

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present:- Councillor Arnold, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Davies, Councillor Fox, Councillor Hogg, Councillor Scordis, Councillor Wood

Also present:- Councillor Buston, Councillor Feltham, Councillor Harris, Councillor L.Scott-Boutell

13. Minutes

Following an amendment to the minutes from the meeting held 24 May 2017, Item 12 to reflect that Councillor Arnold was elected Deputy Chairman, the minutes of the meetings held on 20 September 2016 and 24 May 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

14. Safer Colchester Partnership

Councillor Hogg (in response of his Directorship of Colchester Borough Homes and as a Personal License Holder for the Oak Tree Centre) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Harris

Councillor Harris raised concerns about the reduction in policing numbers, incidents occurring in Colchester and the public perception that the police are powerless to assist. Councillor Harris stressed the importance of distributing the message that the Police are doing what they can.

Councillor Harris also highlighted the importance of involving the community, citing examples of previous targeted days of action. Councillor Harris informed the Committee that he was concerned about gang culture in Colchester and the need to prevent it from escalating and impacting young adults in the Borough. Councillor Harris stated that he was aware of the work that Colchester Borough Homes, the Zones teams and the Police are doing, but more needed to be done.

Councillor Harris highlighted the public protection work carried out by local councillors and neighbourhood watch panels in the area, but stress that further work is needed. Councillor Harris thanked the Police for their work, and highlighted the need to focus on support in the community.

Response

Chief Inspector Kane, Essex Police, welcomed the contribution from Councillor Harris, and noted the points made. Chief Inspector Kane informed Councillor Harris and the Committee that new initiatives will be launched shortly which aim to address public perception issues. Pamela Donnelly, Safer Colchester Partnership Chair, confirmed that all members of the Community Safety Partnership are committed to the plans outlined by Chief Inspector Kane and that community engagement is important to the whole partnership.

Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell

Councillor Scott-Boutell made the Panel aware of an issue relating to an ongoing investigation regarding a constituent. Councillor Scott-Boutell highlighted issues around safety as well as the limited police resources, which restrict the ability of the Police to gather intelligence.

Response

Councillor Davies thanked Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell for attending the meeting and informed her that a response would be covered in the presentation later.

Miss Whyte

Miss Whyte informed the Committee that her wheelchair had recently be stolen. Whilst the information was passed on to the Police no Officers were sent to gather further information. This resulted in the only viable option being to replace the wheelchair which could not be afforded. Miss Whyte stated that she was concerned that, given her experience, Essex Police were not looking after vulnerable people in the community.

Response

Chief Inspector Shaun Kane provided reassurance to Miss Whyte that every contact made to the Police gets recorded, with those dialling 999 receiving emergency assistance. Those incidents where the threat of harm or risk is smaller will fall outside of the emergency response time, but remain very important. Chief Inspector Kane recognised the importance of members of the public feeling valued by the Police and suggested to Miss Whyte that he would be happy to hold further discussions regarding her case after the meeting.

Ms Lennon

Ms Lennon informed the Committee of a number of incidents which had affected her son over the past few years and also caused issues at her property. Ms Lennon also raised concerns regarding the emergency response times after an experience where the Police took over 19 minutes to arrive at a dangerous situation.

Response

In response to Ms Lennon, Chief Inspector Kane stated that further details of this particular case could be looked at outside of the meeting. Inspector Kane confirmed that Essex Police

have the resources to respond to emergencies, but wouldn't be able to provide comment on that particular incident.

Mrs Drury

Mrs Drury highlighted concerns regarding anti-social behaviour in the Arts Centre Church Yard which is affecting those living in the sheltered housing accommodation nearby. Mrs Drury explained that the situation started when a Public Space Protection Order was put in place in the car park, which shifted the individuals causing issues to the Church Yard. Mrs Drury informed the Committee that the residents had regularly seen drug paraphernalia and smelt drug use in the area. Mrs Drury also informed the Committee that the individuals in question had been using the Church Yard as a toilet. Mrs Drury requested that the current PSPO be extended to include St Mary's Church Yard.

Response

Inspector Danielle Booth confirmed to Mrs Drury that as of today a dispersal order had been signed for that area in anticipation of the potential town centre PSPO. Inspector Booth confirmed that the expectation would be that police would patrol this area when possible, and hopefully on a daily basis.

Members of the Panel welcomed the contribution from Mrs Drury and assured her that comments made this evening would be passed on to be included in the Public Space Protection Order consultation, which will then be discussed by the Scrutiny Panel on 27 September.

Safer Colchester Partnership Presentation

Pamela Donnelly, Chair of the Safety Colchester Partnership, stressed the importance of community safety in Colchester and informed the Committee that the presentation would focus on gangs in Colchester. Pamela Donnelly gave apologies from the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Licensing who was unable to make the meeting.

Chief Inspector Kane introduced himself to the Committee and provided a brief background on his policing career, he commented that he was pleased and privileged to have been selected for the Chief Inspector role in Colchester.

Chief Inspector Kane confirmed that the main aims are to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour whilst increasing public confidence. This would build on the success of the steps taken in managing the night time economy, and use a number of initiatives that have been seen in other areas of the Country. Chief Inspector Kane also highlighted that Essex Police will work smarter with the reduced government funding to provide local policing. Chief Inspector Kane stated that the priority is responding to emergencies and protecting people. If an individual contacts 999, they will receive emergency assistance and police support.

With regard to the initiatives, they will be focused on accessibility and visibility. One of the initiatives is to hold street weeks in different areas of the community on a regular basis. This

would address those quality of life issues with residents, low level theft as well as gang concerns and anti-social behaviour.

Chief Inspector Kane also informed the Panel of a concept where the Partnership can bring together resources to target those top people who are hurting communities, particularly those repeat offenders. Councillors and local MP's will be invited to join on the initiatives that have been proposed. Chief Inspector Kane stated that communities will be at the heart of the work, and that he is committed to make Colchester as safe as it can be.

Melanie Rundle, Community Safety and Initiatives Manager, and Sonia Carr, Community Safety Co-ordinator gave the Committee a presentation covering the last twelve months work at the Safer Colchester Partnership. This included the commissioning of a Local Authority Process Review to assess and understand gang issues in Colchester. As well as utilising the Community Safety hub at the Police station, the hidden harms conference and work within schools. All of these aspects have helped to provide a picture of the hidden vulnerabilities and what is happening in the Borough. Work has also been taking place with Operation Raptor.

With regard to the Local Authority Process review, interviews were conducted with 60 practitioners that had awareness of gangs. A total of eight recommendations for Colchester Borough Council were made as a result of the review, one of which was to have a specific point of contact. The partnership is working together to overcome the issues identified and a Community Safety Support Officer has since been recruited. Gangsline has also been used to provide training to professionals, one to one mentoring as well as visiting secondary schools to provide support.

With regard to Operation Raptor, Chief Inspector Kane stated that this was dedicated to gang intelligence. This includes the causes of the gang violence, the links with London and the requirement for intervention to move individuals away from offending. Chief Inspector Kane also highlighted that Essex Police had employed an analyst to assist in this area.

With regard to the position of Community Safety Support Officer, the Officer responsible stated that he was working with approximately 25-26 young people who have multiple vulnerabilities. The Officer explained that gangs from London come to Colchester and take over the household of a vulnerable individual. His role is to meet the vulnerable individual, assess the level of needs and ensure that they are referred to the relevant agencies. Many of the people in this role often live chaotic lives and have slipped through the net of existing support services.

The role of Community Safety Support Officer is unique as it sits between both those who need the assistance and the Police force. The role is also about developing trust with vulnerable individual, representing and assisting them at meetings. Work is also carried out with debt relief as well as mental health services. There is also work in partnership with Community360 to assist people back into the job market.

The Community Safety Support Officer provided the Committee with a brief example of an individual that he had worked with. The individual whose address had been taken over by a drug dealing gang, had struggled to access support, and had been drawn into negative and destructive friendships. Through guidance and support, the individual has now been rehoused and is making good progress.

The Community Safety Support Officer stated that the role has only touched the surface, working with adults, however there is increasing concern regarding young people. It was also confirmed that the awareness of agencies in Colchester to this problem is growing. Communities also need to be empowered and strengthened and to be aware of neighbours.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the presentation and information provided about the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership.

The Committee asked a number of questions regarding the role of the Community Safety Support Officer. In response to the questions the Officer confirmed that gangs are becoming more sophisticated. Whilst the focus of the work is on the victims there could be further work done with the perpetrators to assist with this issue. In terms of the length of time that the role would be in place, it was confirmed that it is initially for one year only as it was linked to a specific Department of Work and Pensions funding role. In order to continue the role beyond January an application for further funding would be required.

In response to a query about what else could be done to assist those who are vulnerable, the Community Safety Support Officer stated that work had to be done in conjunction with partner authorities. With regard to social isolation, Community360 have started a social prescription project, although it can be difficult to encourage individuals to sign up to it. If someone is socially isolated it is difficult for agencies to know who they are, but easier for gang members to exploit them.

A further query was raised about how Councillors can assist with this and in reducing the level of anti-social behaviour. In response, Chief Inspector Kane stated that communities are stronger together with neighbourhood awareness. The Community Safety Hub has assisted with this issue and will continue to grow. Commitment from both the Police and Partnership will make it an uncomfortable place for those who commit anti-social behaviour. The number of incidents categorised as anti-social behaviour increased by 107, which is a 2% year on year increase. Chief Inspector Kane highlighted the proposals for Street weeks which would assist with a collective partnership approach to tackling antisocial behaviour.

Pamela Donnelly stated that everyone has a role to play in Community Cohesion. Pamela Donnelly also highlighted the work undertaken with Colchester Borough Homes in responding to Anti-social behaviour.

A Committee member questioned what was being done to improve the reporting of crime. In response Chief Inspector Kane confirmed that the Police would continue to educate members of the public to report crimes and to the correct forum. The information provided through systems like the 101 non-emergency number is very important and is put through to the Police.

Chief Inspector Kane also provided reassurance that he was committed to working in Colchester and wanted to build long term relationships and consistency whilst in post.

In response to a question regarding Neighbourhood watch, Inspector Danielle Booth confirmed that the neighbourhood watch coordinators had been made aware of the street weeks and were supportive of the initiative.

The Committee expressed thanks to the Safer Colchester Partnership and the Community Safety team and partners for the information provided and work undertaken during the year, which has provided reassurance on the issues faced in the Borough.

RESOLVED that;

- a) The Committee express thanks to the Safer Colchester Partnership and partners for the work during the year.
- b) the Committee reviewed the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership during 2016/17.