

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 5 June 2024.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Ms J Hawkins (Substitute for Rich Lehmann), Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Prendergast and Mr O Richardson

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs C Bell (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) Police Sergeant Peter Ballard, Chief Superintendent Emma Banks, Ms S Brinson, Ms A Cain, Ms C Bright, Ms I Hunter-Whitehouse, Mr S Peerbux, Mr M Powell, Mr M Rolfe, Detective Inspector James Ross, Ms R Westlake, Mr N Wilkinson and Mrs A Taylor.

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Mrs L Game, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Bunting, Ms N Floodgate, Ms C Harris, Ms J Mookherjee, Mr S Perez and Superintendent Peter Steenhuis.

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

Mr Hook made a declaration on Item B - that he worked for the CPS as a lawyer & that his wife was a probation officer.

Dr Sullivan made a declaration on Item B, that her husband was deputy leader of Gravesham Borough Council, was a member of Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and a member of Kent CSP.

#### **58. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024** *(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **59. Scrutiny Committee meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee** *(Item B)*

1. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services and Chair of the Kent Community Safety Partnership (KCSP) introduced the item. The Community Safety Agreement had been refreshed in April 2024 and it set out how the Kent Community Safety Partners in Kent would work together to deliver the key priorities for the county.

2. Shafick Peerbux, Head of Community Safety, introduced a presentation which would be given by the Partners present, a copy of the presentation is available here: [Scrutiny Crime and Disorder Committee - KCSP Presentation](#)
3. Members commended the presentation and thanked the partners for their introductions and comments. Members asked questions in relation to the presentation, the Community Safety Agreement and the work of the partners. Key issues raised by the Committee and responded to by the Cabinet Member, Officers and partners present included the following:
  - a. The Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were being reviewed and it was expected that this would place increasing responsibilities onto the CSPs and bring greater links with the Police and Crime Commissioners.
  - b. A Member raised concerns about extremism and security issues around community events. Nick Wilkinson highlighted the work of the Community Security Trust (CST) which was a national organisation providing protective security advice and training particularly within Jewish Communities but also across faith. The CST website can be found on the following link: <https://cst.org.uk/>
  - c. In relation to a question about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) hot spots, these were defined by analysts who reviewed the levels of calls and incidents classed as ASB over a period of three years. Community Safety Units and Neighbourhood Policing Teams had been given funding to undertake community engagement within hot spot areas. The aim of this was to ensure they were aware that they were within a ASB hot spot area and to ensure firsthand information was available enabling the issues to be tackled effectively.
  - d. A Member asked whether hot spots focussed on urban areas rather than rural areas. Superintendent Peter Steenhuis explained that the new Neighbourhood Policing Model ensured that every area had a dedicated Neighbourhood Task Force, and in addition the Rural Task Force tackled problem issues within the rural areas.
  - e. In relation to Highway Safety – this was often the single biggest concern amongst Kent residents. An annual programme reviewed collisions across the road network, this was a statutory requirement. In addition, where repeated reports were received around near misses or risk areas due to speed or harsh breaking – these were also reviewed to determine the measures to be used to reduce incidents.
  - f. In relation to Domestic Violence a Member asked about further education for both girls and boys. Chief Superintendent Emma Banks concurred with the comments that education was vital. Projects were underway with partners to educate both girls and boys in schools with projects such as the healthy relationships programme. There were also child centred policing teams within Kent Police. Negative role models did exist for young people and prevention was key with early intervention opportunities.
  - g. Early intervention and prevention was also a key part of the new 2024-29 Domestic Abuse Strategy. This included how to talk to young people about abuse they might have experienced at home as well as ensuring that support systems were accessible to young people in their first relationships. Schools were often the first contact for children and young people and there were close relationships with schools to ensure the right

information was available and support for vulnerable children and also their parents.

- h. Nick Wilkinson explained that a training session was delivered, mainly to staff but young people as well, on extremism, gender stereotyping, influencers, incels, misogyny and the manosphere. There was an open invitation to Members to attend this training session. Mr Wilkinson explained that the Channel Panel was a multi-agency group working together to safeguard people from radicalisation and extremism. Online platforms continued to be a significant challenge around this.
- i. A Member asked whether partners were expecting an increase in ASB as a result of the reduction in youth services in Kent and was there anything that Members could do within their own communities? Superintendent Steenhuis confirmed that the Police were working closely with the youth services across Kent and Medway. Dedicated child centred policing teams worked within schools working with specific individuals who might need diverting away from ASB. The loss of any service would have an impact but all partners were working within the available budget.
- j. The online world remained extremely challenging and there was a focus on training, awareness raising and partnership working. There had been national and local investment in keeping children safe online and improving the digital capability of the Police in identifying online child abuse. Education programmes were also provided to children and parents. False and harmful messages spread quickly but work had been undertaken with an organisation that could provide resources in response to an online threat to schools and young people within 5 working days. This would be in discussion with young people to deliver factual messaging.
- k. In relation to e-scooters, these were illegal, they could only be ridden with insurance and currently no companies would provide insurance, there were no pilot areas currently in Kent.
- l. A Member raised concerns around crimes against the elderly, particularly scams and it was acknowledged that scams could affect anyone, regardless of their age. Trading Services had a significant priority around protecting vulnerable people in relation to scams. A victim safeguarding officer worked to engage with people who were victims of scams or potential victims. The majority of scams reported in Kent originated outside of the UK and support to victims was key.
- m. Discussions were ongoing in relation to the lead officer for safeguarding vulnerable people as it was such a broad topic crossing over so many teams. All partners picked up issues around safeguarding vulnerable people in their work.
- n. How could Members help partners in delivering the messages to residents of Kent? Mrs Bell responded that ensuring people are aware of how to report crime was key, communication with residents and neighbourhood watch teams was vital, and residents should be encouraged to report any issues. Members should ensure that they continued to highlight the work of the Community Safety Partners in meetings with their community and in newsletters etc.
- o. The Chairman thanked, again, the Cabinet Member and partners present for their contributions to the meeting and for their work in making Kent a safer place.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee note the refreshed Community Safety Agreement (April 2024) and make no comment.

**60. Work Programme**  
*(Item C1)*

1. In response to a question the Chairman confirmed that details of the plan for continued scrutiny of SEND provision at KCC would be circulated to Members asap.

POST MEETING NOTE: The Chairman emailed all Scrutiny Committee Members on 10 June 2024 confirming that a report on the approach to SEND Scrutiny would be submitted to the Scrutiny committee on 10 July.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.