

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Remote - Virtual Meeting on Thursday, 18 February 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors N. D. Harrison (Chair), S. T. Walsh (Vice-Chair), M. S. Blacker, J. C. S. Essex, R. J. Feeney, K. Foreman, J. Hudson, N. C. Moses, S. Parnall, J. Paul, J. E. Philpott, K. Sachdeva, S. Sinden, R. S. Turner and C. M. Neame (Substitute)

Also present: Councillors R. Ashford, M. Brunt, T. Schofield, Surrey County Councillor B. Thomson, Reigate and Banstead Borough Commander Inspector A. Maguire, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr D. Munro.

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillor G. Buttironi with Councillor C. Neame as his Substitute.

70. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting on 21 January 2021 were approved.

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

72. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY 2020

The annual work of the Community Safety Partnership in Reigate and Banstead during the past year on police and crime matters was scrutinised by the Committee.

Chair, Councillor N. Harrison, welcomed Councillor R. Ashford (Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships), Borough Commander, (Inspector Alex Maguire), and the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner (David Munro) to the meeting. The Leader, Deputy Leader and visiting Surrey County Councillors also attended the meeting.

Councillor Ashford, the Borough Commander and the Police and Crime Commissioner each gave a presentation of their work to the Committee and responded to Members' advance questions in writing and to questions raised at the meeting.

Councillor Ashford gave an overview of community safety in the last year in the context of COVID-19 with restrictions on face to face work and prioritising the community welfare response. A Reigate & Banstead Community Safety Partnership had been established to enable a local focus and build strong collaborative partnerships. Virtual meetings had increased attendance at multi-agency meetings such as the Joint Action Group (JAG). A report on CCTV future options had been agreed and the rationalisation project had started.

Community Safety Officer, Ross Spanton, set out the joint work to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Reigate Priory Park such as fires, gatherings, damage, and disorder during the summer last year. There had been a reduction in ASB reports, engagement and safeguarding of young people and reduced calls of service and complaints to the Council and Surrey Police.

Reports of cannabis fumes impacting neighbours during warm weather and COVID-19 restrictions were dealt with by Cannabis Community Protection Warnings/Notices. A review and public consultation of the Redhill Public Space Protection Order was carried out and a new PSPO established for Redhill to run from 2020-23.

There had been a large rise in the number of domestic abuse referrals during COVID-19 and lockdown in 2020. In response to a Member's written question it was confirmed that the Surrey Domestic Abuse Partnership referral figures showed that in Reigate & Banstead there had been a 63% rise in domestic abuse referrals for April to September 2020 compared with the same period in 2019. (Between April and September in 2019/20 there had been 422 referrals and between April and September 2020/21 there had been 688 referrals).

Councillor Ashford thanked Community Partnerships team Justine Chatfield, Clare Mittelstadt and Ross Spanton for their work in delivering this service to vulnerable residents during the 2020/21 pandemic and national lockdowns.

Members raised questions and discussed the following issues:

- **Domestic abuse** – the Council provides a grant to ESDAS (East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services) to help support the delivery of local outreach support for domestic abuse victims. Council officers have been in regular contact with ESDAS who had received sustained high levels of referrals and complex cases last year. ESDAS have been supporting service users over the phone and via Zoom, and outside of lockdown, face to face. The Committee heard at the meeting that the grant funding was £21,000 which is made up of £18k for the outreach work and £3000 towards the Sanctuary scheme which provide funding to survivors of domestic abuse to have security adaptations added to their homes for their safety (after the perpetrator has left the home).
- The Council continued to raise awareness of domestic abuse and support survivors through campaigns and techniques for survivors to use whilst in lockdown and beyond, such as phone apps like *The Silent Solution* which allows survivors to dial 999 remain silent, dial 55, with the operator putting the call through to police. *Ask for ANI* was also highlighted where survivors of domestic abuse can enter Boots stores and ask for ANI (Assistance Needed Immediately) to trained staff who can ensure appropriate resources are called to the store to support the survivor.

- **Counter--terrorism Prevent national policy** – Members heard that there was continued effective dialogue with local communities through Community Development Network virtual meetings to identify concerns of people being drawn into terrorism including right-wing extremist groups.
- **Cannabis Community Protection Notices** – Members asked how these were followed up to make sure users were complying with the warnings and notices. A review and public consultation of the Redhill Public Space Protection Order was carried out and a new PSPO established for Redhill to run from 2020-23.
- **Anti-social behaviour reporting** – Members asked about ways of reporting anti-social behaviour. Advice was that crime should not be under-reported and to ring 101 if an incident has happened and 999 if an emergency is happening. There was also information on the Council's website about how to report issues such as bonfires and loud music which were environmental health concerns.

Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, David Munro, gave an overview of his work. As the PCC, he is elected to hold Surrey Police to account on behalf of residents and is responsible for the Police and Crime Plan. This includes funding and supporting crime prevention and support for victims. A total of £427,000 was awarded to over 30 organisations through the PCC's Coronavirus Support Fund. A new refuge space had been created with Surrey partners for survivors of domestic abuse. Mr Munro highlighted the further funding for additional officers and operational staff with 83 extra officers and 67 extra police staff (nearly all in operational roles) budgeted for in 2021/22.

It was reported that the vast majority of Surrey residents were abiding by the COVID-19 lockdown rules and police focus was on burglary, drugs and supporting the most vulnerable. There had been 350 Fixed Penalty Notices issued across Surrey due to Covid-related matters; three £10,000 fines had been issued by Surrey Police, including one in the Kingswood area.

A referendum had been held to consult residents on increasing the police precept element of the Council Tax 2021/22 by 5.5% with a narrow majority of residents against the proposal. The Police and Crime Panel at its 5 February meeting voted against the PCC's proposed increase but the panel did not have the necessary two-thirds majority present to overturn it.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Commander, Inspector Alex Maguire, gave a presentation on policing in the borough during 2020. The Safer Neighbourhood Team saw an increase in the number of officers and staff, with an additional 4 PCs, new PCSOs (bringing the PCSOs team to 19) and 2 youth engagement officers. The focus was on protecting the vulnerable (including safeguarding issues), targeting prolific offenders (such as those exploiting children and young people) and tackling crimes which have a serious impact on the community such as drug-related crime.

It was reported that there had been a sharp drop in residential burglaries compared to the previous year with a 57.5% decrease with 194 fewer offences; a 33.5% decrease in vehicle crime compared to 2019 with 175 fewer offences. However there had been a 28.5% increase in anti-social behaviour offences compared to

2019. There had been an increase in the number of Domestic Violence Protection Orders due to the rise in domestic abuse incidents during lockdown.

Neighbourhood officers had worked closely with council officers such as with British Transport Police and the Council's JET team around Reigate station and Reigate College. High harms crimes had led to jail sentences for burglaries in the north of the borough in Banstead and Tadworth. Up to the date of the meeting, the police had issued 78 Covid-related Fixed Penalty Notices in the borough with £10,000 fine in Kingswood.

O&S Committee Members and also Surrey County Council Visiting Member, Councillor B.Thomson, asked the Surrey PCC and Borough Commander questions on: increase in the police precept, legislation around policing heavy waste vehicles, high value burglaries of gold and jewellery affecting minority ethnic communities, action on drug users and tackling the problem of nitrous oxide use with thousands of cylinders collected from litter picks in the borough's parks and green spaces.

- **Fly tipping** – reports of fly tipping volumes had risen during lockdown with the waste, recycling and cleansing services teams working to clear excess rubbish which was an area overseen by the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services.
- **Community Speedwatch** – this scheme had proved very successful with some drivers reported for going two to three times over the speed limit.
- **'Cuckooing' and drug dealers** – Members expressed concern at anti-social behaviour during the lockdown and the lack of response from social housing providers in the Whitebushes and Earlswood areas where young people were selling drugs and taking over properties of vulnerable people (called 'cuckooing') in the local community. Two new PCSOs were joining the neighbourhood team to help target offenders in these areas and make residents feel safer.
- **Council Tax police precept increase** – Members asked the Surrey PCC David Munro about his response to the public referendum result and the increase of 5.5% in the police precept element of the Council Tax. Mr Munro said that out of 4000 people who responded, 51% were against the increase and 49% were for this increase. The Police and Crime Panel had voted narrowly to support the proposal. Members asked why this increase only equated to 10 additional officers and 66 support staff. The PCC said it was due to unavoidable cost pressures. There was a planned zero percent pay freeze, but incremental pay increases were paid to officers in a similar way to teachers.
- **Obstructive parking issues** – Councillor Essex thanked the PCC, police, and officers for their responsive and collaborative work on dealing with obstructive parking issues, including raising it with the Lead Member for Transport at Surrey County Council.
- **Drivesmart** – Members asked the Borough Commander for more information about speed management plans and policing roads such as the A25 and A23 in Redhill and Reigate.
- **Dog theft** – it was confirmed that dog theft was a rising rural crime trend across Surrey, such as in the Mole Valley area, and there were increasing numbers of social media posts about reports of attempted dog thefts in the borough. PCSOs were responding to these reports.

Councillor Harrison thanked the external guests Surrey PCC, the Borough Commander as well as Councillor Ashford and Community Safety officers for attending the meeting and their contributions.

RESOLVED – that the work of the Reigate and Banstead Community Safety Partnership in 2020 be noted.

73. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members made no observations about the Committee's current year Work Programme 2020/21. The Committee's Proposed Work Programme for 2021/22 was an agenda item for the next meeting on 18 March 2021. A Member Development virtual webinar on scrutiny, facilitated by Senior Research Officer, Kate Grigg, from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, was to take place on 24 February.

RESOLVED – that the current year Work Programme 2020/21 be noted.

74. EXECUTIVE

It was reported that there were no items arising from the Executive that might be subject to the 'call-in' procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules.

75. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

The Meeting closed at 9.30 pm