

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 8 June 2022.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr N J Collor, Mr G Cooke, Mrs S Hudson, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr H Rayner, Mr O Richardson, Dr L Sullivan, Mr A J Hook and Mr P Stepto

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill OBE (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, KCC), Mr S Peerbux (Head of Community Safety, KCC), Superintendent P Steenhuis (Kent Police), Mr M Powell (Director, Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit), Ms N Floodgate (Road Safety and Active Travel Group Manager, KCC) and Ms R Westlake (Senior Commissioner, KCC)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

46. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting (Item A3)

1. Mr Hook made two declarations. Firstly, that professionally he had been instructed by the Crown Prosecution Service to advise on and prosecute serious crime in Kent's Crown Courts. Secondly, that his wife was employed by the Probation Service.
2. Dr Sullivan declared that her husband was Gravesham Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Chair of the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership.

47. Kent Community Safety Agreement (Item B1)

1. Mr Hill, Chairman of the Kent Community Safety Partnership, introduced the 2022 Kent Community Safety Agreement. In reference to the Committee's previous consideration of Community Safety Agreements, he noted particular interest in anti-social behaviour, serious violence crime and road safety, which formed the focus of the Partnership's presentation to Members. He reminded Members that the Partnership involved a range of local partners, which included: KCC; Kent Police; Kent Fire and Rescue Service; local District, Borough and City Councils; Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group; the Probation Service; and district Community Safety Partnerships.

2. Mr Peerbux gave an overview of the Kent Community Safety Partnership's functions, as well as the role of the Community Safety Team, which acted as the county's strategic coordinator, carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews and managing the Community Safety Agreement. He explained the Community Safety Agreement development process, including that it had to have due regard for the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Making Kent Safer 2022-25' Crime and Safety Plan.
3. Supt. Steenhuis outlined the Partnership's efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood crime. He informed Members that 40 police and local authority licensing officers had been trained to implement Best Bar None a safe socialising scheme across the county, with night-time economy operations over the festive period leading to a reduction in spiking incidents. He reminded Members of the Police Schools Team and their role in prevention through education. He confirmed that there was a county-wide PCSO problem solving task force, which targeted anti-social behaviour hotspots. He mentioned My Community Voice (www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk), a two-way communication service that helped Kent residents, businesses, and community groups keep in touch with their local policing teams and raise the issues that matter most to them. Members were told that over 7,500 residents had signed up. He informed Members that the Chief Constable was undertaking a review of neighbourhood policing, to bring the neighbourhood policing model in line with Government's Beating Crime Plan, Serious Violence Duty, changes to integrated offender management and the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The review was ongoing and the Chief Constable had given a clear direction that there would be no reduction in the quality service provided to residents building a new model on the success and investment in the current model.
4. Mr Hill made a statement on the Kent Police review of neighbourhood policing. He confirmed that he had received assurance from the Chief Constable at the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board that community policing would not be negatively impacted.
5. Mr Powell explained the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit's responsibilities. He described the Unit's development since its foundation in 2019 and the Home Office's funding of the Unit for the next three years. He set out the Unit's key aims: to focus on public place serious violence including weapons, drug supply and robbery involving those aged under 25; promote a public health or preventative approach to violence reduction; drive multi-agency collaboration to reduce serious violence; develop Partnership data sharing; and fund services in communities impacted by violent crime. He shared the Unit's impact in 2020/21, which included a reduction in county lines from 64 to 40, as well as reductions in robbery and violence with serious injury by 29% and 7% respectively.
6. Ms Floodgate addressed the Partnership's role in improving road safety. She explained that KCC, as the Local Highway Authority, had obligations under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to provide road safety education, publicity and

engineering. She confirmed that in excess of 13,000 primary and 16,000 secondary school aged children had been educated on road safety in the 2020/21 academic year. Regarding focused engineering measures at locations where there was evidence that interventions reduced the number of collisions and injuries, she verified that KCC spent over £1.4m per annum on schemes. Concerning Vision Zero, KCC's road safety strategy, she reminded Members of the Safe Systems Approach and ambition to reduce road casualties to 0 by 2050. She noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner's Making Kent Safer 2022-25 plan included Vision Zero, with the Commissioner chairing the first meeting of the Safe Roads Partnership in late June. She shared Kent's road safety trends between 2017 and 2021.

7. Mr Peerbux gave a brief update on the other Community Safety Agreement priorities: Domestic Abuse; Safeguarding Vulnerable People; Preventing Extremism and Hate; Substance Misuse; and Violence Against Women and Girls, which was a new priority for 2022.
8. Regarding serious youth violence and crime prevention, a Member asked whether the Violence Reduction Unit had a threshold which required problem specific policies and how partners monitored prevention activities. Mr Powell confirmed that the development of policies related to particular forms of serious youth violence were dependent on Home Office grant conditions. He noted that the Home Office's key priorities for Units were reducing injuries involving weapons, admissions to accident and emergency departments, and homicide. In relation to crime prevention, Supt. Steenhuis confirmed that Kent Police used a Cambridge Harm Index, which was reported to the Chief Constable. He explained that the Index measured the impact of different crimes type on communities, down to individual street level. He added that community operations were measured against their index score to assess their effectiveness.
9. A Member asked how Kent Police had built trust with women. Supt. Steenhuis confirmed that Kent Police had developed a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, with extensive involvement from female residents, the importance of understanding why and where women felt unsafe was emphasised. He confirmed that 'walk and talks' had taken place to understand problem areas, which was complemented by the StreetSafe tool, a pilot service which allowed residents to anonymously report public places where they felt unsafe.
10. A Member asked what had been done by Partners to reduce substance misuse and supply, including how children were safeguarded from exploitation by county line gangs. Mr Powell responded that Partners had adopted a trauma informed working response, which ensured that misuse was reduced by providing users with treatment and support. He stated that engaging young people outside of school was an important part of proactive safeguarding, with KCC and Kent Police continually exchanging information on vulnerable people and issues being raised at district level multiagency meetings to decide the local response. Supt. Steenhuis confirmed that Kent Police had a drugs and

county lines team, which directly disrupted gang operations and communication. Concerning counter measures, he noted that the new integrated offender management model will look at sobriety tags for offenders following release, which detected whether they had broken license conditions. He added that Kent Police's specialist drugs officers briefed schools' officers on new substances.

11. A Member asked that the Partnership factor the impact of anti-social and illegal e-scooter use into future Community Safety Agreements.
12. The Chairman asked how the Partnership responded to increases in mental health issues. Supt. Steenhuis emphasised the seriousness of the mental health challenges in Kent, with the county having the UK's highest rate of Section 136 detentions per capita. He reassured Members that the Partnership worked with Kent and Medway NHS Social Care Partnership Trust and received clinical advice, which had resulted in a significant reduction in the use of the police Section 136 power.
13. In response to a question from a Member, on whether there were restrictions on the purchase of nitrous oxide canisters, Supt. Steenhuis noted that the majority of cannisters were bought online, where there were negligible restrictions. He emphasised the importance of education in reducing nitrous oxide use amongst young people.
14. A Member asked how much speed cameras cost to install and what had been done to increase camera coverage. Ms Floodgate informed Members that permanent speed cameras cost in excess of £50,000, required back-office maintenance support and had a strict, serious collision data-led, criterion which Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership were reviewing. She confirmed that a series of mobile camera pilots had run across the county, in locations where there hadn't been a history of serious injuries or fatalities, with one pilot reporting 900 tickets in its first month. In relation to traffic management, she confirmed that KCC had applied for Part 6 powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004, which would allow the authority to enforce moving traffic offences, such as making banned turns, exceeding weight limits or stopping in yellow box junctions. She agreed to update Members on the forthcoming Safety Camera Partnership review and future speed camera trials.
15. Concerning county lines gangs and their use of public transport, a Member asked whether the Partnership had encouraged the installation of metal detectors and use of sniffer dogs at major Kent train stations, in order to reduce drug supply and weapon carrying. Further questions were asked on the restrictions for buying knives online and measures to counter the shoplifting of knives. Supt. Steenhuis gave an example of Kent Police's response to a recent knife crime operation in which dogs, metal detectors, stop search powers and work with British Transport Police resulted in several knife seizures. He acknowledged that more could be done to keep victims and residents informed of outcomes through My Community Voice and asked Members to promote sign up.

16. Following a question from Members on domestic abuse education, Supt. Steenhuis confirmed that, as well as the schools team, Kent Police's rape team visited schools to explain consent and appropriate behaviour to students.

17. A Member asked what was done to share fraud warnings and advice with residents. Supt Steenhuis confirmed that My Community Voice included fraud alerts and advice. Mr Hill informed Members that the Police and Crime Commissioner was providing an update on fraud to the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel, at its 16 June meeting.

18. A Member asked how male victims of domestic abuse were supported by the Partnership. Ms Westlake confirmed that the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) provided support to male survivors and worked with partners to ensure consistent outreach. She noted that the service had experienced an increase in male users.

19. The Chairman thanked Mr Hill and the members of the Partnership for their attendance, answers and assurances.

20. Mr Cooke moved and Mr Love seconded a motion that "the Committee:

- a) make comment on the refreshed Community Safety Agreement (April 2022) and the year-end action plan and performance summary for 2021/22; and
- b) ask that the comments made by the Committee be incorporated into future Community Safety Agreements."

21. The motion was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) make comment on the refreshed Community Safety Agreement (April 2022) and the year-end action plan and performance summary for 2021/22; and
- b) ask that the comments made by the Committee be incorporated into future Community Safety Agreements.