

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

26 February 2019

Present:- Councillor Coleman, Councillor Hayter, Councillor Luxford
Vaughan, Councillor Scordis, Councillor Wood

Substitutes Councillor Laws for Councillor Davies,
Councillor Barber for Councillor Bentley

Also present:- Councillor Fox

19. Election of Chair for the Meeting

In the absence of the Chair and Deputy Chair, clarification was sought as to whether a substitute member could be elected to chair the meeting. Richard Clifford, Lead Democratic Services officer, advised that it was for the Committee to elect a chair from amongst those members attending the meeting, including any substitute members.

RESOLVED that Councillor Darius Laws be elected as chair for the meeting.

20. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

21. Safer Colchester Partnership

This interim report provided the Crime and Disorder Committee with the opportunity to review the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership during the period September 2018 – January 2019. The report was presented by Pamela Donnelly, Chair, Safer Colchester Partnership.

Have Your Say!

Parish Councillor Robin Rennie

Parish Councillor Robin Rennie attended to speak in his capacity as a member on Great Horkesley Parish Council. He raised concern regarding the apparent rise in antisocial behaviour and crime, especially within Colchester town centre. He informed the Committee that he had proposed to Great Horkesley Parish Council that it considers funding a position for a Special Constable to work within the Parish. Conversations have been held with Myland and Boxted Parish Councils regarding cooperation to provide this across the area that they covered.

Pamela Donnelly, Chair of the Safer Colchester Partnership

Pamela Donnelly confirmed that she was aware of the work being done by Great Horkesley Parish Council in this area. Safer Colchester Partnership's aim is to move into providing support for rural communities in tackling issues. An initiative will be launched to assist parish councils in identifying what support is available for them. Furthermore, the Cabinet is planning to invest in additional resources for rural policing. Pamela explained that she would discuss this with the Borough Commander upon his return to duty. She recommended that the content of the next Safer Colchester Partnership report to the Committee be widened in order to provide a briefing on this rural work. Pamela Donnelly restated the intention that there would be consideration and action taken in the future to address rural issues, to compliment and build upon Essex Police's Rural Crime Strategy 2017.

Louise Wishart

Louise Wishart attended the meeting to have her say on behalf of the Williams Walk and Dutch Quarter Neighbourhood Watch. Residents have been reassured by the increase in patrols by Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), Police Officers and Military Police. She raised the discussions held by the Committee on 11 September regarding potential uses of technology to reduce crime, noting that Councillor Lilley had committed to ascertaining the likely cost of increasing CCTV coverage in the Dutch Quarter. She requested information on any quotations received, the likely timetable for the tendering process and related decision making and whether the Council had plans to provide increased camera coverage.

Pamela Donnelly, Chair of the Safer Colchester Partnership

Responding, Pamela Donnelly informed those present that Cllr Lilley was unable to attend this meeting and had given his apologies. She explained that the Council was reviewing its CCTV coverage. Capacity being limited, it was currently not possible to add any further functionality to the existing network. Members of the Safer Colchester Partnership have been working with colleagues from Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd to explore the cost of a new, state-of-the-art CCTV system. The review is underway, and a commercial tendering process will be the next step. Further information would be provided once the current review into coverage was completed, as the current system had no capacity for increased coverage or functionality.

A member of the Committee requested clarification as to whether extra CCTV were to be installed as part of the 'Fixing the Link' Project and, if so, whether there was capacity for them on the current system. In response, Pamela Donnelly explained that the system was currently at maximum capacity, but that additional CCTV camera sites could be provisionally agreed, pending the introduction of a new system with increased capacity to manage them. She offered to provide Committee members with additional information on this, should they wish to see greater detail.

Safer Colchester Partnership Presentation

The attending representatives of organisations within the Partnership were introduced and thanked:

- Greg Keys, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- Sergeant Martin Willsher, Essex Police (Team 10)
- Inspector Jonathan Evans, Essex Police (Community Policing Team)

- Superintendent Tom Simons, Essex Police (attending in place of Chief Inspector Shaun Kane)
- Michelle Behn, Essex Ambulance Service
- Melanie Rundle, Safety and Protection Manager, Colchester Borough Council
- Sonia Carr, Community Safety Co-ordinator, Colchester Borough Council

Pamela Donnelly introduced the presentation which focused on the Partnership's work in the town centre and the Town Centre Action Plan. Future work will address rural issues, which will be reported back at a future meeting.

Superintendent Tom Simons, Essex Police

The Superintendent provided an update on work being done to investigate the murder of Carl Hopkins. A suspect has been arrested, charged and remanded. The Police believed that this crime was related to the supplying of drugs. Leads have been generated and have allowed for measures to be taken within Operation Smuggler, dealing with County Lines activities.

Regarding crime and antisocial behaviour, the Superintendent explained that he was focussed on addressing the root causes, rather than just addressing the consequences. This will involve looking at organised crime groups (including some in Colchester), County Lines activities and other areas. Violent crime has risen in Colchester, partly because of improved reporting, but also in general. The focus of the Chief Constable is to address issues relating to 'victims, visibility, vulnerability and violence'.

Team 10 is now in place in Colchester, whilst Essex-wide, 150 new officers have joined over the last 6-12 months. Funding for a further 52 officers across the Force has now been secured, with the emphasis of their work being the policing of town centres. Assurance was given that continuity is being maintained during the temporary absence of Chief Inspector Shaun Kane. A briefing for Borough Councillors by the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner is due to take place on 4 March. This will give further detail on police investment in the Borough.

Sonia Carr, Community Safety Co-ordinator, Colchester Borough Council

Sonia Carr provided a recap of the problems regarding aggressive begging, street sleeping and antisocial behaviour which had led to the introduction of the Public Spaces Protection Order in Colchester town centre, implemented in October 2017. Details were given of the Order, and the additional enforcement options which it permits for the Council and the Police. The Order will last until 2020. Good results have been achieved, but a wider mix of powers are now being looked at in order to further address begging, antisocial behaviour, drugs, street drinking and to assist information sharing between agencies.

The Town Centre Action Plan and its partnership arrangements were described. Work had been delivered, but co-ordination had been problematic. Closer working and greater communication between organisations have now been introduced and is proving successful. Hotspots of antisocial behaviour are being tackled. Developments have included:

- Longer patrols by Zone Teams, up to 9pm
- Police launching Operation Diss to support the Town Centre Action Plan
- A review of enforcement action taken

- Between August 2018 to December 2018, the fourteen persons identified as causing significant harm and distress in the town centre had been reduced to ten, through positive partnership work
- Standard operating procedures on enforcement have been laid down to give all agencies clarity and consistency.
- A strategic group has been formed to oversee the Town Centre Action Plan, communicating successes and addressing problem areas
- Short-term periods of keeping street lighting on overnight, where hotspots of criminal activity have been identified (e.g. Eld Lane)
- Street cleanliness has been addressed, with new recycling bins and the Gumdrops campaign
- Representative of the National Probation Service now participates in weekly meetings of partners in the Town Centre Action Plan

Sonia Carr briefed the Panel on Team 10, its aims and actions to address antisocial behaviour, begging and street drinking. Investment for this has been provided by the Police, the Borough Council and other partner organisations. The overall investment has been almost £600k. Details of patrols, partners in the local business community and enforcement action statistics were given to the Panel.

Examples of the communications/press activity covering progress and successes were shown to the Panel.

Sgt. Martin Willsher, Essex Police (Team 10)

Sgt. Martin Willsher provided the Panel with a case study involving enforcement action taken to address antisocial behaviour by one of the individuals identified as being most disruptive. The individual was a well-known persistent aggressive beggar who is not homeless. Initial action was to issue a Community Protection Warning against him. This was breached, which led to the issuing of a Community Protection Notice against him. Several breaches of this have now led to successful convictions. A Criminal Behaviour Order was then successfully applied for and granted. This was breached numerous times within a week of it being issued, leading to a successful prosecution resulting in a custodial sentence.

Matt Chittock, Colchester Borough Council, Zone Warden from Zone Team 2

Matt Chittock explained that the information sharing carried out within the Town Centre Action Plan, enhanced by Team 10, has been effective and disruptive individuals have been identified and addressed. In some instances, this has been to find ways to provide housing and to resolve cases of street homelessness, in addition to the cases which resulted in the use of enforcement powers.

Committee Discussion

A Committee member asked for detail on how the Police would address situations where a young person was suspected of travelling to Colchester in order to transport drugs, and whether there was a mechanism by which social services can be liaised with to ascertain if there was already existing concern regarding the individual, or to flag up the concerns of the Police.

Superintendent Tom Simons related some of his experience in dealing with such situations, having previously taken a lead role on public protection, including how the Police service liaised with social care, developing how referral of concerns are made. Where it is suspected that a minor is involved in illicit activity (e.g. the drug trade), the primary concerns are the vulnerability and safeguarding of the individual, with criminal elements of cases dealt with at a later time. A referral form is completed by the Police raising concerns. This is sent to social care who provide it to the social care team in the area from which the individual has come.

A member of the Committee raised questions regarding the 'Your Kindness Kills' campaign, specifically relating to future Borough Council actions to raise awareness of contactless donation possibilities.

Mel Rundle explained that Cllr Mike Lilley (Portfolio Holder for Planning, Public Safety and Licensing) had asked for research to be done on contactless donation schemes which could be used to handle donations to those in genuine need. A scheme was being designed in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes for implementing the roll-out of an app. The Council is mindful of the need to consult with the public, service users and residents, whilst avoiding telling members of the public what (in the Council's view) they should do and on what their donations should be spent. A formal proposal will then be put to the Portfolio Holder and then the approved scheme will be advertised.

The Committee raised the issue of mental health and wellbeing of front-line staff, especially where they are engaged in carrying out policy such as the removal of rough-sleeping items from the street. Mel Rundle informed the Committee that a standard operating procedure was in place to cover this, with direction that items should only be removed if unattended for 30 minutes or longer. This is to allow genuine rough sleepers the chance to leave their items for short periods, for example to collect food, and ensure that only abandoned items are collected. Instances had previously been experienced where possessions had been left unattended for longer than thirty minutes when the individuals were away and undertaking illegal activities.

Questions were raised about the CCTV coverage, with one member questioning a town centre location which had no coverage on the Council's network. Concern was raised that this was close to a landmark site and assurance was sought that key tourist sites and main routes should and will be covered. The suggestion was made by one member that independent cameras could be used in places with no coverage, until a new CCTV system with increased capacity was sourced and installed, at which point they could be linked up to this new system. Pamela Donnelly assured the Committee that she was able to contribute to the process for sourcing a new CCTV system and that the project team are fully aware of the community safety aspect of using CCTV, the service provided to the Police, and the anxiety in local communities. She agreed to raise the Committee's points and suggestions with the project team, such as the potential for short-term use of stand-alone cameras to augment the existing network. A response would then be provided to the Committee.

A Committee member sought assurance that the Council was working with shops selling alcohol for offsite consumption in order to tackle street drinking and be proactive in addressing the sale of alcohol to those identified as being vulnerable to this issue. Pamela Donnelly confirmed that the Town Centre Partnership were focused on reminding shops of their statutory duties, working with the licensing officer at the Community Safety Hub in the Police Station. Mel Rundle provided further detail and explained the ongoing work on this issue, intervening where individuals have been issued with Community Protection Warnings

or Notices relating to street drinking. When these are issued, details of the individuals can be provided to licenced premises, who can be asked to refuse sale to those individuals and avoid enabling criminal behaviour. Pamela Donnelly informed the Committee that Mel Rundle now had management responsibility for community safety and licensing issues, which would help ensure a joined up approach was taken.

Regarding the potential for street lights to be left on throughout the night in problem areas, a Committee member noted that Essex County Council had indicated that they would consider any requests to do this from the Police. They then questioned whether requests could be made for this in areas identified as being likely sites for criminal or antisocial behaviour. A member of the Committee further asked what plans were being made to tackle the idea that Colchester is not safe during the night. Pamela Donnelly agreed that it was not true that Colchester was not safe after dark. Despite a rise in violent crime, Colchester is still a safe place to live and work, when compared to other places. The fear of crime needed to be addressed, coming from perceptions, press and high-profile incidents. It was important for the work addressing crime to be publicised and for facts to counter perceptions, stressing the work and investment involved. Joint communications were carried out between the Borough Council and the Police to give clear messages

Superintendent Tom Simons explained that the Police need to demonstrate a clear link between lights being off and an increase in crime/antisocial behaviour, and that this could not be done at the present time. Practical benefits of keeping lights on could not currently be proved for areas such as the Dutch Quarter.

Superintendent Tom Simons noted that some of the increase in violent crime figures was attributable to improvements in recording practices, with no identified link to the night time economy, which was really well-managed in Colchester. A small group of individuals who target the vulnerable has been identified, but Colchester is still a safe place in general. Reassurance on this should be given to improve confidence in public safety.

The Committee raised the issue highlighted the role played by social media in shaping public perceptions and increasing the perception that levels of crime are higher than they are.

One member of the Committee requested details of what the County Council was doing to address the issue of County Lines, what the Borough Council was doing in co-operation with the County, and whether more could be done. Pamela Donnelly confirmed that the Borough Council had a role to play in safeguarding residents. Officers of Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes were often in a good position to identify where concerns should be raised, including when working in cooperation with members of other organisations in the Partnership.

Superintendent Tom Simons briefed the Committee on current County Lines issues and their causes. Further improvement in cooperation between partner organisations is being sought. Essex Police have invested resources in community policing and in centralised programmes, such as the Raptor Teams targeting County Lines, with a Team based in Colchester. Cross-border working is conducted with other constabularies and social care teams outside of Essex. Technology is providing additional enforcement tools and options. The increase in County Lines drug supply has been driven by the market but the Superintendent gave assurance that, where issues are identified, the Police can act effectively.

In response to questions raised by a Committee member regarding instances of begging in Colchester, Inspector Jonathan Evans detailed the process to be followed in addressing those identified as carrying out such activity in breach of the Public Spaces Protection Order. This commences with advising the individual of the breach, issuing a Community Protection Warning, then escalating to a Community Protection Notice, if necessary. The Police rely on community support through reporting incidents and supplying evidence. These are vital for prosecutions to then succeed. The Committee stressed that reporting of most incidents should not be via 999 or 111. Inspector Evans agreed and detailed some of the ways in which reports can be made online and to the Police Station or to the Council's Zone Teams. Superintendent Tom Simons praised the provisions made in Colchester to address aggressive begging. Effective Police partnership with community safety teams helps them to address residents' concerns.

The negative perceptions felt by some members of the public about community safety in Colchester were highlighted by a Committee member, who encouraged the Police to look at further ways for their work to be publicised to address such perceptions and increase confidence. Inspector Jonathan Evans detailed some of the work being done to communicate their efforts, including via engagement with communities and community safety teams. There is a focus on listening to concerns and then giving reassurance to the public. Community policing teams are at the fore of this work. The public communication of Sgt. Martin Willsher and the local community policing teams was praised by a Committee Member who advised that this should be further built upon.

The Council and Police officers in attendance were asked for details about outreach work being carried out with schools, for an update on the progress of efforts to reduce littering (using Artemis Security patrols empowered to issue fines), and for information on how Team 10 compared with past use of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

Responding, Pamela Donnelly confirmed that Chief Inspector Kane welcomed the advice and knowledge which councillors could provide in approaching outreach work in schools. This would be taken forward by Inspector Jonathan Evans.

Regarding the use of Artemis Security, Pamela Donnelly told the Committee that she would ensure that an update would be provided to members following the meeting.

Superintendent Tom Simons addressed the question about Team 10, explaining that Essex Police had in the past experienced funding cuts which had reduced front-line staff. Essex Police now had greater flexibility which has allowed for the increase in front-line officers. Most new funding is being targeted at community policing, public-facing roles and communication with the public. Sgt. Martin Willsher affirmed his confidence in the work of Team 10 and explained that there were two PCSOs on the team, with a further three (funded by Colchester Borough Council) soon to finish their training. In reply to follow-up questions from a Committee Member regarding the two-year Council funding for these PCSOs, Pamela Donnelly explained that the two-year funding had been set due to the potential for change in Council administration and direction limiting longer-term funding commitments, but that the Police required some certainty as to the Borough Council's commitment to the funding. Decisions regarding future budget decisions would need to be made by the Council early in the next municipal year. The Police investment in local policing is likely to influence these decisions.

The police officers present were asked by a Committee member whether information sharing by individuals and community groups, sometimes on social media, was helpful to

the Police. Inspector Jonathan Evans confirmed that evidence had been found that Neighbourhood Watch groups do seem to reduce crime levels where they operate, so these are encouraged. Pamela Donnelly praised the work of the Colchester Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. There has been a rapid growth in Neighbourhood Watch schemes in Colchester. Inspector Jonathan Evans detailed plans to increase communications with these Schemes.

A question was asked regarding potential ways to expand the roles of the Ambulance and Fire Services in community safety. Pamela Donnelly informed the Committee that the Chief Executive of Colchester Borough Council had recently had meetings with the new Chief Fire Officer, Jo Turton, and that the Council had given significant input into the new Fire Plan and was participating in ongoing Fire Service projects. Pamela extended an invitation to the Michelle Behn of the Essex Ambulance Service to participate in future Community Safety Partnership meetings. Greg Keys of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service was invited to comment. He explained that the Fire Service was updating its approach to community safety and engagement, focused on station-based delivery within communities. Specialist staff are available to help conduct outreach work and messaging on safety, including work on home safety and efforts to achieve casualty reduction. This new approach is due to commence in April 2019, and the Fire Service was open to suggestions for new engagement opportunities.

A member of the Committee raised reports that Essex County Council were to commit additional funds to front-line services, including £250k for addressing homelessness/rough sleeping and asked if some of this would be assigned to Colchester. Pamela Donnelly hoped that this would be the case and highlighted the Borough's success in securing high levels of funding, to address this issue, from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. She noted that the Ministry considered Colchester to be a flagship borough due to the success that has been achieved in tackling homelessness here. A team of Borough Council officers are tasked with identifying and bidding for funding, and an update would be provided to the Committee on this work.

In summary, Pamela Donnelly expressed her optimism for future work to further address community safety in Colchester Borough and highlighted the hard work and positive developments within the Community Safety Partnership over the last six months, and the shared vision held between the partner organisations. Superintendent Tom Simons echoed this and praised the Borough for its investment, planning and development of new approaches, supplemented by Police investment.

RESOLVED that the Committee thanked the Safer Colchester Partnership representatives for attending the meeting