

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 22 February 2024 at 7.30 pm.**

Present: Councillors N. D. Harrison (Chair); M. S. Blacker, J. Booton, G. Buttironi (Vice-Chair), J. Dwight, M. Elbourne, K. Fairhurst, B. Green, G. Hinton, S. Khan, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. Ritter and K. Sachdeva

Visiting Members present: J. C. S. Essex, P. Harp, R. Biggs, V. H. Lewanski, N. C. Moses, M. Smith and S. T. Walsh



67 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2024 be approved and signed.

68 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Baker, there was no substitute.

69 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

70 Annual Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny 2023

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Biggs, Borough Commander Inspector Jon Vale, Sergeant Rob Staplehurst, Justine Chatfield, Head of Community Partnerships and Isabel Wootton, Partnerships Team Leader, to the meeting.

The Leader reported that although Reigate and Banstead was a relatively safe borough, there was no room for complacency and that it was crucial for the Council to work effectively with local partners, through the Community Safety Partnership, to tackle community safety issues where they arise. Through the Managing Director, who is the Chair, and the combination of statutory and non-statutory partners, the Partnership is able to address issues facing individuals and local communities as well as borough wide matters. It focuses not just on addressing situations as they occur, but also on the prevention of anti-social behaviour and crime. In so doing actively preventing harm to persons and property across the area.

The Police are a pivotal member of the partnership, and the Council were pleased to welcome the new Borough Commander John Vale recently, bringing relevant experience with him from his recent post as Borough Commander for Epsom and

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Ewell. The Leader thanked Inspector Vale for attending the meeting this evening. Inspector Vale was joined by Sergeant Rob Staplehurst, who had been acting Borough Commander before Inspector Vale was appointed and is the sergeant for Redhill, Reigate and Merstham.

The Leader also thanked Alex Maguire who had been Borough Commander until the end of 2023, and is now Chief Inspector for Neighbourhoods for East Surrey.

A presentation had been provided by the Borough Commander in the agenda pack, which can be found here:

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 22nd February, 2024, 7.30 pm | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

The Borough Commander invited Members to ask questions on his presentation. In response, the following clarifications were provided:

Harassment

The Borough Commander explained that reports of harassment were often complex and protracted and that there were always two perspectives of the issue. The Police needed to respond effectively, which did not always conclude with the desired outcome of the victim. Victims did, however, have the ability to submit a victim right to review through the Police website, which would lead to a review of the Police involvement in the investigation. He added that anti-social behaviour was linked to harassment and that ongoing anti-social behaviour incidents were closely monitored, with interventions put in place where needed. It was also confirmed that the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Officer would gather evidence and, if appropriate, had the statutory powers to issue a Community Protection Warning to an individual committing anti-social behaviour or harassment, and if the behaviour did not cease, then this could be progressed to a Community Protection Notice.

Success from Epsom and Ewell

Members asked what work had been successfully carried out in Epsom and Ewell that could be replicated and be beneficial to this borough. The Borough Commander reported that he had developed effective work around Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Under Operation Shield, officers were trained to be Behavioural Detection Officers. This is a plain clothes role in the locality, especially within the night-time economy, transport hubs, and public spaces such as parks, where officers are specifically trained to identify predatory behaviours and hostile intent. This operation had been trialled very successfully in Epsom and it was the Borough Commander's intention to apply these tactics to this borough. The Borough Commander had also previously carried out work around Safer Streets and would bring that experience to the implementation of the successful Safer Streets bid for Redhill.

Communication with the Police

In response to a Member question regarding contacting the Police, the Borough Commander confirmed that staff retention, and therefore retention of experience, in the contact centre was challenging. He recommended social media as being the quickest way to communicate with the contact centre.

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In response to a Member question, the Borough Commander confirmed that the Police did not monitor social media community groups, however he would encourage councillors who are aware of policing concerns being discussed via these platforms to encourage residents to report their concerns to the Police.

Communication with victims of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The Borough Commander confirmed that it was challenging nationwide for the Police to earn residents' trust. One of the main priorities of the Local Neighbourhood Teams was to build trust and confidence through in-person engagement with communities and community groups and identifying methods of support. Victims were supported through the process of reporting.

The Borough Commander also confirmed that the Police worked closely with partners at a local level to deal with VAWG and there was a VAWG Board in place.

In cases where a perpetrator of VAWG moved to another borough, that individual would be managed via a partnership forum, such as the Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting.

Safety in Whitebushes

A Member reported that there was an issue with Whitebushes residents travelling to and from work at East Surrey Hospital, who did not feel safe, especially with a lack of CCTV cameras in the area and did not feel confident in reporting incidents to the Police. The Member expressed a desire to work with the Police to improve this issue.

Keyless car theft

The Borough Commander confirmed that keyless car theft was treated seriously. This type of theft was usually committed by organised crime groups and was being combatted by Operation Dungeon, which targeted organised crime groups, who usually came from outside the county. The Chair added that the most recent police newsletter discussed this issue, and set out some effective counter-measures for residents to take to protect their vehicles.

Priory Park

Sergeant Staplehurst confirmed that cannabis use and dealing in Priory Park had been targeted with a specific operation leading to a number of arrests and convictions, which had also resulted in a decrease in offending in this area. The Police were working with the Joint Enforcement Team to patrol Redhill and there was an intention to extend this to Priory Park in the summer months.

Diversionsary tactics to tackle youth crime

It was confirmed that the YMCA was carrying out youth outreach work in Merstham and that the Police were planning engagement, events, and activities to put in place diversions.

Clear, Hold, Build project in Redhill

Members asked for an update on the Clear, Hold, Build project in Redhill. The Borough Commander confirmed that plans and a partnership model to deliver the initiative were in place. It was anticipated that this would commence at the end of

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March 2024 and would continue to implement longer term change. It was confirmed that Clear, Hold, Build was a national project, with each police force being asked to support wider community safety partnerships in delivering these projects. It had been decided that the Surrey Police pilot for Clear, Hold, Build would take place in Redhill, partly due to the strength of the existing partnership.

County Lines

It was confirmed that County Lines was a national issue and that there was an experienced team across Surrey and Sussex to deal with this problem, working closely with neighbourhood teams and counterparts in the Metropolitan Police. Work was carried out to identify vulnerable victims to prevent cuckooing.

Rural Engagement Team

It was confirmed that the Rural Engagement Team had essential knowledge and expertise, with a Rural PCSO, supported by a wider team covering the county.

Working with Croydon Police

Following a Member's question regarding criminals coming into the area at night from Croydon, Sergeant Staplehurst confirmed that a close working relationship had been established with the Metropolitan Police, particularly in Croydon, with monthly meetings being held and the sharing of intelligence and information where appropriate.

Pavement parking

Following a question regarding responsibility for dealing with pavement parking, the Borough Commander confirmed that it was not always clear who was responsible for enforcement. Most issues with parking laid with Surrey County Council, however, dangerous parking and obstruction were Police matters. The Borough Commander encouraged reporting of pavement parking to enable the issue to be dealt with effectively.

Improving outcomes and visibility

The Borough Commander confirmed that the number of charges being brought to court was increasing.

Resources were finite and needed to be deployed where they were most needed. Instances of crime and anti-social behaviour were recorded, and this evidence-based data was needed to achieve greater resources. Social media was used well, and a newsletter was produced by a volunteer, both of which provided opportunities to reach more people. The Police were keen to identify other contacts who could share their information to the wider community. It was also important to share good news stories.

Linking crime and design measures

The Borough Commander confirmed that there were four or five Designing Out Crime Officers across the county who support in reviewing planning applications and new developments, but also to identify vulnerabilities, such as homes, premises or shops that have been targeted for burglary several times.

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Policing by consent

The Borough Commander confirmed that the Police were keen to increase general respect for the law by engagement with communities to help them feel confident about challenging low level behaviours. There was not currently any training offered for residents on challenging behaviours.

Engaging with minority communities

The Borough Commander confirmed that a significant amount of work was being carried out around seldom heard communities. However, this could be challenging if the Police were not aware of the existence of specific communities, and opportunities for engagement needed to be identified. He welcomed suggestions from Members.

Awareness of Police resources

The Borough Commander confirmed that there were a large number of Police officers within the county, with a significant number fulfilling roles that did not exist in the past, such as cybercrime and domestic abuse officers. These officers would not have a visible street presence.

Retail crime

Sergeant Staplehurst confirmed that a Neighbourhood Specialist Officer worked with the shop community in Banstead. Retail crime and anti-social behaviour had increased in the last 12 months and was becoming more of a priority. Work was being carried out to tackle retail crime and to implement prevention, and it was hoped that the success of work at Sainsbury's in Redhill could be replicated in other areas.

Youth engagement

It was confirmed that two Youth Engagement Officers carried out school visits, as well as wider engagement with young people. They offered a specific lesson package to schools for Years 4 and 7.

Justine Chatfield, Head of Community Partnerships, introduced the work of the Community Safety Partnership, which was a statutory partnership led by the Council, and played an important role in bringing together key partners to identify and tackle local community needs, setting the direction and resolving strategic issues. Within the Community Safety Partnership, was the Joint Action Group (JAG), and the Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting (CHARMM). Between the strategic group and the operational group, strong partnership working was provided in the borough. The Community Safety Partnership action plan, guided the work of the partnership and focused around the four priorities of tackling anti-social behaviour, protecting the vulnerable from harm, preventing violence against women and girls, and domestic abuse.

A presentation had been provided by the Community Partnership Team in the agenda pack, which can be found here:

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 22nd February, 2024, 7.30 pm | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Several advance questions had been submitted regarding the Community Partnership presentation. The advance questions and responses can be viewed here:

The Head of Community Partnerships invited Members to ask questions on the presentation. In response, the following clarifications were provided:

Housing Associations

It was confirmed that Raven Housing Trust, as the largest housing association in the area, attended the Community Safety Partnership meetings, but other housing associations did not attend. It was confirmed that the Council Officers enjoyed good relationships with the other housing associations and would involve other housing associations in community safety partnership matters, as appropriate.

Identifying and tackling problems

It was confirmed that communities identify problems to the Community Development Team, which are then addressed. A part time Anti-Social Behaviour Officer was in place. The number of domestic homicides in the borough was higher than in other boroughs so this was recognised as an issue. There was also a focus on providing opportunities for young people.

Fly tipping

The Leader confirmed that part of the problem with fly tipping was around educating residents about who could collect their waste, communicating the need to employ a licensed waste carrier. There was also a need for understanding of what constitutes fly tipping, for example leaving rubbish at bring sites.

JET Team

It was confirmed that the JET team worked on a rota basis and that there was currently no intention to expand this team.

How can Councillors help

The Borough Commander confirmed that regular meetings were held with certain wards for ongoing concerns, which provided more structured engagement and recognised councillors as community leaders. The Head of Community Partnerships confirmed that ward councillors were made aware of incidents in their wards. She asked that councillors contact the Community Partnership team and the Police regarding any issues that they became aware of. Community Safety colleagues and many other organisations and groups including the Police regularly attended Community Development Partner Network meetings. These quarterly meetings share information and to work together to tackle local issues. The Leader confirmed that an email address would be setup for councillors to use to contact the Community Safety Team.

Youth provision

It was confirmed that the YMCA bus was an asset that could be widely used throughout the borough in time. This was not the only initiative funded by the Safer Streets programme, other youth work was associated with the bus. Health colleagues were also talking to the YMCA about use of the bus in the borough for health programmes with schools. The Leader highlighted the breadth of youth provision

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provided by community groups and confirmed that a piece of work was in progress to identify youth services already in existence and identify any gaps.

The Chair and the Managing Director both thanked Inspector Vale, Sergeant Staplehurst, and the Community Partnership officers for their presentations.

71 Review of the Work of the Greenspaces Team

The Chair welcomed Councillor Moses, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability.

A presentation had been provided on the work of the Greenspaces Team in the agenda pack, which can be found here:

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 22nd February, 2024, 7.30 pm | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Several advance questions had been submitted regarding the work of the Greenspaces team presentation. The advance questions and responses can be viewed here:

[Document Advance Questions and Answers OS 22 february 2024 | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

The Portfolio Holder invited Members to ask questions on her presentation. In response, the following clarifications were provided:

Managing Greenspaces

The Head of Neighbourhood Operations confirmed that the Council had a good relationship with Natural England, and worked closely with them, particularly on Reigate Heath. She acknowledged that several funding schemes were available, and that the intention was to apply for any relevant funding schemes in the future.

Accessibility

It was confirmed that there were some constraints to accessibility, due to the need to apply for permission from the Secretary of State to carry out works on common land. Pathways had been installed, but the team would welcome conversations regarding specific areas that may benefit from being made more accessible.

Ash Dieback

It was confirmed that an inspection programme of one and three years for all trees was in place. More urgent inspections were carried out on trees of concern, and trees that may pose a danger to the public. One-year inspections were carried out on trees in public high traffic areas, such as on footpaths and near schools. Three-year inspections were carried out on trees within woodland areas. Trees were categorised for condition, with categorisation continually monitored. A Member suggested that the process could be communicated to residents for better understanding.

It was confirmed that there was an industry suggestion that allowing trees to repopulate would work well, and the Council was considering using this method. The Tree Officer was very experienced and would monitor this closely.

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Communication to Greenspaces Team

It was confirmed that requests from residents and response times for these issues was not recorded specifically but that data trails were recorded. A Member suggested that a metric on response times and customer service be explored in the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy.

Trim Trails

It was confirmed that there was an intention to install further trim trails.

Management Plans

It was confirmed that the variations in the content of management plans was due to some management plans being set out by Natural England, and the varying characteristics of sites.

A request was made by a visiting member for the way in which management plans are adopted to mirror that which we expect Banstead Commons to follow, namely being shared with 'warm contacts' and then the public at the draft stage for consultation. The Officer agreed to discuss this with the Portfolio Holder and respond to this request.

Wildlife Surveys

It was confirmed that although some of the wildlife surveys had been carried out some time ago, management plans included wildlife surveys and recommendations on dealing with habitats, which would show the changes in land and maintenance carried out and would inform actions moving forward. In the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy baseline surveys and future maintenance would be identified.

Mere Pond

It was confirmed that the habitat survey for Mere Pond was carried out by the Wildlife Trust in 2018 and was due to be updated in 2024. It was confirmed that the Council's engineer had been engaging with the community and the Head of Neighbourhood Operations would check that the plans to carry out a new survey and the analysis from the survey were shared with the community group.

Grass cutting

A Committee Member spoke about the advantages of tailoring grass cutting schedules to allow the growth of herbs which encouraged biodiversity. The Chair asked the Member to contact the Head of Neighbourhood Operations and Countryside Officer in writing after the meeting to discuss this matter further. Although rules were put in place by Natural England on grass cutting in some areas, the Council would consider suggestions put forward by the Member and would investigate the equipment necessary for grass collection. The Managing Director added that Members would have the opportunity to contribute to the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy. The Leader also added that issues could be brought to the steering groups for land areas.

It was agreed that a good way forward would be to have a review of the approach to mowing/management of the different sites that are mown such as verge/park/countryside with expert advice and the results in the public domain so that residents can see the balance of approaches across the different types of grass/countryside area.

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A Member commented that there was a varied approach to grass cutting in operation to suit the different purposes of each greenspace, with grazing carried out well, and congratulated the Greenspaces Team.

Hedges

A Member reported that hawthorn hedges provided a good source of food for wildlife and should not be cut back. He asked whether rotational management of the countryside areas could be introduced to allow flowering and fruiting. He also suggested planting corridors between bio-rich and bio-poor areas. These suggestions could be considered during the consultation on the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy.

Wildlife

It was confirmed that the Greenspaces Team were trained to check areas for hedgehogs before commencing mowing and strimming. The Greenspaces officer assured Members that he will ensure that operatives adhere to this practice before mowing to protect the hedgehog population.

Banstead Commons Conservators

It was confirmed that the Banstead Commons Conservators would be consulted with as part of the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy.

BMX track at Burgh Heath

In response to a request for an update on the BMX track at Burgh Heath which had been closed, the Head of Neighbourhood Operations agreed to provide a written response.

Balance of resource

It was confirmed that there was a wide breadth of resource within the Greenspaces team which could be redeployed to different areas when necessary. The Council was very grateful to volunteer groups for the wealth of good work they carried out and noted that guidance and support for this work was provided by officers from the Greenspaces team.

The Chair encouraged Committee Members with expertise in this area to liaise with officers on the upcoming Greenspaces Strategy.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and the Greenspaces team for their presentation and thanked the Greenspaces Team for their work.

RESOLVED that Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the review of the work of the Greenspaces Team.

72 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

The Chair requested that Committee Members submit to himself or the clerk any suggestions for additional topics for scrutiny for 2024/25.

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It was noted that during the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Review Panel a suggestion was made to add sewerage and wastewater as a topic of scrutiny for 2024/25.

RESOLVED that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- i) Noted the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2023/24.
- ii) Would consider possible items for scrutiny in the Forward Work Programme 2024/25.
- iii) Noted the action tracker.

73 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 Rules.

74 Any other urgent business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting finished at 10.27 pm