

NOTES of a Meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee's Informal Member Group on the Community Safety Unit Business Plan held on Tuesday, 4 December 2007.

PRESENT: Mr C Hart (Chairman), Miss S J Carey and Mr G Rowe.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs E M Tweed, Lead Member for Community Services; Mr Clive Bainbridge, Director of Community Safety and Regulatory Services; and Mr Stuart Beaumont, County Manager, Community Safety.

OFFICER: Mr S C Ballard, Head of Democratic Services.

1. Community Safety Unit Business Plan 2007/08

Terms of Reference

- (1) The Informal Member Group had been established by Cabinet Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 May 2007 to examine the Community Safety Unit Business Plan for 2007/08.

Introduction

- (2) Mr Beaumont and Mr Bainbridge explained the role of the Community Safety Unit and outlined the major changes facing it over the next year, particularly in relation to the crime and disorder agenda with the coming into effect of the Police and Justice Act 2006.
- (3) Members' questions covered the following issues:-

Community Warden Service (paragraph 2.2 of Business Plan)

- (4) In answer to questions from the IMG Members, Mr Beaumont explained that the Unit employed 101 uniformed Community Warden staff, of whom 9 were Area Supervisors and 10 formed the County Response Team. There were therefore 82 Community Wardens actually deployed within communities.
- (5) Mr Beaumont went on to explain that if a community wanted a Community Warden, it had to make a business case against strict eligibility criteria. The request was then subject to approval by the Chairman of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Area Police Commander.
- (6) Mrs Tweed and Mr Beaumont emphasised that the role of the Community Warden was not to tackle crime. That was a matter for the Police. Instead the role of the Community Warden was to engage with the community (including kick-starting local projects to, for example, provide constructive activities for young people), deal with low-level anti-social behaviour, assist vulnerable residents (eg on rogue traders), act as the eyes and ears of the Police and other agencies (eg Kent Highway Services in the case of obstructions of the footway by traders), all with the aim of reducing the fear of crime.
- (7) Mr Beaumont explained the rolling review of Warden deployment. When a Community Warden had been deployed in a community for three years, the Unit's staff would look again at the eligibility criteria for that community to ensure that it was still met.

They would also look at unmet needs for Community Wardens in other communities. This information would be referred to the Chairman of the local CDRP and might lead to the partial redeployment of the Community Warden (ie sharing the post with another community). Unfortunately, as community safety was a non-statutory service, resources did not permit an increase in the overall complement of Community Wardens.

(8) In answer to questions from Mr Hart and Mr Rowe, Mr Beaumont confirmed that Community Wardens could be contacted via the KCC Contact Centre. A dedicated page would shortly be added to the KCC website (and would also be accessible via Kent Police's website) containing photos, contact details, etc, of all the individual Community Wardens. Community Wardens were also expected to post their contact details in appropriate places throughout their own area (shops, doctor's surgeries, etc) and an important part of their role was to be a highly-visible presence within their community. Mr Rowe suggested that Community Wardens should leave notes at the places they visited during the course of their duties so that local people would know where the Community Warden had been and when. **(Action: Stuart Beaumont)**

(9) Mrs Tweed reported that Marilyn Howell, the Head of Operations for Community Safety Wardens, had recently won the National Award for Best Community Warden Manager, and this highlighted the good performance of the Community Warden service in Kent.

Community Safety Projects (paragraph 2.3)

(10) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont said that, between them, Community Wardens initiated a large number of projects and the ones listed in paragraph 2.3 of the Business Plan were just a few examples. This reflected the fact that part of the Community Warden's job was to work with their community to identify and then prioritise issues. The Community Warden's role was then to facilitate ways of tackling those issues, often by being instrumental in starting up a project and then, once started, leaving the community to carry on running it.

CDRPs (paragraph 2.4)

(11) In answer to a question from Mr Rowe, Mr Beaumont explained that his unit organised a series of training and awareness-raising seminars throughout the year for those officers (known as the Focus 48, but in reality numbering about 30) who represented KCC on the 11 District CDRPs. In addition, before each meeting of the Dartford and Gravesham CDRP (the largest), a pre-meeting was organised for the KCC representatives.

Community Safety Partnership Training Centre (paragraph 2.5)

(12) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont explained that the Training Centre had originally been set up to train all the Community Wardens and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) when they had first been recruited. Now that the full complement of Community Wardens was deployed and the Police College trained PCSOs, the role of the Training Centre had changed and it had broadened its focus as described in paragraph 2.5 of the Business Plan. Amongst other things, the Training Centre would provide Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act awareness training to elected Members (from District Councils as well as KCC).

(13) The Training Centre still held training sessions for existing Community Wardens during the year and 10 attended each course. In addition there was an annual seminar for all Community Wardens. Mr Hart suggested that it might be helpful for Members of the IMG to be invited to the next annual seminar. **(Action: Stuart Beaumont)**

HandyVan and HomeSafe (paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7)

(14) In answer to questions from Mr Hart and Miss Carey, Mr Beaumont said that advertising for the HandyVan service was narrowly focused because otherwise the demand would greatly exceed capacity. The focus was on specific areas where statistics showed that there were particular problems. This included advertising the service in certain hospitals where the carrying out of minor home security and safety works for elderly and/or vulnerable people patients would allow them to return home sooner than would otherwise be possible. Some referrals to the HandyVan service also came from the Police where a vulnerable person had been burgled. The security improvements which the HandyVan service could provide could help to prevent a second burglary.

(15) Mr Beaumont said that the burglary figures for Kent had reduced substantially recently. It was not possible to quantify what contribution the HandyVan service had made to this, but it was certainly clear that the service made vulnerable people feel safer.

Kent Crime View (paragraph 2.8)

(16) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont explained that Kent Caddie was a software system containing a huge amount of data about crime, anti-social behaviour and related issues. It was being upgraded to form Kent Crime View and would be overlaid with the MOSAIC system. Because of the sensitivity of much of the data, access was tightly restricted, but it was hoped that in future some of the less sensitive information could be made accessible to local Members and the general public.

Local Community Assessments (paragraph 2.9)

(17) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont explained that local community assessments related to crime, fear of crime, etc. They were undertaken by each individual Community Warden and fed into the annual assessments carried out by each District CDRP. In future, the individual District CDRP assessments would in turn feed into the County-wide assessment carried out by the County-wide CDRP. In areas without Community Wardens, the assessments would be undertaken by the local Police team, the local PACT team, or by the Parish Council under its Parish Plan. It was intended that every community should have a local community assessment.

IDeA Review (paragraph 2.15)

(18) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont explained that the unit's Business Support arrangements had originally been set up at the time that a large number of Community Wardens were being recruited over a short period of time. Now that the Community Warden service was up and running, the unit's Business Support requirements had changed and the IDeA review was to help identify what Business Support arrangements were now needed. The recommendations of the review had subsequently been implemented. Mr Beaumont agreed to provide copies of the IDeA report to the Members of the IMG. **(Action: Stuart Beaumont)**

Review of Interface between the CDRPs and KCC (paragraph 2.20)

(19) In answer to a question from Mr Rowe, Mr Beaumont said that the four KCC officer representatives on each District CDRP were drawn from Children's Social Services, Education, the Youth Service and the Youth Offending Team. Arrangements could also be made for other departments (eg Kent Highway Services) to attend a District CDRP meeting when necessary. Planning was largely an issue for District Councils but efforts were made to take community safety into account at the design stage of new developments through the "Secure by Design" scheme.

(20) Mr Bainbridge accepted that there were issues about how four officers could represent an organisation as diverse as KCC; whether Kent Adult Social Services should also be represented on District CDRPs; about encouraging fuller participation from the CFE Directorate; and about ensuring good links between District CDRPs and the new local Children's Trusts. To tackle these issues, two new posts were being created (using two currently vacant posts) in order to improve co-ordination between KCC and the District CDRPs.

County Response Team (paragraph 2.21)

(21) In answer to a question from Mr Rowe, Mr Beaumont confirmed that the County Response Team was up and running and that it was working well. However there were only 10 members in the team and the demand was greater than this so the team's activities had to be prioritised. Every effort was made to keep communities informed about changes in their Community Warden service, whether temporary or permanent.

Safer Schools (paragraph 4.8)

(22) In answer to a question from Mr Hart, Mr Beaumont explained that his unit's financial contribution provided the core funding for Safer Schools, and this enabled the programme to secure funds from elsewhere. As a result the Community Safety Unit had a representative on the Safer Schools Board.

Staffing (paragraph 8.0)

(23) In answer to a question from Miss Carey, Mr Beaumont said that his unit had two posts which were partially externally-funded;

- County Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (funding from CSU and a number of partners);
- Police Liaison Officer (a senior Police officer who acted as liaison between KCC and Kent Police and who was jointly funded by those two bodies).

Conclusions

(24) The IMG:-

- (a) thanked Mrs Tweed, Mr Bainbridge and Mr Beaumont for the information they had provided and noted with pleasure the Community Safety Unit's good progress against its Business Plan;

- (b) emphasised the need for the deployment of Community Wardens to be kept under review, given that there were insufficient resources to allow every community which wanted a Community Warden to have one;
- (c) welcomed the steps being taken to improve co-ordination between KCC and the District CDRPs but **suggested that Cabinet Scrutiny Committee should recommend** the Cabinet Member for Community Services that KCC representation on the District CDRPs should be reviewed to ensure fuller participation from the CFE Directorate, participation from the Kent Adult Social Services Directorate, and in general, representation of the right Directorates at the right level of seniority;
- (d) expressed support for the need for community safety to be taken into account in new developments at the design stage and therefore welcomed the “Secure by Design” scheme.