

Medway Council
Virtual Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 11 June 2020

6.30pm to 8.37pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Bhutia (Vice-Chairman), Carr, Curry, Etheridge (Chairman), Sylvia Griffin, Andy Stamp and Tranter

Substitutes: Councillors:
Osborne (Substitute for Browne)

In Attendance: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
James Brown, Head of Regulatory Services
Neil Howlett, Community Safety and Enforcement Manager
Andrew Mann, Partnership Director, Medway Norse
Kyle Rogers, Lawyer
Sarah Valdus, Head of Environmental Services
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

Community Safety Partnership

Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership

Cynthia Allen, Director - Kent, Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company

Acting Chief Inspector Matthew Burbeck – Kent Police

Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health

David Read, Group Manager – Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service

Paula Wilkins, Chief Nurse for Medway, DGS, Swale and West Kent CCGs

Councillor Vince Maple, Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Group

34 Election of Chairman

Discussion:

The Committee was invited to appoint a Chairman for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

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Decision:

Councillor Etheridge was appointed Chairman for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

35 Election of Vice Chairman

Decision:

Councillor Bhutia was elected Vice Chairman for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

36 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Browne, Fearn, Hubbard, Mahil, Thompson and Williams.

37 Record of Meeting

Decision:

The record of the meeting held on 21 January 2020 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

38 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

39 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Andy Stamp referred to the Annual Review of Waste Contracts: Contract Year October 2018 – September 2019 and informed the Committee that he worked for the Environment Agency. However, he was not involved in any sites in Medway therefore he was not precluded from taking part in the debate on this item.

40 Community Safety Plan 2020-2024

Discussion:

The Chairman drew attention to a correction to the recommendations set out on page 25 of the agenda in that the Community Safety Plan would now be submitted to Cabinet on 7 July 2020 and to Council on 16 July 2020.

The Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) introduced the report and apologised for the late circulation of an updated proposed Community Safety Action Plan 2020 – 2021. This document had been circulated with additional sections highlighted for ease of reference.

He welcomed feedback on the Plan and reminded the Committee that the CSP would be attending the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2020 to be held to account. In addition, he advised that work was currently in hand to reinstate the monthly Police surgeries.

The Committee considered the draft plan and action plan and the following were discussed:

- **Action Plan Priorities** - The strengthening of the 'reducing vulnerability' overarching priority was welcomed.
- **Lack of provision of targets** - Concern was expressed that the draft plan did not contain any targets and would therefore make it difficult to measure performance and hold the CSP to account.

In response, the Chairman of the CSP advised that the Partnership had decided not to include key performance indicators within the Plan or the Action Plan as issues were constantly changing. In addition, crime rate statistics were already in the public domain.

This view was supported by Acting Chief Inspector Burbeck and he requested that the Committee measure the Partnership on results rather than performance against targets.

The Chairman of the CSP agreed that it would be important for the CSP to be able to show areas of progress when attending the Committee in December 2020 to be held to account and he referred to rough sleepers and alcohol misuse as being examples whereby the CSP had led on initiatives which had proven results.

In response to the request for a table of results to be included in the December report when the CSP was held to account, the Chairman of the CSP agreed to ask the Community Safety and Enforcement Manager to take this on board.

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- **Impact of recent events on the four strategic priorities** – Concern was expressed that the Community Safety Plan and Action Plan whilst covering mental health, domestic abuse and listening to communities and partners, did not mention the COVID – 19 pandemic, the resulting recession and the community unrest and worldwide protests following the tragic death of George Floyd in the USA. It was considered that these factors should be referenced with the Plan and Action Plan as they would undoubtedly have an impact on the work of the partner agencies.

In response, the Chairman of the CSP commented that provisions of the proposed Plan and Action Plan were sufficiently robust so as to cover the potential impact of the recent issues referred to without having to be specifically referenced. However, feedback was welcomed by the Partnership and therefore if, when the CSP was held to account in December, there was a view that adjustments were required, the CSP would be prepared to consider suggestions at that time.

Acting Chief Inspector Burbeck confirmed that those issues that were of concern prior to the COVID – 19 pandemic would still be of concern when life returned to normal and would likely continue for the next 2 – 3 years . Whilst incidents of domestic violence had increased slightly during the restricted lockdown period, this had now eased. In addition, he confirmed that the priority 'listening to communities and partners' was a key element of the action plan and he was confident that this was sufficiently robust.

Aeilish Geldenhuys – Head of Public Health referred to domestic abuse and confirmed that those services and provisions outlined in the Plan would continue after the COVID – 19 pandemic. In addition, she referred to specific work being carried out both in Kent and nationally for all age groups on the issue of mental health.

Paul Wilkins, Chief Nurse for Medway, DGS, Swale and West Kent CCGs advised that it was anticipated that there would be an increase in the level and type of mental health referrals as a result of the COVID – 19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, it was likely that the way in which services were delivered would need to be reviewed but she was satisfied that the Plan covered such eventualities.

- **Medway Task Force** – The Committee praised the work undertaken by the Medway Task Force in Luton Ward.

The Chairman of the CSP endorsed this and confirmed that the Task Force would soon be starting work in Gillingham North Ward but would continue to work in Luton Ward.

- **Relationship between the new Community Safety Plan 2020 – 2024 and the former Plan for 2016 – 2020** – Concern was expressed that there did not appear to be continuity between the former Community Safety Plan covering the period 2016 – 2020 and the new Plan for 2020

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– 2024 and it was suggested that the new plan include an additional paragraph setting out achievements, elements of the Plan where work was continuing and work being carried forward.

The Chairman of the CSP accepted that this would be helpful and agreed to take this suggestion forward for the future.

- **Wording in the Community Safety Plan** – Concern was expressed as to some of the terminology used in the Community Safety Plan and in response, the Chairman of the CSP made specific reference to domestic homicide reviews whereby it had been recognised that there was a need for practitioners to exercise curiosity and ask more probing questions.
- **Support provided by the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service for Vulnerable Adults** - David Read, Group Manager from the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service supported concerns raised that the Community Safety Plan did not fully reflect the support provided by the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service to vulnerable adults. He commented that this work had been challenging over the past few months as a result of the COVID – 19 pandemic and he confirmed that the Service was particularly involved with vulnerable people in care homes and community housing. He advised that he was new in post but looked forward to feeding into the work of the CSP.
- **Crime statistics** – In response to concerns as the increasing number of crimes in Medway, Acting Chief Inspector Burbeck informed the Committee that crime statistics had increased considerably in the past 4 years across Kent but stated that this was a direct result of the way in which crimes were now being recorded. He reminded the Committee that this had been the subject of discussion at previous meetings when the CSP had been held to account. He advised that under the former crime recording procedure, a crime would have been recorded once, but under the revised method of crime recording one criminal incident could involve as many as 4 – 5 different and separate crime reports. This change had resulted in a dramatic impact upon recorded crime statistics.

This change had been a challenge for Kent Police and therefore work was being undertaken to concentrate on those incidents regarded as being ‘high harm crimes’ so that these could be fed into the CSP and shared with partner agencies to identify vulnerable individuals. This was covered within the new Community Safety Plan.

- **Gang Crime** – In response to a request for information as to the current situation with gang crime in Medway, Acting Chief Inspector Burbeck advised that a Violence Reduction Unit had been established and that the Unit worked closely with the Medway Task Force and Youth Service.

He further advised that there were no recognised postcode gangs operating in Medway and two previous gangs ceased to be active

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following disruption by the Police and partner agencies. However, former members of those gangs who were not serving custodial sentences were still involved in criminal activity. He reassured the Committee that the Police and partners both inside and outside the CSP were committed to stopping youth violence and criminal activity, and asked for the assistance of the community in reporting any concerns.

- **Population changes in Medway and incidence of drug use** – In response to a question as to whether the Community Safety Plan reflected population growth in Medway through regeneration, Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health confirmed that the work of the CSP was based on analytical data provided by officers.

Concerning incidence of drug use, Paula Wilkins, Chief Nurse for Medway, DGS, Swale and West Kent CCGs, advised that Medway had a population of older drug addicts but that deaths from within this group were not necessarily from drug overdoses but as a result of wider health related conditions resulting from drug use over a lengthy period of their lives.

- **Community engagement** – The Committee sought clarification on the wording of paragraph 2.16 of the report concerning the terminology ‘ensuring there is a systematic way of engaging with existing panels and groups’. It was confirmed that the CSP was committed to engaging on the Community Safety Plan with groups across Medway but if further clarification was required, this could be explained in more detail by the Community Safety and Enforcement Manager upon request.
- **Consultation on the Community Safety Plan** – In response to a question concerning consultation on the Plan, the Chairman of the CSP advised that had the March/April cycle of Council meetings not been disrupted due to the COVID – 19 pandemic, the Plan would have been considered by this Committee, Cabinet and Council at that time. He confirmed that the proposed plan had been shaped by previous consultation events and a further public consultation would be undertaken when it was safe to do so or by virtual means.
- **Safe places for people with mental health conditions** - In response to a question as to the future care of individuals with mental health issues who may be involved in crime and disorder, Acting Chief Inspector Burbeck informed the Committee that it was no longer permissible to use police custody suites as ‘safe places’ for people detained under the Mental Health Act unless they were already under arrest or posed a risk to the public. This had prompted the need to review how partners managed and supported people with mental health conditions involved in crime and disorder. This included paying greater attention to interventions aimed at preventing people reaching crisis point. He advised upon the availability of the ‘Safe Haven’ facility in Medway.

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Decision:

The Committee:

- a) thanked the Community Safety Partnership for attending the meeting and answering questions on the Community Safety Plan 2020 – 2024.
- b) suggested that the proposed 2020 – 2024 Plan would benefit from the provision of a bridging section between the 2016 and 2020 Plan and the current proposed Plan setting out successes and identifying areas that continued to require attention or improvement.
- c) requested that future reports to this Committee include analytical data across the board, not just related to the COVID-19 pandemic and a results comparison to enable the Committee to undertake meaningful scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership.
- d) noted that the proposed Community Safety Plan 2020 – 2024 would be considered by Cabinet on 7 July 2020 and be determined by Council on 16 July 2020.

In accordance with rule 12.6 of Chapter 4 of the Council's Constitution, Councillors Curry and Andy Stamp requested that their abstention from voting be recorded.

**41 Annual Review of Waste Contracts - Contract Year: October 2018 to
September 2019**

Discussion:

The Committee received a comprehensive report and the Head of Environmental Services provided an update on the activities carried out by Veolia Environmental Services on the provision of waste and recycling collection, waste disposal and street cleansing services and Medway Norse providing management of the three household waste recycling centres for the contract year October 2018 – September 2019.

The Head of Environmental Services paid tribute to Veolia for their performance on the Waste Contract for the past 9 years.

The Head of Environmental Services drew attention to the changes introduced by Kent County Council in the past year at their household waste recycling centres which had resulted in Medway introducing a checking system to protect free use of Medway's sites for Medway residents. She advised that a reclaim system had been introduced for Kent residents but there had not been a significant increase in KCC tonnages.

Andy Mann, Partnership Director from Medway NORSE attended the meeting to answer questions.

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The Committee discussed the following issues:

- **Waste and recycling collections** - The Committee discussed the achievements arising from the Veolia waste and recycling contract and in particular the introduction of weekly recycling collections during the contract period which had been welcomed. Reference was made to the previous problems experienced with a Christmas/New Year collection, but it was acknowledged that these issues had now been resolved and collections in the 2019/2020 Christmas/New Year period had worked well.
- **Recycling tonnages** – The Committee discussed the recycling rates over the term of Veolia’s 9-year contract and concern was expressed that the recycling tonnage rate was not increasing and was 3.3% lower than in 2014/15. In response, the Head of Environmental Services advised that the inability to increase recycling tonnage rates was a national problem. She advised that when weekly recycling collections were introduced in 2014/15, this had temporarily increased the recycling rate but this has since plateaued.

She assured the Committee that the benefits of recycling and the different types of collection services were actively publicised on social media and there had been an increase in requests for more recycling containers and services since the COVID – 19 lockdown had been introduced in March 2020. This would be reflected in the 2020/21 Waste Contract review report.

- **Employment of staff** – In response a question as to whether Medway NORSE would continue to employ staff directly as opposed to using employment agencies, Andy Mann from Medway NORSE advised that all staff had transferred from Veolia to Medway NORSE under TUPE and therefore were on the same terms and conditions, and whilst Medway NORSE recruited staff via employment agencies they were then transferred into full time employment direct with the Company. He confirmed that since taking over the contract, Medway NORSE had recruited an additional 24 members of staff.
- **Waste Management Strategy** – In response to a question about the Waste Strategy 2005 – 2020, the Head of Environmental Services advised that there was not a statutory duty for the Council to produce a Waste Strategy but there was a statutory duty to have a Recycling Plan. This was currently in the process of being drawn up and would include an investigation of all possible initiatives for recycling and would be reported to the Committee at a future date.
- **Depot facilities** – The Head of Environmental Services advised that Veolia had retained use of its depot at George Summers Close and

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Medway NORSE's recycling fleet were currently operating from a depot at Pier Approach Road.

- **Challenge Fund 2012** – In response to a question concerning funding received from the Challenge Fund 2012 which aimed to encourage local authorities to reinstate or retain weekly residual rubbish collections, the Head of Environmental Services advised that this was a one-off funding stream, but she confirmed that bids would be submitted if further funding was made available.
- **Recycling containers located in car parks** – It was identified that a number of recycling containers located in car parks across Medway advertised a weblink that was out of date. The Head of Environmental Services agreed to investigate this as soon as possible.
- **Veolia Environmental Trust** – In response to a question as to whether Medway NORSE would be taking up a charitable cause such as Veolia's Environmental Trust, the Head of Environmental Services advised that this particular Environmental Trust belonged to Veolia and therefore it would not be appropriate for Medway NORSE to provide funding to the Trust.
- **Carbon footprint** – The Head of Environmental Services advised that climate change had been included within her remit from April 2020, and she confirmed that the issue of climate change and carbon footprint would be included in the 2020/21 Waste Review report.
- **Recycling targets at household waste centres** – In response to a question, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that there were no financial penalties for not reaching recycling targets at household recycling centres. However, she confirmed that in the past year, officers had successfully achieved a recycling market for mattresses. Unfortunately, there was no longer a market for the disposal of rigid plastics. When using the household waste recycling centres, people were discouraged from using black sacks so that rubbish could be separated at the site. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that there were multiple markets available for recycling products but commented that during the COVID – 19 pandemic, many of these had temporarily closed.
- **Recycling of paint, oil and solvents** - In response to questions, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that whilst the household waste recycling centres all accepted engine and cooking oils, unfortunately, there was not currently a market for recycling paints. This was an area of recycling that was being investigated to establish whether there were opportunities for recycling paints via community painting schemes.

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- **Risk management** – In response to a question as to the validity of the risk management categories set out in paragraph 5 of the report having regard to the current COVID – 19 pandemic, the Head of Environmental Services stated that as the report covered the period October 2018 – September 2019, the risk categories were correct. However, in the light of recent circumstances these would be reviewed for the 2020/21 report.

The Head of Environmental Services also reported that during the pandemic, whilst the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres had been required to temporarily close, they had remained open for longer than many other local authority sites and prompt action to introduce a pre-booking system had enabled the sites to re-open at the earliest opportunity.

- **Date of annual scrutiny of the Waste Contracts** – The Head of Environmental Services acknowledged that this report reviewing the Waste Contracts was nine months after the end of the contract period and suggested that the timing of this report be considered when the Committee considers its work programme for 2020/21.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the contents of the report including the annual Service Reports set out at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.
- b) noted that the draft Recycling Plan would be submitted to this Committee at a future date for consideration.
- c) noted that consideration would be given to the timing of the Annual Review of the Waste Contracts report when considering the work programme.

42 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a copy of its work programme and it was noted that a schedule for holding Portfolio Holders to account in 2020/21 was in progress.

The Democratic Services Officer provided an update on the Cabinet's Forward Plan as a new Forward Plan had been published on 8 June 2020.

In addition, she drew attention to paragraph 4 of the report which set out proposals for the future scrutiny of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which fell within the remit of this Committee. It was proposed that initially SELEP be invited to undertake a Member briefing to outline its role, responsibilities, achievements/challenges and the new governance arrangements following which, an annual invitation would be extended to SELEP to attend a meeting of this Committee along similar lines to the

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Community Safety Partnership. In the meantime, the Committee could consider how it might scrutinise economic growth at a local level.

In addition, a link would be provided from the Council's web pages to the papers for meetings of SELEP's Partnership Ltd and the SELEP Accountability Board with an alert to all Members of the Accountability Board call-in deadlines,

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted its current work programme;
- b) agreed the proposed approach to the scrutiny of SELEP as set in section 4 of the report.
- c) noted that the scheduling of the Annual Review of the Waste Contracts into the Committee's work programme would be considered at a future pre-agenda meeting.

Chairman

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