

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

18 SEPTEMBER 2012

- Present :-* Councillor Beverly Davies (Chairman)
Councillors Helen Chuah, Pauline Hazell, Peter Higgins,
Nigel Offen, Gerard Oxford and Terry Sutton
- Substitute Members :-* Councillor Will Quince for Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Colin Mudie for Councillor Bill Frame
Councillor Cyril Liddy for Councillor Kim Naish
- Also in Attendance :-* Councillor Brian Jarvis
Councillor Sonia Lewis
Councillor Sue Lissimore

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

4. Safer Colchester Partnership

The following Councillors declared non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5);

Councillor Davies in respect of being a Local Magistrate.

Councillor Young in respect of being the Vice Chairman of the Essex Probation Board.

Safer Colchester Partnership

The following guests were in attendance;

Superintendent Adrian Coombs, (Local Policing Area North)

Chief Inspector Paul Wells, District Commander, Colchester

Inspector Kate Sale, Senior Manager, Integrated Offender Management, Essex Probation

Ms. Pauline Auguste, Manager, Integrated Offender Management, Essex Probation

Police Constable Sonia Mirrington, Integrated Offender Management, Essex Probation

Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture and Member of the Police and Crime Panel

Mr. Ian Vipond, Executive Director and Chairman of the Safer Colchester Partnership (Community Safety Partnership)

Ms. Bridget Tighe, Community Initiatives Manager

Introduction

Councillor Davies, on behalf of the Committee, explained that whilst Member's sympathies and thoughts go out to all the families affected by recent events in Colchester Town Centre, the Committee is unable to comment on, or discuss any issues where there is an ongoing police investigation. This evening's meeting will only

concentrate on the Safer Colchester Partnership.

Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture introduced the guests from Essex Police and Essex Probation.

Councillor Young, on behalf of all Councillors expressed to Superintendent Coombs the Council's sympathies and condolences to the families and the Greater Manchester Police for the deaths of the two young police constables who were killed today as they responded to a suspected burglary.

Police and Crime Commission for Essex

Councillor Young provided details of the Police and Crime Commission for Essex and the Police and Crime Panel.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 make significant changes to the way in which the police are held to account. The Government believes a directly appointed person will be more accountable to the public. On Thursday 15 November 2012 elections will be held across England and Wales to vote for a Police and Crime Commissioner for every police area. At the same time, Police Authorities will be abolished.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

The PCC role will involve working with the public, the police and local partners to ensure effective policing as well as contributing to national requirements. The PCC will be responsible for overseeing policing on behalf of more than 1.7 million people in Essex. He or she will be chosen by an electorate of about 1.4 million and will set the Police Council Tax precept for more than 700,000 homes as well as holding the Chief Constable and police force to account.

Police and Crime Panel (PCP)

Although directly elected, the PCC will be held to account by the PCP comprised of councillors representing each of the districts, boroughs, unitary authorities and county council. There will also be a minimum of 2 independent members.

The Shadow PCP now operates under the chairmanship of Councillor John Jowers and had already had two meetings.

The PCP will fulfil its role of scrutinising the PCC, acting as a critical friend. With the terms of reference for the PCP agreed, the PCP will, with a two thirds majority, be able to veto the proposed PCC precept.

In response to Councillor Offen, Councillor Young said each member of the PCP will receive nine hundred pounds remuneration, though members had chosen in the first year to pool this money to be used for Member Training, thereby foregoing their allowances.

Councillor Young said the difference with the new arrangements was accountability and

transparency. Whilst the PCC would have overall responsibility for overseeing policing in Essex, the elected Commissioner would be held to account by a board comprising of directly elected members.

The Commission will initially comprise of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Finance Officer. Thereafter, additional staffing will be decided once the Commission is fully operational.

Responding to Councillor Quince, Mr. Vipond said in regards to 'Purple Flag Status', putting aside the differences of getting the status now or in the future, what was agreed was the need to seek further improvements to the quality of experience when visiting the town centre in the evenings. The Partnership have been working towards this for a number of years, and the Purple Flag will provide the framework for the partners to improve and manage the experience along with providing the economic benefits of the night time economy. Mr. Vipond was expecting a draft accord to be approved shortly with a submission for the status to take place in the autumn.

Essex Police

Chief Inspector Paul Wells, District Commander, Essex Police gave a presentation on violent crime statistics in Colchester over the last year, and the initiatives being undertaken to reduce the current levels.

For the rolling year, the overall number of crimes committed were broken down as follows; Violence 29%, Shoplifting 9%, Other Burglary 6%, Dwelling Burglary 7%, Other Theft 16%, Criminal Damage 19%, Sexual 2%, Robbery 1% and Vehicle Crime 11%.

Violent Crime

A 2011 v 2012 comparison of the recorded offences of violence against a person shows; Actual bodily harm and other injury down by 9.2%, Assault without injury up by 6.1%, Assault without injury to a constable down by 41.7%, Harassment 1 case only in 2012, Inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent down by 28.6%, Possession of article with blade or point down by 60%, Possession of other weapons 1 case in each year, Public fear, alarm or distress no change, Racial or religious aggravated actual bodily harm and other injury 2 cases only in 2012, Racial or religious aggravated assault without injury down by 80%, Racial or religious aggravated public fear, alarm or distress down by 83.3% and Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life down by 36.4%. Overall there was a reduction in 2012 of 11.5%.

The overall number of recorded violent crime incidents in the Colchester District since April 2012 has been 1175, broken down as follows; Actual Bodily Harm 473, Grievous Bodily Harm 21, various non-injury incidents 675 and 6 Racial and Religious Crimes.

In regards to the specific time periods when violent crime takes place, a 2011 v 2012 comparison showed between 6 – 10 pm a 10.9% increase, between 10 pm – 2 am a small reduction of 3% and between 2 – 6 am a decrease of 26.7%. It was acknowledged that whilst this was a small sample, the early and mid periods showed little change though there had been a big drop in violent crime in the third period, during

the early hours of the morning.

Some of the initiatives undertaken within the partnership are helping to reduce violent crime and include; Weekly meetings with responsible officers in the Borough Council, Weekly review of Violent Crime related to Licensed Premises, Licensing Visits, Liaison with Pubwatch, Robust Licensing Policy = Challenge Temporary Events Notices (TEN) and reviews of Alteration of Licence, Joint Patrols, Specific Operation (WATERFALL) / Use of early intervention and Joint Working e.g. Night of Action (*Safer Colchester*) / S.O.S Bus.

A Dwelling Burglary chart was presented identifying a breakdown of burglaries by Ward. Later, and in response to Councillors, CI Wells said in some cases the named Ward included information from two or more neighbouring wards e.g. High Woods represented High Woods Ward and St Johns Ward.

Some of the burglary initiatives included; Operation NEMESIS (a force wide operation) and Operation LENTIL (with a list of nominated offenders, targeted interaction with all, and daily property visits). The variety of tactical options included Covert (surveillance), Overt (curfew checks and Joint Working (in partnership with IOM and the Council).

Councillor T. Higgins said the data provided encouraging signs, but the data was for one year only, a very small sample that did not identify patterns. Councillor Higgins said three to four years data would provide a better picture with accurate trends. Superintendent Coombs said having to reduce the Police budgets by £41m meant the loss of data analysts, so while more information can be provided for future reviews the request for information would need to be made well in advance of the meeting.

In response to Councillor Quince, CI Wells said that regardless of the recruitment freeze, there remained four Special Constables supporting the force during the busy periods of the night time economy. Superintendent Coombs said it was the intention to retain 600 Special Constables in Essex with a view to providing more dedicated Special Constables to neighbourhoods. It was acknowledged that many wards would benefit from dedicated Special Constables.

Councillor Davies said it was, even given the small data samples, worrying that crime had increased during the early period of the night time economy, between 6 - 10 pm. CI Wells said the force does change its resources to respond to the peaks periods of crime, though generally the early period was usually about cases of drunk and disorder. The more serious assaults happened between 10pm – 6am.

With regard to the cases of drunk and disorder, CI Wells said it was always their intention to try to determine at what licensed premise(s) individuals frequented, to address the issues at a later time, but it was usually the case that people are reluctant to provide information.

Councillor Offen said discussions with residents from his Ward led him to believe it was more to do with the fear of crime. For example, wives of serviceman being left on their own for long periods of time. Also, the compulsion of soldiers to own fast motor bikes makes them targets for theft and increases that fear. CI Wells acknowledged the

comments of Councillor Offen saying two people had recently been caught in connection with these thefts. CI Wells said the Police do link closely with the Military Police to tackle these problems.

Essex Probation

Integrated Offender Management (IOM)

Inspector Kate Sale, Joint Integration Manager, Essex Probation, Ms. Pauline Auguste, Manager for Offender Management at the Colchester Branch of Essex Probation and Police Constable Sonia Mirrington, Integrated Offender Management at Essex Probation gave a presentation on IOM.

Inspector Sale said she worked across the whole of Essex in her role as Joint Integration Manager for IOM. The idea is to build a multi-partnership framework (including Police, Essex Probation, Social Services and Local Government) to address the most problematic people in Essex.

For the first time crime data and offender data is being cross-referenced. The initial analysis highlighted the 650 most problematic people. The restructuring of the Essex Police Force has resulted in a dedicated team of 21 police officers working across the County (one team located in Colchester) in close partnership with IOM managers, plus a specialist team working specifically on drugs and alcohol related cases. The intention within their work is to bring people to control their behaviour and reduce offending. The local IOM Team worked across Colchester and Tendring and worked closely with the local constabulary on Operation Nemesis.

Inspector Sale said this was a national initiative, but if successful will provide huge gains for society. Six months into the new operation, and even though the performance framework is still developing the IOM was getting very encouraging feedback.

Ms. Pauline Auguste, Integrated Offender Manager at Essex Probation said the IOM work very closely with the Police and the drug abuse and housing agencies. They are able to respond quickly to situations and are pro-active in their visits to homes and prisons.

These are early days for the IOM but there are already some very positive changes happening.

Police Constable Sonia Mirrington said the benefit of IOM is the plugging of the gaps of all the agencies involved. This was an opportunity for individuals to get free of their criminal lifestyle. The success of the work was to a large extent due to the offenders knowing the agencies are now joined-up, making it harder for individuals to slip through the net and reoffend.

There is some good news stories already coming out of the IOM work, and even though re-offending is prevalent (known as the 'Revolving Door') there are positive signs, with the timescale for many individuals between offending and re-offending positively changing from weeks to months.

Ms. Auguste responded to Councillor Offen concerning the links with re-offending and unemployment. Finding jobs for these people and keeping them in employment is extremely difficult. Whilst it is not possible to find a job, there are also other community projects or voluntary work that these individuals can participate. Individuals are risk assessed before being placed in any form of work.

It is extremely difficult to find employment for someone with a criminal record, and responding to Councillor Hazell, Ms. Auguste said the Prison Service does have educational facilities and is working hard to get offenders through educational courses such as NVQs.

Councillor Young said the two things that are statistically proven to reduce re-offending is a job and a home. The education system fails many of these individuals who have very low literacy and numeracy skills.

Ms. Auguste said the IOM are still looking for ideas and opportunities for re-offenders, and welcomed any work ideas from the Council.

Councillor Davies said from her work as a Magistrate, it was very frustrating having to remand re-offenders in custody, that it would be nice to have some other outlet to move them on. Councillor Davies said the volunteering work she did for the Olympics made her realise what a huge volunteering resource was available locally, including teachers and social workers.

The Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS) and Essex County Council recently had their last committee meeting in respect of their work for the Olympics with the point being made that this resource was there and needed to be tapped into, and suggested the IOM get in touch with SAVS..

Safer Colchester Partnership (SCP)

Mr. Ian Vipond as Chairman of the Safer Colchester Partnership said the Council's Community Initiatives Manager and her team did a lot of work to support the SCP with very limited resources. Mr. Vipond added;

The funding of the SCP had reduced significantly in recent years, due to the restraints on budgets of all the public services represented within the SCP. Whilst the SCP was originally receiving a Home Office Community Safety Fund of £200k, this had now reduced to £10k for 2012-13, a significant drop. This figure, supplemented by contributions from Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue and Colchester Borough Council brought this year's budget to £87,076, enabling the SCP to continue to fund initiatives such as Crucial Crew and community days of action.

The SOS Bus has made a positive impact on the A&E Department at the General Hospital, with the clinical staff on the bus providing treatment to those with minor injuries or sickness. This has resulted in a significant reduction of people being admitted to A&E from 78 to 12 in a single year, a welcome improvement. Councillor Young said the SOS Bus statistics are excellent. Alcohol abuse is prevalent in society, not helped by supermarket pricing, something that needs to be a Government led initiative to

tackle. The support of the police at the Licensing Committee is welcomed and the improved changes from this are noticeable.

Whilst the fourth priority of the SCP, to 'reduce crime and the fear of crime' may seem obvious to the point of not being specific, Mr. Vipond responded to Councillor Offen by suggesting local residents would think it would be odd simply not to have a reduction in crime as a priority.

Mr. Vipond responded to Councillor Quince concerning the work of Trading Standards, saying that Trading Standards are proactive in monitoring businesses selling alcohol. Tests where underage children enter these businesses and try to buy alcohol are carried out. Councillor Young said in cases where alcohol is sold to these children, the licenses should be revoked, and this would send out a message that Colchester is not a soft option.

In response to Councillor Davies concerning the need for more publicity for NAPs meetings, the local reporter said it was the intention of the local press to publish future meetings in their newspaper(s) and this would form part of a regular item providing local people with details such as these meetings, evening chemists and opening times etc. The reporter suggested that Ward Councillors contact the newspaper with details of future NAPs meetings.

The Chairman, Councillor Davies thanked all the attendees for their presentations and positive responses to questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED that the Committee;

- i) Thanked guests for attending the meeting, giving their presentations and responding to questions from Members of the Committee.
- ii) Noted the work and progress of the Police and Crime Commission, Essex Police and Essex Probation.
- iii) Noted the work and progress of the Safer Colchester Partnership in connection with their statutory crime and disorder reduction functions.