

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Tuesday, 11th October, 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Lee Anderson in the Chair;

Councillors Amanda Brown, Christian Chapman, John Knight, Cathy Mason, Christine Quinn-Wilcox and Paul Roberts.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Ben Bradley.

Officers Present: Jodie Archer, Richard Crossland, Edd deCoverly, Mike Joy, Inspector Glenn Longden, Alan Maher and Rebecca Whitehead.

In Attendance: Councillor Cheryl Butler, Councillor David Griffiths and Councillor Nicolle Ndiweni

OS.9 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.

Cllr Paul Roberts declared an other interest in relation to Item 4 (Crime & Disorder Scrutiny – Addressing Crime and Disorder Issues in Ashfield)

OS.10 To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 12 September 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September 2016 were approved as a true record.

OS.11 Crime & Disorder Scrutiny - Addressing Crime and Disorder Issues in Ashfield - REPORT TO FOLLOW

The Chair welcomed everyone to this extraordinary meeting of the Committee, the purpose of which was to consider crime and disorder issues in the District. Members were reminded that under the Police and Justice Act 2006, Overview & Scrutiny had the right to consider these issues and in particular, to scrutinise the performance of the Ashfield Community Safety Partnership. It was explained that the Council and Nottinghamshire Police were both members of this partnership and that the Committee would be able to discuss its work with representatives from both of them.

The Committee were informed that as part of the Council's commitment to European Local Democracy Week, representatives of the Ashfield Youth

Forum had also been invited to take part in the meeting, in order to highlight any crime and disorder issues that were of special importance to young people in the District. However, although the representatives of the Youth Forum had been keen to do this, other pressures on their time had meant that they had been unable to attend on this occasion.

The Youth Forum thanked the Committee for this opportunity and made it clear that they would be keen to take part in any other investigations at a later date. Members welcomed this.

The Committee were also informed that this meeting would be supported by Corporate Communications, who were using Twitter to provide a real time commentary of the discussion on social media.

The Council's Service Director – Place and Communities, Edd DeCoverly, along with the Community Safety Manager (Rebecca Whitehead) and the Community Protection Team Leader (Jodie Archer), then explained the work of the Community Safety Partnership and its approach to tackling crime and disorder in the District. As part of this, Members were informed that over the last five years the Partnership had developed a more strategic approach, with a greater focus on trying to bring together the different agencies to help communities feel safer, by tackling the wider problems which lead to crime and disorder in certain areas and which put some individuals at risk of offending.

The Committee were informed that the partnership had focused on five so-called 'Partnership Plus' areas in the District, where they had sought to put this more joined up approach into practice. They explained that the approach had proved successful, but that one of the lessons learned was that in order to make further progress, the Council, Police and other agencies would have to do more to integrate their activities on the ground.

The officers explained some of the practical ways in which this was already happening, including the co-location of the Police and the Community Protection Team in the Council's Kirkby Offices, which would take place shortly. They made it clear that the joint initiative to help tackle problems in New Cross was operating well and providing a model for successful partnership arrangement elsewhere.

The Committee then heard from Inspector Glenn Longden, the Inspector for the Ashfield Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team, who reiterated just how effective the partnership approach had been in the District. He explained that one of the drivers for closer working between the different agencies had been the budget reductions implemented during recent years. In this context, he explained the operational changes which the Police Service had made to help adjust to these budget reductions and to accommodate the additional demands which they now faced, such as investigating historic abuse allegations.

Members were informed that they had moved to a 'hub' model for the delivery of specific services, rather than have these located at all Police stations. It made sense, therefore, for the different agencies to work together in order to reduce duplication and get the most out of their limited resources. A lot had already been achieved, including the co-location of the Police with the

Council's Community Protection Team, and which he hoped could be built on further.

The Committee thanked the officers and discussed their comments with them. There was a consensus that the partnership approach had proved successful and a recognition that this had involved a significant culture change, so that co-operation is increasingly seen as the norm rather than the exception and for the focus to be on the wider picture when tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. This was contrasted with the time when there had been little or no co-operation between the different agencies.

Members discussed the partnership initiative to tackle crime and disorder problems in the New Cross Support area. This initiative had proved to be very effective and was increasingly seen as a model for other areas to follow. The Committee welcomed this.

There was an extensive discussion about the need for a visible presence by the different agencies in the community. The Committee made it clear that although it recognised the need to target resources more effectively, local people felt reassured by a uniform presence and this reassurance should be seen as an effective use of resources. Again, it was reiterated that the Council and the Police hoped to be able to do this by working in a more integrated way and so to maximise the effective use of resources.

The complementary roles played by the Police Community Support Officers and the Council's Community Protection Team in providing this reassurance was also discussed. It was suggested that a balance has to be struck, making sure that the uniform presence was in the right place at the right time in order to provide this reassurance in a cost effective way, rather than deployed at times and in places where they would only have a limited impact. The Committee recognised that this would be a sensible approach.

Members also considered the ways in which local people and other organisations could make a contribution to Community Safety by providing intelligence and information which might be a symptom of a bigger problem, such as Domestic Violence. In particular, Members discussed whether more formal arrangements could be put in place for gathering this information - rather than relying on ad hoc reports - involving post staff, waste collectors or those who worked in shops. The officers agreed to investigate this.

Cllr John Knight left the meeting at 7.30pm

Finally, Members discussed the focus of the partnership approach on specific areas. They received an assurance that this did not mean that other areas received a worse service as a consequence. The Committee welcomed this assurance.

A specific question was asked whether it would be possible to break down information about crime & disorder by electoral wards rather than by police beats. It was explained that for technical reasons it would not be possible to do this in a way that would guarantee the same level of accuracy. The Committee accepted this.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee thanked the officers for their contributions. It was recognised that significant progress had been made, but it was felt important that this should continue to be monitored; especially in the context of the moves towards greater integration that were now taking place and the co-location of the Police and Council teams together. The Committee agreed therefore that it would like to look again at the issue to see whether progress had been made in six months' time.

RESOLVED

That the Committee review the partnership arrangements to combat Crime & Disorder in the District in six-months' time.

Reasons

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the powers to scrutinise crime and disorder issues through the Police and Justice Act of 2006.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm

Chairman.