

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

16 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present :- Councillor Beverly Davies (Chairman)
Councillors Mark Cable, Dominic Graham, Jo Hayes, Marcus Harrington, Mike Hogg, Peter Higgins and Chris Pearson.

Substitute Member :- Councillor Jackie Maclean for Councillor Sue Lissimore

Also present :- Councillor Tim Young

3. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2013 and 16 June 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Safer Colchester Partnership

Councillor Davies (in respect of being the Vice Chairman of CCVS and a Colchester Magistrate) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure 7(5).

Councillor Hogg (in respect of being a license holder to sell Alcohol and in receipt of Community Mental Health Trust Pension) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure 7(5).

Councillor Pearson (in respect of working for the National Probation Service and being on the Committee of the Domestic Homicide Review) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure 7(5).

Councillor Graham (in respect of working for Holmes and Hills LLP UK representing claims against North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group) declared their non-pecuniary interests in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure 7(5).

The following members of the Safer Colchester Partnership attended the meeting;

- Pamela Donnelly, Chair of Safer Colchester Partnership
- Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
- Richard Phillibrown, District Commander, Essex Police
- Melanie Rundle, Community Initiatives Manager
- Sharn Taylor, Neighbourhood Policing Team Inspector, Essex Police
- Sarah Wright, Open Road
- Anna Trudgian, Open Road
- Martin Lucas, The Essex Community Rehabilitation Company Limited
- James Taylor, Assistant Divisional Officer, Community Safety Manager
- Les Nicolls, Community Connector Lead, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

- Sue Nice, Community Safety Manager, Colchester Borough Homes

Apologies had been received from both Major Adrian Grinonneau from Colchester Garrison and Karen Williams, who was substituted by Sue Nice from Colchester Borough Homes.

Pamela Donnelly

Pamela Donnelly introduced the Safer Colchester Partnership (SCP), and thanked Melanie Rundle the author of the report, and the members of the Partnership who attended the meeting.

The report invites the Crime and Disorder Committee to scrutinise the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership over the past year. The Safer Colchester Partnership is a statutory requirement for local agencies to work together to tackle crime in their local area. As part of the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 the Committee is required to meet once a year in order to review the performance of the Partnership.

Pamela Donnelly stated that the Partnership recently held a meeting reviewing its own procedures, and how the operation of the partnership helps to promote community safety across Colchester. The meeting focused on the priorities and goals of the partnership, as well as managing the reducing budget to deliver these priorities. The Partnership recognised the good work done, but that there is always room for improvement, especially on making better quality decisions more quickly and effectively.

The report focuses on the four priorities of the partnership and how the partners are involved in helping achieve these, either in kind or financially. The four priorities for the partnership are:

- Addressing domestic abuse
- Reducing reoffending
- Addressing alcohol misuse
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime

With reference to the partners in the SCP, there has been a significant amount of change in their organisations such as the Police and the Probation service. The SCP also works with the Police and Crime Commissioner in receiving funding for initiatives. Work has already begun to identify the priorities for next year, with a strategic assessment of crime to be held in December, as well as a focus on the budget pressures.

Councillor Tim Young

Councillor Tim Young, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Safety provided the Committee with a brief summary of the previous year's activities. He stated that his thoughts and prayers were with the families of the victims of the recent crimes in Colchester.

Councillor Young highlighted that Colchester remains a safe place to live, and the partnership has continued to be active across the Borough in arranging initiatives. This includes Days of Action, which help the local community in dealing with crime in their local area on the Day of Action and over the next three months. These days of action have continued to be a success, the latest being held being in Tiptree with further events already planned for the future. The Partnership is looking to refresh the days of action concept as they have been operating for six years.

Another success this year was Colchester being awarded the Purple Flag status, for its management of the night time economy. A reassessment for this important status is due in the near future. Councillor Young also highlighted that he is the Council's representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel. During the course of the year, the issue of part-night lighting was taken to the Panel for discussion, particularly around the concerns of increasing the crime rates.

The Partnership has also been working together to tackle street drinking in the town centre. The 'Reduce the Strength Campaign' is progressing, which focuses on retailers not stocking super strength alcohol. A number of retailers have signed up to the initiative; however there is some concern from the smaller retailers that it may damage their sales. Information from Ipswich and Suffolk, who have implemented the campaign show that once the branding and marketing of the campaign has taken hold the custom has not fallen for those smaller retailers.

Councillor Young summarised his presentation stating that the Partnership has a number of good initiatives and a good track record, but there is still work to do to maintain Colchester as a safe Borough.

Pamela Donnelly

Pamela Donnelly briefly highlighted the Domestic Homicide Review which took place earlier this year, chaired by Major Grinonneau. A Domestic Homicide Review is a requirement by the Home Office, and the completed report was submitted in May this year. Within the last few days a request for further information has been received from the Home Office which will be responded to shortly. Further details of the review will not be available until the Home Office has given permission that they can be disclosed. Pamela Donnelly also announced that in response to another investigation another Domestic Homicide Review would now be undertaken.

Councillor Pearson questioned whether there had been any representation to Central Government as to the cost of holding Domestic Homicide Reviews.

In response Pamela Donnelly stated that for the last Homicide Review Major Adrian Grinonneau chaired the review at no cost to the Council, and the Partnership had set a provision with the budget for both of the reviews.

Richard Phillibrown

Richard Phillibrown then presented information regarding the Police statistics and events over the past year.

The new policing structure was highlighted, with the 400 officers in response and patrol teams remaining, and the 100 specialist officers moving from specialist units to local policing. For Colchester, this means that the response and patrol teams that were based at Stanway have now moved to Colchester Police Station, joining the neighbourhood crime teams that already work from this station. Historically the response and patrol teams attended the initial call outs, with the neighbourhood crime team picking up any subsequent investigation. This is now provided by the amalgamated team called the Local Policing Team which works twenty four hours a day and consists of 5 Inspectors, 10 Sergeants and 75 Constables, which operates over the whole district.

As part of the new structure there is also the Neighbourhood Policing Team Inspector role to which Sharn Taylor has been appointed. Under her command the Neighbourhood Policing Team consists of two Sergeants, eight Constables and 28 Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's). In addition, there is also the Town team which consists of one sergeant and two to six constables. Sharn Taylor also manages the partnership hub which includes the:

- Licensing Officer
- Crime Prevention Officer
- Watch Coordinator
- Areas of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Youth Engagement
- Engagement with Community Safety Partnership, Colchester Borough Council and Zone Wardens.

With regard to the most recent murder enquiry, officers from across the Eastern region have been helping with the investigation, with particular assistance from Kent. Essex Police are working with the serious crime directorate to commit resources and have over 50 detectives working each day in Colchester in addition to the normal number working in the town.

As part of this investigation it is important to ensure that the public are reassured, as the fear of crime increases the rate of crime, and as part of Operation Echo support has been given from the eastern region and the local Council. Following the most recent murder Colchester crime levels rose to over a 10% year on year increase, this included an increase in racially aggravated crime.

The Essex Police Service believes that information relating to the murder is still located in Colchester. There are a number of key lines of inquiry that focus on analysis of CCTV, forensics, and inquiries with returning students at Essex University. The investigation is also in contact with Nahid Almanea's family in Saudi Arabia. Overall there have been 3,226 investigative actions, 1,072 witness statements, over 1,000 house to house enquiries and 4,404 exhibits seized.

The latest figures for other key areas of crime in Colchester highlight an increase of 10% year on year in 'other' burglary. In reaction to this Operation Homeguard has been deployed to target specific areas, with groups of local volunteers providing information to residents. These local volunteers provide an effective presence wearing hi-vis jackets, and can be deployed quickly. Another recent campaign is Operation Ragwort, where the Crime Prevention Officer is helping to distribute alarms for sheds and outbuildings which have been funded by the Safer Partnership.

In these key areas of emerging crime, the Police are looking to involve more of the partnership through tactical briefings targeting the offenders. This will help to engage with the Council and Zone Wardens to deliver more against people harming local communities.

In terms of criminal damage, the Police are constructing a graffiti database, identifying where the graffiti is most likely such as routes out of town during the evening. There is also a significant amount of work done in schools with youth engagement officers including presentations, and identifying tags on school property.

For violent crime, there are different areas of categorisation, in Colchester 40% of violent crime is domestic orientated, 40% is related to the night-time economy, and 20% categorised as other. As part of the changes to policing structure implemented on the 1st of September, there are now domestic abuse teams in each district across Essex, with one based in Colchester. This has been implemented to help professionalise the investigations and improve the success rate of convictions.

The following issues were identified by Councillors:

- Councillor Davies – Has the Domestic Abuse Protection order been successful; could the Committee have further information about Operation Homeguard?
- Councillor Pearson – Have the shed alarms as part of Operation Ragwort been advertised? Questioned the figures presented by Richard Phillibrown comparing the percentages with the actual figure in regards to burglary, and the levels of violent crime.

- Councillor Cable – Has the part night lighting affected the crime rates? Has there been a decrease in the publicity of knife crime? What are the plans to help prevent the issues of street drinkers at St Botolphs priory?
- Councillor Higgins - Asked for further information about St Botolphs Priory, and whether the CCTV in that location was operational.
- Councillor Harrington – Questioned the implementation and success of Section 222 Orders in use at St Botolphs Priory.
- Councillor Davies – How successful was the ‘Reduce the Strength’ conference?
- Councillor Graham – Asked for information about the link between crime and mental health, and the work undertaken by the Partnership.
- Councillor Davies – Have Williams and Griffins committed to providing a donation to the SOS Bus?
- Councillor Hayes – Asked for information on the level of drug dealing in Colchester.
- Councillor Harrington – What measures are the partnership undertaking in preventing child abuse?
- Councillor Graham – Asked for information about internet based crime, in particular financial fraud affecting residents in Colchester.
- Councillor Pearson – Queried the yearly budget of the partnership.
- Councillor Davies – Has there been a good uptake on the use of polycarbonate glasses in drinking establishments in the town centre? Councillor Davies also queried the proposals for the attendance of the Police at NAPS meetings.

Pamela Donnelly, Richard Phillibrown, Councillor Tim Young and other members of the partnership provided the following responses to issues raised by Councillors:

- Colchester has the highest implementation rate for Domestic abuse protection in the country. The order has proved successful, providing a short term ban of a maximum of 28 days. This prevents a previous situation where, once bailed, those who have been arrested for Domestic Abuse may have returned to the same environment. This has previously resulted in the victim feeling unsafe, and occasionally the original statement being retracted. Operation Homeguard has been deployed across Colchester. There are currently 15 volunteers, with more being sought. The most recent campaign focused upon vehicle crime in Mersea, where the presence and advice of the volunteers to residents helped stopped the crime taking place.
- The alarms are provided in targeted areas, and are adapted rape alarms which are then installed in sheds and outbuildings. With regard to the increase in ‘other’ burglaries of 10% year on year, this equates to a total of 27 offences. Detailed analysis shows the majority of burglaries occur on those empty properties, as dwelling burglaries are down by 17%. With regards to violent crime, this may be due to the increasing resources undertaken across the town, which in turn increases accuracy levels and reporting. As of today, with the latest figures there is a 3% increase year on year of violent crime. In regards to the night time economy there is further work being undertaken with licensing, and the figures for shop lifting are below this current year’s figures.
- It is too early to produce conclusive evidence on whether the part night lighting has affected the crime rates. It is difficult to differentiate between whether the reason behind the crime is due to the lights being off, or if there is a decrease the potential crimes as more people use taxi’s to get home from the town centre. The part night lighting decision is one taken by Essex County Council, but the District Commander does have the ability to switch on the lights for evidence gathering purposes. In St Botolphs Priory, a lot of effort has been place into moving the street drinkers away from the area, and Colchester is one of two areas to have the Section 222 powers. This order places a restriction on the street drinker from drinking in that location. The Police have designated an officer to be responsible for that location in order to reduce the number of offenders. With regard to knife crime, there have been campaigns, including Amnesty Bins, and those from charitable organisations such as ‘Only Cowards Carry’. Sharn Taylor the NPT inspector then highlighted to the Committee

that there had been a knife crime incident earlier that day in Wivenhoe. Between August 2013 and August 2014, knife crime in Colchester had reduced by 3 incidents equating to 2.42% decrease.

- The dedicated officer for the St Botolphs Priory area began on the 1 September, and the CCTV is in operation at that location.
- The Section 222 Orders are intended as a staged process, in order to help those drinking in public spaces. They are enforced to help support individuals back into housing, and Colchester currently has ordered two sentences. Sue Nice from Colchester Borough Homes highlighted that the Section 222 orders were obtained by CBH and form a support package for individuals as moving the problem elsewhere doesn't help the situation. Working closely with Zone Wardens and the Police to help. Anna Trudgian from Open Road stated that those street drinkers are complex individuals, with diverse backgrounds requiring support. Overall 21 street drinkers have been referred into other agencies.
- The 'Reduce the Strength' conference has been delayed and will now take place on the 18th of November.
- The SCP will continue to work with health organisations as they are very important partners. Pam Donnelly stated that health partners are statutory partners, and there will be further communication to improve the attendance. Sharn Taylor stated that from October there will be a mental health worker located at Colchester Police station.
- Sarah Wright from Open Road stated that there had been no update on the contribution from Williams and Griffin, but the Chief Executive had committed to a date to attend the SOS bus.
- The level of drug dealing in Colchester is comparatively similar to that of Chelmsford, but lower than in Southend and Harlow. Over the past year, two people were convicted with the intent to supply drugs. As part of the structural changes in the Police Force there is now a nominated officer in charge of dealing with drug related issues.
- Pamela Donnelly responded to Councillor Harrington stating that information on the work to prevent child abuse can be provided to the Panel at a later date. Martin Lucas from the Essex Probation Service stated that the Safeguarding Children's board take the issue very seriously. Richard Phillibrown stated that the Public Protection command centre for North Essex is based in Colchester.
- The local police service has a limited role in the more serious financial crime that takes place, with those that are significant being dealt with by Action Fraud, the national fraud and cyber-crime reporting centre. This particular function is undertaken by the City of London Police. Information about the impact on Colchester in relation to this crime can be provided at a later date.
- The SCP has increasing pressures on its budget, but by refreshing the ways of working and with the input from partners and help from voluntary organisations the Partnership can continue to deliver on its priorities. The current yearly budget is approximately £40,000.
- The number of venues that have adopted the polycarbonate glasses has not increased as hoped. It may be worth considering that the use of polycarbonate glasses be made a condition of a license to sell alcohol. The Partnership is eager to see them used as soon as possible.
- Richard Phillibrown highlighted the issue of the Police attending the NAP meetings is due to the number of meetings Officers are expected to attend and the limited capacity. The proposals are for Police Officers to attend 5 meetings across Colchester, but this is developing and ways to make this new method work are open to debate.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Crime and Disorder Committee thank the Safer Colchester Partnership for attending the meeting and presenting the report.
- ii) details of Operation Homeguard be sent to all Councillors on the authority.
- iii) feedback from Councillor Hayes' pre-submitted questions be distributed to all Councillors on the Committee

- iv) an update on the funding of the SOS bus is provided to the Committee in due course, and the Crime and Disorder Committee to write to the Chief Executive of the SOS bus highlighted the successful work undertaken.
- v) Information on the figures of internet based crime be circulated to the Committee.
- vi) The report of the Safer Colchester Partnership be noted.