

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

9 FEBRUARY 2023

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2020-2024, REFRESHED ACTION PLAN 2023-2024

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Neil Howlett, Community Safety Partnership Manager

Summary

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are under a duty to produce a Community Safety Plan to formulate and implement a strategy to reduce crime and disorder, combat substance misuse and reduce re-offending. This report provides information on the Plan, which forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, to cover the period from 2020 to 2024, and specifically the refreshed Action Plan for the coming year.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. CSPs were set up under Sections 5-7 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and comprise representatives from the 'responsible authorities'. For Medway these are Medway Council; Kent Police; Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS); Integrated Care Partnership and The Probation Service. CSPs are able to work in partnership with any other agencies or bodies that they feel would contribute to community safety.
- 1.2. Although the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is not a responsible authority on the CSP, there is a mutual duty to take account of each other's priorities and to co-operate.
- 1.3. Regulation 5 of the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007 requires the CSP to carry out an annual strategic assessment of crime and disorder (see Appendix 1). Regulation 10 requires CSPs to prepare a partnership plan and to revise it annually in consideration of the strategic assessment. The plan's overarching aim is to reduce crime and disorder, tackle substance misuse and reduce re-offending.

- 1.4. The current Community Safety Plan covers the period from 2020 to 2024 and forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. The classification of this Plan as a policy framework document is set out in Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, and in Article 4 (The Full Council) of the Council's Constitution.
- 1.5. Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires local authorities to have a crime and disorder committee with power to scrutinise the decisions and actions of the CSP in their area and to make reports and recommendations to the local authority and the Partnership. The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 require Local Authorities to scrutinise CSPs at least once a year.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Community Safety Plan 2020 – 2024 was adopted by full Council on 16 July 2020.
- 2.2. The CSP has conducted its annual strategic assessment of crime, disorder, and other community safety issues in Medway over the previous year. The assessment looks back at issues that have impacted upon community safety in Medway and forward at emerging issues, themes, and trends.
- 2.3. The strategic assessment has shown that the existing priorities and Action Plan should be refreshed as per the findings, with a number of work streams under each priority. This has been agreed by the five responsible authorities.
- 2.4. Whilst the existing Action Plan provides a lot of detail, it can be difficult to identify key actions as there are so many of them. It is recommended that rather than updating a large number of actions each quarter, agencies supply a summary of their work for each of the 4P's within each Priority. This will allow for a quick, concise, and informative update.
- 2.5. The scrutiny of the partnership, including scrutiny of the strategic assessment and Community Safety Plan, was last carried out by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022.
- 2.6. The Committee discussed the following topics:
 - 2.6.1 **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)**
 - 2.6.2 **Probation Service representation, crime rates and policing reductions -**
A Member asked why no Probation Service representative was present at the meeting. They also asked whether Medway was considered to be a safer or less safe place since 2015/16, in the context of incidents of violence having increased by 12.5%, sexual offences 22.5% and burglary 7.5%. It was also asked what consultation had been undertaken in relation to reductions to town centre and school policing teams and what the expected level of reductions to the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Medway was.

- 2.6.3 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police considered that Medway was a safer place than it had been ten years ago. Kent Police was committed to crime data integrity and accurate recording of incidents. There had been significant work in relation to safety initiatives such as work to reduce violence against women and girls and preventative work in relation to sexual offending and the night-time economy. Kent Police had faced staffing issues in answering calls and officers had needed to be reassigned from other areas. This included 35 Police Officers, 26 of which had been working in schools. There had not been time for consultation with schools and this had been addressed subsequently. It was considered that the eight or nine officers who had been working in Medway Schools had made a significant impact. As part of remodelling work being undertaken a child centred policing team would be established. Schools would be allocated named officers to maintain and build on the strong relationships previously established.
- 2.6.4 In relation to town centres, it was considered that the PCSOs based there had done a fantastic job. In future, each ward in Kent and Medway would have a named police officer and the remodelling work would see a significant increase in neighbourhood officers, the exact numbers were not currently known but there was due to be a total of 4,145 police officers across Kent and Medway by March 2023, which would be the highest ever level. It was acknowledged that call responses for the 111 non-emergency number had been unacceptable. Work was taking place to address this, including encourage callers to use a live chat function, but it was acknowledged that this was not suitable for everyone.
- 2.6.5 **Publication dates and Strep A** – A Member asked when a report looking at serious youth crime would be published and when the Combatting Drugs Partnership would publish its Needs Assessment and Strategic Action Plan. The Member also asked how Public Health was responding in relation to the current outbreak of the Strep A bacterial infection. The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that information had been provided to schools in Medway, including signs and symptoms, what to do and how to get support. Close working was taking place with the Health Protection Authority to track numbers and information being shared with partner organisations. The Combatting Drugs Partnership was due to meet in early January to agree the priorities that would form the initial Action Plan. This would be a live document; both the Needs Assessment and Action Plan would be continually updated. There was also a regular item at Community Safety Partnership meetings to share information from the Combatting Drugs Partnership.
- 2.6.6 The Portfolio Holder for resources added that the Combating Drugs Partnership, which had met twice so far, was Medway focused. The Serious Youth Crime report was ongoing work that would be published in due course.
- 2.6.7 A Member requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee to provide an update on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership.
- 2.6.8 **Vulnerable people and communities** – A Member highlighted cost of living issues and their impact during the winter. He also highlighted the good work

of the Medway Task Force and how this could be rolled up, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups and communities.

2.6.9 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police said the Task Force worked with vulnerable communities across Medway and that a challenge was to ensure that vulnerability continued to be addressed when the Task Force work moved to another area. The new Neighbourhood Policing Model moving forward would support that through use of named ward officers. Tackling vulnerability was a team effort through the Community Safety Partnership. In relation to 16 – 18-year-olds there was a focus on wider engagement with there being plans to involve more young people from groups across Medway. The Child Centred Policing Board also engaged with various groups.

2.6.10 The Kent Fire and Rescue Service Area Manager said that the Service worked through the Community Safety Partnership and through its own education programme in schools. An Early Intervention Framework had been introduced which shaped interventions with youths and young adults. It targeted those who would benefit the most. The referral routes had been commended and fire crews had received a high level of training to enable them to identify young people who could benefit from intervention.

2.6.11 The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that the Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership faced a challenge of ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors were heard. Council officers from Housing and Public Health had been meeting these groups to understand the challenges that they faced. These included the cost of living and ability to flee domestic abuse. A multi-agency conference had recently been held to understand how to facilitate access to support. Communication tools were being developed to signpost survivors to available support. An example of such support was people fleeing DA being able to access free train travel. The Portfolio Holder added that he considered that the threshold for young people being able to access mental help support from Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was too high and that the Community Safety Partnership had funded mental health mentors for the last two years through the Council's Youth Service. In response to a further question that asked how the availability of free train travel was publicised, the Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that this was promoted through Women's Aid. Public Health were producing an information leaflet which would also include details.

2.6.12 **Regular updates on progress** – A Member proposed that the Committee be provided with a six-monthly briefing note to update the Committee on the work of the Community Safety Partnership. The Director of Place and Deputy Executive agreed that this should come forward to the Committee. This would be provided to the Committee between the Partnership's annual attendances.

2.6.13 **Town centres and police responses** – A Member asked how responses to town centre incidents would be managed in the future when there were fewer PCSOs and more Police Constables. The Member also asked what could be done to help people to feel safe in town centres and considered that Police

surgeries had been ineffective. He highlighted that on three occasions he had been advised that feedback would be provided but none had been. The Member also highlighted the poor level of service that he considered had been provided by the 111 non-emergency number.

2.6.14 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police said that PCSOs had done fantastic work while deployed in town centres. It was anticipated that the new model would include PCSOs and that there would be increased numbers of police officers undertaking neighbourhood policing duties. He said that budgetary constraints necessitated the changes and reiterated that there would be the highest ever number of police officers in Kent by March 2023. There was no intention for resources to be removed from town centres. The Superintendent undertook to establish why follow up contact had not been made with the Member following police surgeries and encouraged the Member to continue attending the surgeries.

2.6.15 In relation to feeling of safety, the Superintendent said that work had been undertaken in the last year around promoting safety and making Medway a safer place. Officers were deployed in town centres on Friday and Saturday night and there had been feedback that people felt safer as a result of the work undertaken. There were numerous examples of officers having helped vulnerable people to travel home safely. The Member was advised that an opportunity was available for him to join a town centre night-time patrol, which could include attending a Walk and Talk event taking place in Rochester on the evening after the Committee meeting. The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police highlighted that the Crimestoppers service enabled anonymous reporting of crime and that further messaging of the options available could be considered. A community engagement Tool, My Community Voice was currently being promoted and further work on this, particularly in Rochester, could be considered. In relation to the 101 services, extra resources had been made available and it was considered that there had been a significant improvement in ability to answer calls. It was disappointing to hear concerns that the Police did not care about issues raised and The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police offered to speak to the Member about this following the meeting.

2.6.16 The Medway Task Force Manager (Kent Police) highlighted work undertaken as part of the Safer Streets initiative. Around £500,000 of funding had been provided for this work. This included lighting projects, the Medway Safe Spaces Scheme, which involved businesses across Medway being able to provide safe spaces for people. HollieGuard vouchers had been provided to victims of stalking and Active Bystander Training had been provided to local businesses and people working in public spaces. There had been street scene work around graffiti and rubbish removal. Extra radios had been provided to businesses. This work was helping to make Medway safer than it already was. Engagement was a significant part of the work, including with the Fire Service, the Department for Work and Pensions, Medway Council and Victim Support.

- 2.6.17 **Domestic Abuse Support** – It was asked what could be done to support people who had concerns and did not necessarily want to involve the Police and whether more could be done around prevention. The Portfolio Holder said that there had been a presentation at the last meeting of the Community Safety Partnership about remote interviews that the police were offering these to victims of domestic abuse. These took place via mobile phone. These enabled the victim to maintain privacy and avoid Police attendance at their home.
- 2.6.18 The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that victims of Domestic Abuse were not always aware that they were victims. A range of support was available, including a one stop shop, held at the Sunlight Centre, Gillingham on Tuesday mornings. A range of organisations were represented by this service. The Domestic Abuse Service, Oasis, provided a helpline and there were a range of national helplines available. Leaflets and information were also available and in November, '16 Days of Action' had seen a range of conferences and training sessions take place. A number of people had come forward as a result. Work was also taking place to embed Domestic Abuse Champions in organisations across Medway who could then signpost to support available.
- 2.6.19 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police said that the police often identified coercive and controlling behaviour during engagement with victims and that this could be investigated without there being any evidence of physical abuse. The use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders were powerful tools that could help break cycles of abuse and enable access to support services. The use of evidence led prosecutions were important as this could enable a prosecution to go forward under appropriate circumstances, even where a victim did not consent to this.
- 2.6.20 **Concern about response provided to public disorder** – A Member expressed significant concern that there had not been an effective response to an incident of serious disorder in Strood that had involved a large number of people. He expressed concern that the Police had not been willing to attend a public meeting and in relation to the attitude of an officer at a surgery he had attended. The Member advised that a formal complaint had been submitted to Kent Police. It was stated that a meeting would be held between the Police and the Member to discuss the issues raised.
- 2.6.21 **Feeling of safety** – in the context of increasing rates of offences, such as sexual offences, hate crime and theft and handling, a Member asked what action was being taken in Medway to make people feel safer. She highlighted residents being isolated because they did not feel safe to go to Gillingham or Chatham town centres. The Member also asked whether the funding for the Task Force was in place in the long term and whether there was confidence that Medway would be allocated sufficient resources by Kent Police.
- 2.6.22 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police said that existing town centre officers would remain in post until the remodel had been finalised. From June 2023, there would be an increase in the number of police involved

in neighbourhood policing of town centres and from this point there would be a named officer in each ward who would be able to work on addressing why people did not feel safe. Close working would take place through the Community Safety Partnership and Medway Task Force. The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police believed that the new model would provide reassurance and safety in communities. He was confident that there would be sufficient resources for Medway and for the Task Force.

2.6.23 **Community policing** – A Member expressed concern that the police would only have capacity to focus on serious and violent crime and that the reduction in the number of PCSOs would amount to a weakening of neighbourhood policing as PCSOs played a valuable role in engaging with the public and dealing with low level issues before they could escalate. The Member asked who would be undertaking this valuable community work under the new model. They also expressed concern that some of the older PCSOs would chose not to apply to become s police officer and that valuable local knowledge and experience would lost.

2.6.24 The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police considered that the public generally had no issues raising issues directly with Police Officers. He said that the work of the Medway Taskforce demonstrated that police officers could undertake effective community policing and that the new model would see increased resources allocated to neighbourhood policing in Kent and Medway. He considered that it amounted to a strengthening of this provision. A meeting was due to take place shortly with PCSOs to encourage as many of them to become police officer as possible. There would be a fast-track system to enable those who applied to not have the go through a full police recruitment process.

2.6.25 **Police surgeries and information from local Councillors** – A Member said that they had also had a poor experience of attending a police surgery and suggested that consideration be given to a more senior officer attending future events. It was also suggested that following the local elections in May 2023, the Police should contact local Councillors to obtain their feedback on local issues they had become aware of while campaigning.

2.6.26 **County Lines** – A Member requested information about County Lines. The Operational Superintendent from Kent Police said that there had been excellent results with drugs having been taken off the street. There was evidence of a reduction in harm due to this work to reduce drugs coming into Medway. It was suggested that a presentation could be given to the Committee in relation to County Lines. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the importance of also reducing the demand for illegal drugs in Medway.

2.7. The Committee thanked the Community Safety Partnership partners for attending the meeting and answering questions and:

- a) Noted the findings of the strategic assessment.

- b) Supported the refreshed CSP priorities in light of the strategic assessment findings.
- c) Scrutinised the activity of the Community Safety Partnership, over the past year, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.
- d) Requested that reasons be provided as to why the Probation Service had not been represented at the Committee meeting.
- e) Requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee in January 2023 on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership,
- f) Requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee six months after the Community Safety Partnership's attendance at Committee and annually thereafter.
- g) Requested that Councillors feedback their views on priorities to the Community Safety Partnership.

2.8. The Community Safety Plan for 2020 to 2024 contains four priorities:

- Tackling Serious Youth Violence and County Lines
- Reducing Vulnerability
- Reducing Reoffending
- Listening to our Communities and Partners

2.9. These priorities are discussed in more detail in the Community Safety Plan 2020-2024 (Appendix 2), and as previously noted the annual Strategic Assessment 2022 at Appendix 1.

3. Options

3.1. A protocol is in place to encourage the sharing of assessments and plans, so as to foster improved strategic alignment amongst the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Boards and CSP. Board members' comments are sought on the strategic assessment and Community Safety Plan, to inform future assessments and plan priorities.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1. There are clear linkages between health and community safety and a range of areas of congruence where health and wellbeing and community safety players can make strong common cause, such as:

- Drugs and alcohol
- Domestic abuse
- Mental health
- Tobacco control
- Health of ex-offenders and their families
- Troubled families
- Hate crime and vulnerable people

- 4.2. The CSP continues to recognise that Medway’s future success is contingent on regeneration. It is clear that benefits from growth must be delivered to existing communities and new developments and residents must be effectively integrated. The CSP is confident that the identified community safety priorities are robust and remain the right priorities.
- 4.3. This physical regeneration will only be successful if people feel that they and their families are safe. Safety is a key factor in encouraging people to take exercise, especially for children and older people. Taking regular exercise has clear health benefits, including limiting obesity, heart health, reducing the onset of diabetes, promoting a sense of wellbeing, and protecting older people from depression.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 There are reputational, environmental, economical and legal risks to the Council for not pro-actively pursuing an improvement in crime and disorder levels. This report reflects the importance of constructive dialogue with the partner organisations comprising the CSP and also the importance of coordinated and collaborative working.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Decreased Agency “buy in”	Changes in leadership, staffing or resources could reduce the involvement of key agencies	Ensure that agencies are aware of the impact of disengagement upon their own service delivery/performance. Ensure that strategic members of the CSP are made aware of any situation as it arises.	E2
A wide range of CSP objectives	Means that the CSP may be spread too thin and not have the resources to deal with all aspects so there may be gaps in service.	Prioritisation based on strategic assessment	E2
Legislation	Government guidance could change focus for CSP	CSP to ensure that it effectively horizon scans to be aware of impending legislative changes.	D3

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plans	Changes in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan.	Continued engagement with the PCC.	D3

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The CSP is required to consult with a wide variety of stakeholders in putting together the annual strategic assessment.
- 6.2. An online consultation was carried out during November and December 2021 with a further consultation held in the Summer of 2022.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has submitted his Police and Crime Plan and has proposed that CSPs be allocated a budget to use for funding activities to tackle crime, disorder, drugs, and re-offending. In 2022-2023 the amount allocated to Medway CSP was £106,460. The PCC has in previous years been committed to supporting the funding of CSPs, however we will not get any confirmation on the level of funding for 2023-2024 until the overall budget is considered and approved by the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. Currently there is no indication that 2023-2024 funding will be reduced.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
- 8.2. The Council's statutory powers are detailed in the report.
- 8.3. The adoption or modification of the Community Safety Plan would be a decision for Full Council.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. The Board is asked to note the strategic assessment 2022 and to make any comments or recommendations to the Partnership in that regard.
- 9.2. The Board is asked to note that as a Policy Framework document the Community Safety Plan 2020 - 2024 was adopted by Full Council on 16 July 2020. The comments of this Board are invited.

Lead officer contact

Neil Howlett
Community Safety Partnership Manager
neil.howlett@medway.gov.uk
01634 331183

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Strategic Assessment 2022
Appendix 2 - Community Safety Plan 2020 to 2024

Background papers

None.