

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 23 February 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

Present: Councillors N. D. Harrison (Chair); H. Avery, M. S. Blacker, M. Elbourne, J. C. S. Essex, A. King, N. C. Moses, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. Ritter, M. Tary, R. S. Turner, S. T. Walsh (Vice-Chair) and P. Harp (Substitute)

Visiting Members present: Councillor R. Ashford

62 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 be approved and signed.

63 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Hinton with Councillor Harp substituting.

Apologies were also received from Mari Roberts-Wood, Managing Director, with Frank Etheridge, Strategic Head of Neighbourhood Services, representing the Management Team.

64 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

65 Annual Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny 2022

The Chair welcomed Councillor Ashford, Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships, Borough Commander Inspector Alex Maguire, and Michelle Blunsom, CEO of East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services, to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation on policing in the borough from Surrey Police Borough Commander for Reigate and Banstead, Inspector Alex Maguire, focussing mainly on the work concerning domestic abuse, protecting the most vulnerable from harm, empowering communities to feel safe and tackling anti-social behaviour.

The presentation used was an updated version of that published in the agenda pack, in order to show the most up to date figures. The presentation used at the meeting can be found here:

[Document Follow Up Questions from OSC 23 February 2023 | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)



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Members asked questions and discussed the following issues:

Domestic Abuse – Members commented that resources had been committed to tackling domestic abuse and asked what return was expected on the resources. It was confirmed that ideally the solved rate would be increased to 15% and that increases in successful prosecution at court, cautions issued, and the number of victims engaging with other services, would also be measures of success.

Members asked what contribution is made towards decreasing the rate of domestic abuse and harm. It was confirmed that specific periods of time had been identified for higher incidences of domestic abuse and that the Police increase their activities during this time period. A holistic approach is offered through partner working with East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (ESDAS).

Members observed that the number of domestic abuse cases resulting in prosecution is significantly lower than the number of cases reported and asked what is the outcome of violent domestic abuse cases that are not solved. It was reported that although a criminal justice finalisation was not always the outcome, every domestic abuse investigation would involve work engaging with victims and signposting them to support agencies.

Members asked how domestic abuse cases which are subsequently withdrawn are reported. Such cases would still be recorded as an offence and each case would be reviewed by the CPS who would consider whether there was sufficient evidence to charge, and even without the victim's support, CPS would consider whether they could proceed with a prosecution.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable from Harm – Members asked how many offenders move to another area following the issue of a Community Protection Notice. In the last 12 months, 40 Criminal Protection Warnings (CPW) and 6 Community Protection Notices (CPN) had been issued. One person had received a CPW and CPN for Redhill and had later received a CPW for Reigate, due to their actions in Reigate. However, after being issued with a CPW, a person will subsequently be arrested and fined every time they enter the specified area and this usually prohibits them from doing so; it has been noticed that many of the people receiving CPWs and CPNs in an area, usually decide to do other things, such as move away or stay at home, but do not return to that area.

Members asked whether the drug activity tackled by Operation Potion related to the whole of Tadworth or just certain areas within Tadworth. It was confirmed that the problems were worse in the Long Walk area. A survey of anti-social behaviour had been carried out with residents on that estate. Operation Potion had targeted drug dealers who were using serious violence against each other, which had been escalating and putting other people at risk. Two of the most serious offenders had received prison sentences. CPNs and CPWs had been successfully utilised in this operation.

Violent Non-Domestic Abuse – Members observed that the crime figures published on Police UK website varied significantly from the crime figures in the presentation. The Borough Commander was aware of the differences in reporting and informed that Committee that the Surrey Police Performance Team was looking into the issue. It was thought that the difference in reporting figures arose from differences in classification of offences, with Police UK including a larger number of offences in their groupings, for example text messages and school fights.

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Empowering Communities to Feel Safe – Members asked whether there could be a more frequent Police presence at Priory Park and Redhill town centre to act as a deterrent, rather than having to resort to dispersal orders. It was explained that there is a challenging demand for officers and whilst officers do patrol these areas, a constant presence could not be maintained. A bid had been submitted for the use of a Proactive Team consisting of a Sergeant and six officers to increase the number of patrols carried out in problem areas. The Police also work with JET and the YMCA street pastors in these areas.

Members asked for further explanation about bidding for teams. It was explained that a new Proactive Team had been established in East Surrey consisting of a sergeant and six officers, specialists in stop and search and targeting disorderly behaviour. As this resource belongs to the whole of East Surrey, areas must bid for their time at a tasking and coordination group held fortnightly.

Members then asked if there is a need to bid for extra resources, does this indicate that the resources to follow up dispersal orders are not currently in place. It was confirmed that bidding for the extra resources was in addition to resources already in place. If a dispersal order was in place, officers would already be in attendance to deal with it.

Members further asked how often the Proactive Team has been used in Reigate and Banstead. It was confirmed that Reigate and Banstead uses the Proactive Team more than most other areas.

Members asked for information about the roles of volunteers and special officers, and the plans to employ 200 new Police officers. It was reported that the special constables are an invaluable resource and are used regularly, being involved in the policing of problem areas. There are also a number of volunteers in place, taking on some of the other roles which enables officers' time to be used more effectively, which works well across the force. The Borough Commander was unaware of the specific numbers of new officers expected but commented on the challenges faced by Surrey police in retaining officers due in some part to location, as Surrey is an expensive place to live and is close to the Metropolitan police area, which attracts experienced officers. These issues are being addressed with retention packages. Although recruitment is taking place, the number of officers leaving leads to the total numbers remaining broadly the same, however, several further intakes of new officers are expected in May and July.

A Police Officer had previously been present on Banstead High Street regularly, talking to shopkeepers. This Police Officer had left and now shoplifting was increasing. Members asked whether a weekly liaison could begin again on Banstead High Street and whether a more regular Police presence could be implemented to deter vehicles parking on the pavements in Nork Way and Banstead High Street which causes an obstruction for disabled and elderly residents. It was confirmed that a new Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, PC Logan, would be in place soon, focusing on Banstead High Street and would tackle the problems mentioned. A second Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, PC Fielder, was expected in the next month to work in the Merstham area.

Members asked for details on the number of Neighbourhood Police Officers in comparison to several years ago. The Borough Commander felt that there were fewer neighbourhood officers now than there had been several years ago but explained that additional specialist teams had been created within the Police force. One of the

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priorities in Reigate and Banstead is to ensure that the response teams are fully resourced.

Members commented that the crime solved rate for Surrey Police was significantly lower than it had been seven or eight years previously and asked for the reasons behind this. It was confirmed that the crime solved rate was lower, but in the last few years, the senior team had been addressing this by implementing some of the different specialist teams, such as the domestic abuse team and burglary teams, and the different models put in place to try to improve those solve rates.

Members requested information on the number of Police officers by departments in comparison to previous years. A written response would be provided after the meeting.

Members asked whether the “detection rate” was the same as the “solved rate”. It was confirmed that this was the same; detection rate was the previous terminology which had recently been replaced by solved rate.

Members asked at what stage policing would be at the resource level that the public would be happy with. The Borough Commander would like to have a Neighbourhood Officer on every ward.

The Chair reminded members of the committee that there is a representative on the Police panel and questions could be submitted through that member on high-level aspects of policing.

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the Community Safety Partnerships from Councillor Ashford, Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships.

Priorities for the Community Safety Partnership are empowering communities to feel safe, protecting the most vulnerable from harm, responding to domestic abuse and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Work over the last year in empowering communities to feel safe included community engagement through events, campaigns, listening events, targeted talks.

Work on protecting the most vulnerable from harm included Surrey Fire and Rescue Safe and Well visits in residents’ homes, adjustments to the Safe and Well form to make it more relevant to local residents, Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Group (JAG) where intelligence is shared, bringing a public health approach to crime prevention, Healthy Communities grants such as youth mentoring in schools, a local football programme and raising awareness of drug and alcohol risks with young people and parents.

Work on responding to domestic abuse included a learning event to share insight from a local domestic homicide review, development of a Surrey-wide strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls, delivery of the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) programme with GPs, and learning from domestic homicide reviews.

Work on tackling anti-social behaviour included multi-agency meetings and work with the Joint Enforcement Team.

Attention was drawn to Serious Violence Duty, a new public health duty created by the Home Office in January 2023. This is to ensure that partners in relevant services are

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working together to share data, intelligence, and knowledge, to understand and address the root causes of serious violence. The Community Safety Partnership will be working with the Office for Police Crime Commissioner and Surrey County Council to establish a needs assessment, develop a strategy, and implement and review a plan.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships thanked the Community Partnerships team for all their work.

Members asked questions and discussed the following issues:

Anti-Social Behaviour – Members asked how multi-agency referrals are made, whether several agencies need to report information before the case is investigated and what role councillors can play in referring cases. It was confirmed that a case could be based on one individual's experience of anti-social behaviour in a location; complaints did not have to reach a certain threshold or a certain number of reports. The role for councillors would be to signpost residents depending on their circumstances, to contact the Council, via the website, and lodge a concern around anti-social behaviour. The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer would review the concern and if appropriate they would refer it to the multi-agency meetings.

Members asked what the Community Safety Partnership is doing in conjunction with the police and other agencies to tackle increasing incidences of anti-social behaviour in Redhill town centre and asked whether youth agencies could carry out preventative work. The Borough Commander confirmed that the Police are dealing with the problem through education and enforcement; dealing with the offenders and also visiting colleges, schools and youth groups, involving youth workers and the YMCA to discourage involvement in crime. It was added that if town centres and young people were found to be part of the Serious Violence Duty needs assessment, part of the funding could possibly be used in this area.

Members asked whether the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer works in conjunction with the Police. It was confirmed that the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer is an office-based case worker with specialist knowledge in the field of anti-social behaviour, who assists the Police with case-building and using the right material to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Members further asked whether the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer was engaged before or after Community Protection Warnings (CPW) or Community Protection Notices (CPN) are issued. It was confirmed that the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer's advice and recommendation for actions is sought before a CPW or CPN is issued to enable early intervention. The CPWs and CPNs can be issued by the Police and the ASB Officer.

Members commented that car cruising is increasing and noted that other boroughs have implemented cruising public safety orders to combat this. Members asked whether this approach has been considered for use in Reigate and Banstead. It was confirmed that obtaining a public space protection order is a lengthy, involved process and that other tactical options were available to address the problem, such as Operation Hubcap, with Police Officers targeting specific areas and issuing ASB letters for driving, prohibiting the drivers from returning to those areas.

Serious Violence Duty – Members asked what this would mean to the Council and its residents. Councillor Ashford explained that the duty itself does not put a definition around serious violence. The Home Office intends for different geographies across the

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country to undertake a needs assessment, to provide data and insight to understand the spikes or issues in the local area. The conclusions from the assessment will form a strategy and a plan as to what services should be invested in locally, meaning that the plan can be tailored to the needs of residents rather than having a national policy.

Domestic Abuse – Members noted the Surrey wide strategy on violence against women, but questioned what support is offered to men and transgender people. It was confirmed that the impact of violence towards women is very significant, consequently there is a targeted strategy for violence against women and girls, but there are also services locally responding to domestic abuse of male victims and other people that sit outside either gender.

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (ESDAS) from Michelle Blunsom, CEO of ESDAS.

Members asked questions and discussed the following issues:

Members asked whether there was an increase in the 16- to 24-year-old age group seeking help and asked what work needs to be carried out to further engage with this age group. It was confirmed that domestic abuse occurs across all age groups but that the growth in social media has led to an increase in abuse in this age bracket, with issues such as intimate images, the use of pornography, and the understanding of consent. Approximately £1million funding had been secured from central government to implement a public health campaign starting in March 2023 and running for two years, to train teachers in effective delivery of sex education.

Members asked what the Council could do to help ESDAS in delivering their service. It was confirmed that councillors should continue with what they are already doing and were asked to highlight campaigns to their residents.

Members asked what could be done to address social media platforms that use algorithms to target vulnerable young adults with harmful content, for example regarding eating disorders. It was reported that a consultation period was underway on the Internet Safety Bill, but that it did not contain all the measures required.

The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee thanked Inspector Maguire, Michelle Blunsom, and Councillor Ashford for their presentations.

66 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Schedule 2022/23

The Committee received the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

Committee members were asked to submit their suggestions for additional topics for scrutiny for the 2023/24 forward work programme to the Chair or Vice-Chair as soon as possible.

It was confirmed that the Review of the work of the Greenspaces Team, which had been postponed due to the vacancy for a Countryside Manager, would be added to the forward work programme for 2023/24 and would be discussed as early as possible, subject to the recruitment of a new Countryside Manager.

Members questioned whether there would be details of a plan and a financial strategy within the Leisure and Culture Strategy which would be presented at the March Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting. It was confirmed by the Chair that the

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Leisure & Culture Strategy would be a high-level strategy document and that Overview & Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to make recommendations to Executive and would be able to request a further report once the strategy had been out in place.

Although Community Infrastructure Levy recommendations would not be received by Overview & Scrutiny Committee, once the recommendations have been published, Committee members would have the opportunity to approach Executive Members and to attend the Executive meeting to discuss the recommendations.

It was agreed that the Leisure & Culture Strategy and the CIL SIP Assessment Process should appear early on the agenda for the March meeting.

It was noted that one action remained open from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12 October 2022, and the Chair requested that full responses are provided by officers in a more timely fashion.

It was agreed that three items on the action tracker relating to Commercial Assets and Asset (Re)development should remain open as full responses had not yet been received.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and the Action Tracker.

67 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 Procedure Rule.

68 Any other urgent business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting finished at 10.16 pm