

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1 DECEMBER 2020</b>
<b>Heading:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY REVIEW: COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICE</b>		
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>		
<b>Ward/s:</b>	<b>ALL</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>NO</b>		
<b>Subject to Call-In:</b>	<b>NO</b>		

### **Purpose of Report**

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019 and was subsequently added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/21 by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members wished to consider the objectives and remit of this discretionary service, how it works with partners to achieve these objectives, and to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and provides value for money. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the considerations during the review and sets out the recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Panel B Members.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- a) The Panel note the importance of and endorse the ongoing restructure and recruitment exercise within Community Safety, ensuring the Community Protection Service is fully resourced
- b) Full consideration is given to the equipment needs of Community Protection Officers to ensure that the on-street presence and back office support maximises efficiency in both reporting and monitoring casework
- c) The Community Protection Service focuses on four core priorities of:
  - Providing a visible presence
  - Dealing with anti-social behaviour issues
  - Working collaboratively with key partners
  - Ensuring public safety in Ashfield

whilst maintaining a flexible approach to holistic issues.

### **Recommendation(s) Cont.**

- d) As part of a wider engagement initiative, a managed consultation exercise is undertaken to understand public perception of the Community Protection Service. This would also allow the Council an opportunity to raise awareness of the Community Protection Service and its priorities.
- e) Delegate the power to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, to ensure all options are explored regarding the use of powers accredited to Community Protection Officers.
- f) The Community Protection Service continues to expand on partnership working with the Police and other key partners, including training opportunities and intelligence sharing, to ensure a more integrated approach to community safety in the District.
- g) Following the review and restructure of Community Safety, the Community Protection Service topic be referred back to Scrutiny as appropriate in 2021.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019 and subsequently added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/21 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

All options considered by the Panel are detailed in the report.

### **Detailed Information**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Scrutiny Panel B Members began the Scrutiny Review: Community Protection by agreeing a review terms of reference. The agreed terms of reference set out the review rationale, objectives, indicators of success, review methodology, key witnesses, and information required.

#### **Rationale**

By 2023, Ashfield District Council has committed to ensure the foundations for a good quality of life are in place: reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Specific actions include:

- Continue to develop effective patrol plans and priorities for the community protection team, targeting hotspots areas
- Influence operational tasking through more effective use of Council data to determine priorities and activity
- Enhance the Police and Community Protection integrated hub collaborative working through our area team approach

In approving the topic for the Scrutiny Workplan, Members of the Panel agreed the importance of ensuring that the Community Protection Service, as a discretionary service, continues to both meet its wider objectives and be adaptable to differing social challenges.

### Review Objectives

The objectives of this review will be to:

- Gain an understanding of the current Community Protection Service, and how it operates within the wider Community Safety section
- Establish the objectives and requirements of the service
- Examine outcomes and achievements
- Review procedures in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the service
- Understand public expectation of the service

### Indicators of Success

- Establishing clear service objectives that are fit for purpose
- Identifying effective mechanisms to monitor performance and outcomes
- Clear evidence of effective collaborative working within the Integrated Services Hub
- Understanding public expectations and current perspectives of the service
- Ensuring the service provides value for money
- Ensuring adequate resources are in place for the service to operate efficiently

### Methodology

This review was carried out through consideration of both qualitative and quantitative research.

- Interviewing Community Protection Officers, Police representatives and Council Officers
- Public consultation
- Statistical information regarding the service
- Consultation with partner agencies
- Best practice from other authorities, systems used, powers given etc.

### Review Involvement

It is important for a scrutiny review to be a collaborative process, inviting involvement from experts both within the Council and externally. Members engaged with the following over the course of this review:

- Director – Place and Communities
- Service Manager – Community Safety
- Community Protection Team Leader
- Community Protection Officers
- Portfolio Holder
- Leader of the Council

### Supporting Information considered by the Panel

The Council's current Community Protection Service originated as the Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service. The Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service began operation in December 2002,

established with a mission statement to: “assist to improve the quality of life for residents, reduce crime, the fear of crime, and help businesses thrive in Ashfield”.

Previously co-ordinated by Ashfield Homes, the current Community Protection Service was established in 2008 and set out as the “Eyes for Ashfield”, with the main objective of tackling anti-social behaviour in Ashfield.

Throughout the review, Members of the Panel were focussed on ensuring that the objectives of the service remained clear, effective case management continues to support and inform the operational duties of the service and provide a visible and collaborative role in the community.

In doing so, the Panel engaged with the Director, Service Manager, operational officers and the Portfolio holder to gain a clear understanding of the current service, individual roles, challenges and partnership working.

## **COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICE**

### Approach and Responsibilities

Ashfield District Council’s CPOs undertake a problem-solving approach to address on-street antisocial behaviour, environmental and nuisance related issues, which affect the quality of life for residents in Ashfield.

Community Protection Officers provide a uniformed patrol presence within Ashfield’s town centres and communities, spending time in communities conducting high visibility patrols, engaging with residents, visitors, and businesses, and proactively challenging perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Using both a proactive and reactive approach, CPOs follow patrol plans that include schools, parks, town centres and estates, focusing patrol time on areas that evidence the greatest levels of need at that time.

Key tasks and responsibilities of Community Protection Officers include:

- High visibility foot, bicycle or vehicle patrols across the District
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints
- Supporting victims of anti-social behaviour
- Gathering evidence and preparing statements to proceed with legal action
- Problem solving approach to persistent anti-social behaviour
- Targeted approach to geographical areas and locations
- Recognising issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

### Collaborative Working

The Community Protection Service operates within the Council’s Integrated Services Hub based at the Council Offices in Kirkby – in – Ashfield. Representatives from the following agencies are able to work within the Integrated Services Hub:

- Nottinghamshire Police
- Ashfield District Council Community Safety
- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue
- Women’s Aid Integrated Service

- The Reducing Re-offending Partnership
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Nottinghamshire Victim Care
- Framework
- Change Grow Live

The Integrated Services Hub facilitates a collaborative approach to community safety. Agencies within the Hub work together towards:

- Delivery of priorities – reducing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour
- Delivery of transformation
- Engagement
- Achieving value for money
- Improving services
- Project delivery
- Understanding communities and customers

### Patrol Plans

Throughout the review, Members of the Panel considered the importance of effective, visible patrols. Members agreed that this was a pivotal part of the service in relation to both prevention and providing confidence in the district regarding community safety.

To assist Members, the Panel discussed patrols with operation Community Protection Officers and the Director. The importance of remaining both proactive and reactive was acknowledged by the Panel.

Members further recognised the necessity to ensure that Community Protection Officers had all of the equipment necessary to ensure their own personal safety when carrying out the role and that of the public.

Community Protection Officers undertake high visibility foot patrols in hotspot areas focusing on anti-social behaviour, and issues that present risk, threat, and harm. Patrols also focus on themes including town centres, parks and open spaces, and housing estates.

The team are also expected to connect with the community and key individuals within it. This includes retailers, elected members, community voices, individuals requesting services, and vulnerable people. Officers should also provide immediate feedback on any high-risk issues identified; ensuring safeguarding referrals are made appropriately.

Members agreed that Community Protection Officers should maximise the impact that their high visibility can have within the District.

### Hotspots

The Council's Community Protection Officers have a thorough understanding of the geography and communities within Ashfield, including problematic locations in the district. Hotspots are identified based on this knowledge and experience.

The hotspots could relate to anti-social behaviour or environmental issues in town centres, estates, roads, parks, footpaths, and trails. Historically, CPOs have been assigned specific locations to manage. At present, CPOs are borderless within Ashfield and take on a District-wide role.

The Community Protection Service has maintained flexibility, ensuring a high level of responsiveness to any new or emerging issues generating a short-term hotspot are supported and addressed. Until COVID-19 CPOs attended the Partnership Operational Tasking meeting every three weeks, which incorporate victim, location and, offender briefings, as well as weekly team and geographical problem-solving meetings. The Team Manager provided the police with updates and collaborates regarding the weekly briefings and patrol plans.

### Operational Tasking and CCTV

Community Protection Officers carry airwave radios that link to the Police operational channel Page 12 and the CCTV control room. This ensures that, in addition to planned activity in hotspot areas, they can also be reactively tasked following either visual reports of an incident through the control room or through the police for low-level reported incidents.

Furthermore, all Community Protection Officers are also equipped with body worn cameras, allowing visual recordings to be used as evidence if required.

### Case Referrals and Partnership Working

Community Protection Officers attend many kinds of issues and when appropriate, some of these issues will be referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers or Complex Case Team. Such cases can often include dealing with vulnerable people with needs that will need a multi-agency approach. CPOs also undertake safe and well checks, deliver food parcels and gather evidence for caseworkers.

In considering this aspect of the role, Members of the Panel agreed that utilising appropriate technology to enable officers to make timely referrals on cases that can be picked up in an efficient manner by other Members of the Service was essential.

Partnership working was intrinsic to the Community Protection Service within the Integrated Services Hub and Ashfield Community Partnership. Members recognised the importance of ensuring these partnerships worked collaboratively and welcomed the progress of the Integrated Hub as part of a collaborative approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

In discussing partnership collaborative working with Community Protection Officers, Members of the Panel were informed that Officers found this to be highly beneficial particularly in relation to information sharing.

The officers spoke positively about the working arrangements and the willingness on both sides to work together to achieve outcomes. The airwaves radio system, shared by the Police and CPOs, was considered an excellent communication tool and allowed for requests for back up, assistance and information as required.

Members were also informed that the Council were also working with the Police to enable the CPOs to have access to their 'safe system' that would enable a greater level of information sharing to support their work further. The Anti-Social Behaviour and Triage Team Manager also attended both joint tasking meetings and Police briefings as required.

The Panel also considered the Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan, a strategy setting out how various agencies in Ashfield will work together to address crime and disorder issues and improve quality of life for residents.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to develop a community safety partnership and an associated strategic plan. The authorities specified in the Ashfield Community Partnership are:

- Ashfield District Council
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Authority
- Ashfield and Mansfield Clinical Commissioning Group
- Nottinghamshire Probation Trust
- The Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Rutland Community Rehabilitation

The Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 identified five following areas as priorities:

Anti-social Behaviour Aims:

- Increased identification and active targeting of offenders and hot spot locations
- Improved provision and promotion of support to victims and witnesses
- Increased community empowerment
- Increased positive diversionary activity
- Improved management of perceptions
- Ensuring people know how to report anti-social behaviour

Indicators of success:

- A downward trend in anti-social behaviour incidents
- Communities and residents are safer and feel safer
- Improved public perception of anti-social behaviour and connected issues
- Reduction in the number of repeat anti-social behaviour victims year on year

Protecting Vulnerable People Aims:

- Increased identification and support for vulnerable residents and victims
- Improved early help support mechanisms
- Improved multi-agency awareness and prevention programmes
- Increased proactive response to emerging and high-risk vulnerability concerns
- Improved early intervention and community based assistance
- Enhanced awareness of violent extremism and hate crime

#### Working Times/Hours of Community Protection Officers

Community Protection Officers form the high visibility uniformed service operating between 8am and 10pm, seven days per week. There are 10 CPOs on the establishment, this equates to 50 shifts over the seven-day period covering 14 hours per day.

The CPOs contract allows CPOs to work between 7am and 12pm with a four-week notice period for shift pattern changes. The service benefits from the goodwill of officers to change their shift pattern at late notice on occasions to accommodate service and community needs.

## Mobility of Community Protection Officers

CPOs were based in the localities they served when the service first started at Police stations and are now based at Kirkby Council Offices. CPOs have one dedicated CPO vehicle, use the IT vehicle (566) most days/evenings, and utilise a van (520) from the depot Friday evening to Sunday evening.

## Area based Community Protection Officers

When the service originally started, 16 CPOs covered the district and were ward based (16 wards) and predominantly worked evenings and weekends. The same challenge exists today as per when the service first started regarding coverage on rest days, holidays and sickness when having area-based CPOs.

Equally, without having area-based CPOs there is a challenge in recognising the perpetrators (by only coming into contact periodically rather than daily); of building community intelligence and confidence with residents who may not report without dedicated officer support.

Members were further informed about the priority areas in the District:

- Sutton Town Centre - One dedicated Community Protection Officer.
- Leamington Estate - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers Sutton on a demand request basis).
- Carsic Estate - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers Sutton on a demand request basis).
- Kirkby East (Coxmoor) - Two concentrated Community Protection Officers (also cover Kirkby on a demand request basis).
- Hucknall East (Butlers Hill and Broomhill) - Two concentrated Community Protection Officers (also cover the rest of Hucknall/Rural on a demand request basis).
- Hucknall Town Centre - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers the rest of Hucknall on a demand request basis).

A recent change to the Community Protection Service was introducing a 'duty CPO' to receive demands, allocate or undertake initial visits and problem solving.

## Community Protection Officer Powers

Members agreed that providing Community Protection Officers with appropriate powers in the community was vital to them contributing to improving community safety in the District. The Panel acknowledged some of the powers currently vested in the CPO's, as follows:

- Require the name and address of a person who has committed a criminal offence or acting in an anti-social manner;
- Confiscate alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco from young people;
- Require the removal of abandoned vehicles;
- Require a person to stop drinking in a designated public place and leave;
- Issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering, graffiti and fly posting;
- Issue a penalty notice for disorder for:
  - The sale of alcohol to a person under 18
  - Buying or attempting to buy alcohol by a person under 18
  - Consumption of alcohol by a person under 18
  - Wasting police time or giving a false report



- Behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress;
- Housing enforcement action against Council tenants;
- Statutory nuisance powers for bonfire and noise nuisances etc.

### Triage Service and Out of Hours Response

The Panel were advised that the Council's Community Safety triage service was only operational during working hours. The service was designed to enable designated staff to assess cases as they came in and referring them to the most appropriate place i.e. Community Protection Team, Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers or the Complex Case Team. After 5.00pm, any calls/emails are diverted to the CCTV control room and are picked up by the 'out of hours' officers.

The airwave radios are still operational at these times including a duty phone that ensures contact can be made at all times to assess cases and target resources accordingly.

### Community Protection Service Restructure

Early into the review, Members were informed that their discussions and concerns would be considered as part of a wider Community Safety review/restructure. The restructure involved introducing two new Team Leader positions within the Community Protection Service, ensuring increased flexibility and improved strategic management.

Members were informed that the recruitment process for the new Team Leaders had already begun, with the first Team Leader recruited and undertaking the role already. The second Team Leader post was currently going through the recruitment process and was due to be finalised within weeks.

During the review, Members expressed concerns regarding capacity due to vacancies within the team. Following a successful open day for the recruitment of Community Protection Officers, three officers had been appointed and were due to begin training with the Police imminently. It was remarked upon that having received an offer from the Chief Inspector to undertake the necessary training of the new Community Protection Officers; it was testament to the ongoing success of partnership working by partners through the Integrated Hub.

During the restructure, it had become apparent that there was synergy between the roles of the Council's Place and Wellbeing Team and the Community Protection Service and with that in mind, a revised Service Manager, Place and Wellbeing position had been established with responsibility for Place and Regeneration, Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Community Safety.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of Scrutiny Panel B approved the following set of recommendations at the 15 October 2020 meeting. Rationale regarding the reasons for each recommendation is provided below.

*The Panel note the importance of and endorse the ongoing restructure and recruitment exercise within Community Safety, ensuring the Community Protection Service is fully resourced*

During the course of the review and as a result of the open co-operation of the team, Members of the Panel acknowledged the capacity issues due to vacancies and the structure in place. Reviewing this structure was considered pivotal in ensuring the service continued to meet the needs of the community.

*Full consideration is given to the equipment needs of Community Protection Officers to ensure that the on-street presence and back office support maximises efficiency in both reporting and monitoring casework.*

The importance of ensuring Community Protection Officers were both protected and had the capacity to efficiently log cases and referrals, Members agreed that the service would benefit from reviewing the effectiveness of current equipment with a view to upgrade as appropriate.

The Panel's views on mobile, hand-held technology to enable digital input reports and data in situ (rather than having to return to the main office) was taken on board during the review by the Director and this service upgrade had been embedded in the second phase of the Council's Digital Transformation Programme for progression.

*The Community Protection Service focuses on four core priorities of:*

- *Providing a visible presence*
- *Dealing with anti-social behaviour issues*
- *Working collaboratively with key partners*
- *Ensuring public safety in Ashfield*

*whilst maintaining a flexible approach to holistic issues.*

The core priorities of the Community Protection Service have been heavily considered by Members through the course of the review, as a key objective agreed in the terms of reference. After considering both the challenges and demands of the service, Members agreed the above core priorities. All four are considered intrinsic to the continuation of an effective Community Protection Service.

*As part of a wider engagement initiative, a managed consultation exercise is undertaken to understand public perception of the Community Protection Service. This would also allow the Council an opportunity to raise awareness of the Community Protection Service and its priorities.*

Members identified the importance of ascertaining and managing public perceptions of the Community Protection Service, as a key discretionary service. It was agreed that this could be achieved through undertaking a public consultation exercise involving residents and businesses in Ashfield but again, the new structure would need time to establish itself before any meaningful data could be captured.

This could form part of a wider engagement exercise as Community Safety works more closely with the Community Engagement team. This would also allow a clear opportunity for the Council to raise awareness of the service and its priorities within Ashfield.

*Delegate the power to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, to ensure all options are explored regarding the use of powers accredited to Community Protection Officers.*

Members acknowledge that options for optimising the use of accredited CPO powers should be explored following discussions during the review with Officers, the Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council. Finding the balance between deterrent and enforcement is crucial. This work should be completed by the Director of Place and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

*The Community Protection Service continue to expand on partnership working with the Police and other key partners, including training opportunities and intelligence sharing, to ensure a more integrated approach to community safety in the District.*

The Panel considered collaborative working with our partners and the Integrated Hub as part of the review process. Members were encouraged by the benefits that the Hub had provided so far, such as the Police offering training for the CPOs, and would consider this a key factor in improving the Community Protection Service and effectively working towards the core priorities.

*Following the review and restructure of Community Safety, the Community Protection Service topic be referred back to scrutiny as appropriate in 2021.*

The Panel recognise that following the restructure, it will take some time to be able to analyse the outcomes. Therefore, due to the strategic importance of Community Safety, the Panel agreed that it should come back to Scrutiny for a progress update in 2021.

## **CONCLUSION**

Scrutiny Panel B undertook a comprehensive review of the Council's Community Protection Service, focusing on the objectives and requirements of the service and examining outcomes and achievements. Members of the Panel recognised the wide-ranging demands placed upon the service but applauded the hard work of all of the staff, particularly the Community Protection Officers. Members were greatly encouraged to see that some of those ideas discussed at the Panel Meetings have been used to inform the review/restructure of Community Safety.

Lastly, the Panel would like to thank all who contributed to the review including the Community Protection Officers, Service Manager, Portfolio Holder and Leader. Members acknowledge both the importance of the service, the role it plays in the community and the outcomes it has achieved.

## **Implications**

### **Corporate Plan:**

Ashfield District Council's vision for a safer and stronger Ashfield by 2023 is set out within the new Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. This includes ensuring the foundations for a good quality of life are in place and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

This will be achieved through prioritising both an effective response to issues but also working on prevention and behavioural change. To achieve this, the Council will continue working with our partners to ensure people feel safe and are safe by reducing levels of crime and disorder and antisocial behaviour.

### **Legal:**

There are no direct legal implications detailed in this report.

### **Finance:**

There are no direct financial implications contained in this report.

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>Implication</b>
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

### **Risk:**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
The Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 identifies ensuring a safer and stronger Ashfield by 2023 as a key priority. Capacity, expectations, resourcing and adapting to new social issues could be viewed as ongoing risks.	The restructure of the service to meet different needs provides the mitigation necessary to the effective delivery of the service. In addition, the recommendations provided in this review suggest further options for improvements.

### **Human Resources:**

There are no direct HR implications resulting from this report.

### **Environmental/Sustainability**

There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications resulting from this report.

**Equalities:**

There are no direct equality implications resulting from this report.

**Other Implications:**

There are no other implications resulting from this report.

**Reason(s) for Urgency**

None.

**Reason(s) for Exemption**

None.

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