

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,
on Tuesday, 10th October, 2017 at 6.30 pm**

Present: Councillor Lee Anderson in the Chair;

Councillors David Griffiths, John Knight,
Rachel Madden, Cathy Mason, Christine Quinn-
Wilcox, Paul Roberts and Phil Rostance.

Officers Present: Ruth Dennis, Katherine Green, Mike Joy,
Alan Maher and Mike Manley.

Apologies: Councillor Lauren Mitchell

In Attendance: Councillors Cheryl Butler, Nicolle Ndiweni,
Helen-Ann Smith and Jason Zadrozny.

OS.11 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No Declarations of Interest were received.

OS.12 To receive and approve as a correct records the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2017

The Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2017 were approved as a true record.

OS.13 Reviewing Crime and Disorder in Ashfield - 2016/17

The Chair opened the meeting by explaining that the discussion would be streamed live through the Council's Facebook account and tweeted through Twitter. Those following it on the Internet would be able to submit questions, which representatives would then seek to answer during the meeting. Members supported this approach.

The report to Committee explained that under the Police and Justice Act 2006, Overview & Scrutiny had the right to consider crime and disorder issues and in particular, to review the performance of the Ashfield Community Partnership. The Partnership is responsible for drawing-up and implementing the District's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. It is made up of public sector bodies, such as the Council and Nottinghamshire Police, as well as representatives from the business community and voluntary groups.

The Committee heard from Inspector Glenn Longden, Nottinghamshire Police and Mike Manley, Manager of the Council's Community Protection Team, who explained the work of the Partnership and how it had sought to develop a more integrated approach to tackling crime and disorder in the District.

The Committee was informed that the Council and the Police have a closer working relationship due to the Council's Community Protection Team and the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team now working together as part of a single 'Hub', located at the Council's Urban Road offices. Members were informed that this allowed greater collaborative working in tackling crime.

Members also heard how the Selective Licensing Scheme had made it easier for the partners to combat crime and anti-social behaviour in the Stanton Hill and Sutton Central areas. The scheme required landlords to effectively manage and maintain their rental properties. This had helped to prevent disorder from occurring and for enforcement action to be taken against known offenders when it does.

The Committee was also reminded of the successful New Cross partnership initiative, which had brought together the Police, Council and other agencies to help local people deal with the range of problems facing them, so that they were less at risk of committing crime or anti-social behaviour. Members welcomed this.

Members were informed that there had been an increase in recorded crime during 2016-17 compared to the previous year. For the most part, this reflected national changes to what incidents should now be recorded as within the figures, rather than real growth in offending.

The Committee noted that the number of 'Hate Incidents' locally had fallen over the period. Members learned that across the country there had been a slight increase. The reasons for this difference were discussed. Members enquired as to whether the victims of Hate Incidents in Ashfield may have been unwilling to report that they had been attacked. The Police intend to carry out further work to try and find out if the number of Hate Incidents in the District had been under reported. The Committee supported this.

Members considered how the District's crime rates compared to the 'Most Similar Group' (MSG) of fifteen other local authorities. They learned that during 2016-17 Ashfield performed better than most other authorities in this group. The Committee noted, however, that during the final quarter of the year (October 2016 to the end of February 2017) the incidence of 'Violence against the Person with Injury' had increased.

A range of issues were raised, both by Members and by those following the meeting on the Internet. These questions covered specific crime problems, broader policy issues about how the Partnership works and the use of resources. Several key points emerged from the discussion.

It was made clear that the Partnership is committed to tackling crime and disorder problems impacting on local communities. Several examples of this were highlighted. They included initiatives to tackle off-road motor biking in Huthwaite and the work which had taken place to prevent car cruising at

Junction 27 on the M1 motorway.

The partners work closely to monitor emerging crime trends so that they can respond to them. As part of this they plan for shifts in crime and disorder patterns, such as the increase in acquisitive crime, such as burglaries during the dark winter period, as well as shoplifting and pickpocketing in the run up to Christmas.

A lot of work has gone into tackling alcohol related crime and disorder in the District's town centres, for example, by taking action against pubs and clubs which fail to prevent trouble from occurring and by reducing street drinking. The success of this approach was reflected in the figures. The number of Public Order Offences that had been recorded had more than doubled compared to the same period of 2015-16. It was suggested that had the Partnership not deliberately set out to tackle this behaviour then the recorded figures would have been lower.

The partnership approach has helped to mitigate the impact of the large budget reductions which the Police, Council and other public bodies have had to make over the last seven years. These reductions have meant that there are now fewer Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers and Council Community Protection Team Officers serving the District than in the past. The partners had recognised that they would need to work in a more targeted and complementary way in order to pool their resources so that they could collectively tackle crime and disorder with less.

Specific crime and disorder problems from around the District were highlighted, including the problem of speeding cars in Selston. Some of these cars, it was claimed, had removed their number plates so that they could not be recognised. The Police agreed to investigate these problems to see what further could be done.

The private sector is playing an important role in the work of the Partnership. In this context, Members were told that the Asda store in Sutton had provided space for police officers so that they have a base to work from when they are in the area, rather than require them to travel to and from the 'Hub' in Kirkby. The committee supported this.

The Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system in the District has proven to be an important asset, which has been used to gather evidence and ensure that effective action is taken against offenders. Members recognised that given the pressure on budgets, others would need to be involved in funding the system. The Committee was reminded that it had agreed to carry out a review of the CCTV system as part of the scrutiny work programme for 2017/18.

In discussing the Police '101' phone system to report non-urgent issues, Inspector Glenn Longden responded to a social media question from a member of the public asking why sometimes people had to wait for unacceptably long periods before their calls are answered – although others have got through straight away. These delays can lead to frustration and may discourage them from using it again. In response, it was confirmed that this had been brought to attention of the Police, and they are in the process of training additional call handlers to ensure a more consistent, speedy, response

to those ringing the 101 number.

There was a consensus that local communities should play their part in tackling crime and disorder. Members discussed work that had taken place to encourage greater community involvement. This included initiatives to try and help defuse anti-social behaviour problems, by getting neighbours to talk through any issues with each other so that they do not escalate.

The Committee also agreed that local people should be encouraged to pass on any information about crime and disorder to the Police and the Council's Community Protection Team, so that evidence can be gathered and effective action be taken. The Committee were informed of several instances where evidence gathered from local people had played an important part in enabling successful legal action to be brought.

In concluding the meeting, the Committee thanked the officers and Police for their contributions and for the questions submitted by members of the public through the Internet. It was recognised that significant progress had been made and that this should continue to be monitored. Members also agreed to consider whether they wished to make recommendations to Cabinet on the work of the Partnership following on from today's meeting. The Committee agreed that any suggested recommendations be forwarded in the first instance to the Scrutiny Manager, Mike Joy.

RESOLVED

- a) That the Committee notes the performance of the Ashfield Community Partnership;
- b) That the Committee continues to monitor progress on tackling Crime and Disorder in the District;
- c) That, if appropriate, the Committee considers and agrees specific recommendations to Cabinet on Crime and Disorder and the work of the Partnership.

Reasons

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

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

Chairman.