

Regeneration, Culture, and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 December 2024

Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety,
Highways and Enforcement

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee are asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- All Wardens
- CCTV
- Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
- Enforcement Hubs
- Highways
- Parking Enforcement
- Parking Strategy
- Regulation – Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Enforcement (Executive Functions Only)
- Road Safety
- Street Lighting

- Traffic Management
 - Transport Strategy
- 2.2 Note: The following services fall within the Resources Portfolio, in relation to the CSP:
- Tobacco control, excluding smoking cessation services
 - Community safety aspects of alcohol and drug misuse
 - Public health aspects of promotion of community safety, violence prevention and response.
- 2.3 The CSP is made up of the following responsible authorities –
- Medway Council
 - Kent Police
 - Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS)
 - The Probation Service
 - Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- 2.4 I am the Chairperson for the Community Safety Partnership; the nature of the work of the CSP means that several areas of work detailed in appendix 1 of this report although are all community safety initiatives, involve several different council departments who are the responsibility of a number of Portfolio Holders.
- 2.5 It is worth noting that the Warden service no longer exists, the work of the Wardens has been moved into specific roles such as Street Scene Enforcement.

3. Background

- 3.1 I am pleased to have taken on Portfolio Holder responsibility for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement. I would like to thank to all the officers working in these areas for their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to delivering exceptional service to the residents of Medway, in what is a challenging financial environment across the Local Government sector.
- 3.2 Community Safety and Enforcement covers a wide range of services and teams which I have listed in appendix 1 with an outline of activities carried out in the last year.
- 3.3 Medway's Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) sets out our overarching transport strategy and includes priorities and objectives for highway maintenance, active travel (walking and cycling), public transport, road safety and infrastructure capacity. The Council receives an annual capital grant from central government for delivering transport infrastructure improvements across Medway in accordance with these priorities. Work is underway to draft a new Local Transport Plan for 2026-2040, which will provide an opportunity to engage with stakeholders across Medway to understand their priorities for

transport and to align our priorities and objectives with local and national transport policies and the emerging Local Plan.

- 3.4 In July 2023, the Council was granted powers under the Traffic Management Act for the civil enforcement of moving traffic offences. This has enabled us to progress our Safer, Healthier Streets initiative. We have installed Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras at eight key locations to enforce traffic restrictions such as 'no entry' signs, pedestrian only zones and yellow box junctions, and a further seventeen locations will be subject to camera enforcement over the coming months. Supporting the Police with enforcement will make our roads safer and less congested, in line with our transport and climate change priorities. The implementation of seven School Streets across Medway, with temporary access restrictions for vehicles at peak times, has created a safer environment for children and parents to travel to school, reducing parking problems and congestion for residents, improving air quality and promoting sustainable travel. Consultation on a further nine School Streets was undertaken in September and October, underlining our commitment to making the streets outside our schools safer and healthier for our children.
- 3.5 The introduction of School Streets is supported by our ongoing road safety education workstreams across Medway, with lessons offered to schools across all key stages, alongside our extensive programme of road safety initiatives and promotional activity. Our School Crossing Patrol Service continues to expand with new patrols joining the team to help our young people travel to school safely. There are currently 19 patrols serving our school communities across Medway, with further locations likely to be progressed over the coming months.
- 3.6 In March, the Council received a funding allocation from the Department for Transport's Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant. This funding will be used to support the upgrade of traffic signal systems by replacing obsolete equipment to resolve maintenance and reliability issues. It will enable us to fine tune traffic signals on key routes to better reflect current traffic conditions, expand remote traffic signal site monitoring, and undertake the maintenance and repair of Medway's Variable Message Sign (VMS) stock. These workstreams, which will be delivered over the next two years, align with the Council's climate response in relation to carbon reduction and improved air quality by tackling unnecessary congestion, as well as supporting a reliable public transport network.
- 3.7 I oversee the management and enforcement of 56 flat surface car parks and 2 multi storey car parks, together with on-street parking controls and bus lanes. Further details on parking enforcement in Medway is provided at appendix 1. We will continue to ensure that, as far as possible, parking is accessible, safe and secure for all users. Car parking will be an important consideration in the development of our new Local Plan, as we seek to ensure that future growth can be accommodated, but at the same time recognise the importance of managing the traffic in our urban centres and how our approach to car parking could help promote sustainable travel.

- 3.8 I oversee one of the largest and most valuable council managed assets, that has a replacement value of around £2billion. Medway's highway network is an essential link that serves every one of us, every day, connecting communities and businesses and encouraging economic growth, whilst being accessible for all modes of transport.
- 3.9 Our Highways Asset Management Strategy sets out how our highway service is delivered and how it supports Medway Council's wider policies and priorities. We remain committed to informed decision making, which is demonstrated through adopting best practice and participating in the annual National Highways and Transport (NHT) Survey, which measures public perception of the service we provide, allowing us to also benchmark against other Authorities.
- 3.10 We have submitted our bid for Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Funding which will enable us to create an on-street EV charging infrastructure in Medway, giving residents without off-road parking the confidence to switch to EV. Feasibility studies have identified suitable locations for chargers to be installed that will not impact on existing on-street parking provision and we have prioritised 132 sites for our Phase 1 installation. Funding is anticipated in late January when we will then go out to market to award a 15–20 year contract for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of the on-street EV charging infrastructure.
- 3.11 Highway Infrastructure Contractor Volker Highways have consistently met their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and succeeded in securing the maximum yearly extensions to bring this contract up to a term of 10 years, bringing the expiration date to 31 July 2027.
- 3.12 On 4 October 2023, the government announced £8.3 billion of additional highways maintenance funding, diverted from HS2 Network North. For Medway this means an additional £401k for the next two years with an additional £12.552M between 2023/24 and 2034. In the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024, the Chancellor announced an additional £500m for Local Authorities to address potholes and we are currently awaiting confirmation as to the allocation we should receive.
- 3.13 We replaced and converted over 25,500 lighting columns to LED and fitted them with a remote monitoring system that enables us to implement dimming regimes across the network. Energy costs have reduced since the implementation of LED lighting and with the discontinuance of compact fluorescent lamps, which are found in illuminated signs and bollards, we are now looking to convert those assets to LED to provide further energy savings.
- 3.14 We are acquiring AI technology through our Transformation Team known as Route Reports which will improve efficiencies for our highway inspections. Route Reports utilises 4G mounted cameras in Highway Inspector vehicles to identify defects on the highway network such as potholes, faded road markings and damaged signs which can then be reviewed and ordered for

repair. Route Reports will improve efficiencies in dealing with customer enquiries as footage can be reviewed in response to enquiries raised, thus reducing the number of site visits required, as well as providing additional functionality for quality assurance.

- 3.15 Innovation continues to play a key role in how we develop the way we do things to provide value for money and as well as undertaking trials of new products in the industry, we recently carried out a trial of Thermal Road repair, borrowing the equipment from Bath and Somerset Council who invested in purchasing this machinery for all year use on their highway network.

Thermal road repair is a low emission, zero waste permanent repair solution which repairs various defects such as cracking and potholes. The asphalt is heated and recycled in-situ with a minimal amount of new material added to create a seamless, longer-lasting repair.

4. Providing political leadership and challenge

- 4.1. I have a regular 1:1 meeting with the Council's Deputy Director for Place and with the Head of Service for Community Safety and Enforcement where I am kept informed of performance, quality and any challenges they are facing. It also gives me the opportunity to understand the strategic direction of the teams within their remit and to challenge where appropriate.
- 4.2. As Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, I can engage with my Cabinet colleagues to facilitate discussions to ensure our services are appropriate for our residents.

5. Championing the Interests of service users

- 5.1. In delivering a range of community safety and enforcement services I am conscious there will always be a variety of opinions on how such services should evolve, and I receive a range of correspondence on numerous aspects. I am keen to encourage officers to engage fully with correspondents to ensure their views are heard, even if it is not always possible to accede to specific requests.

6. Support for key service areas

- 6.1 The range of services across community safety and enforcement is so diverse I have added appendix 1 which gives an overview of the work that has been carried out.
- 6.2 Recognising the many demands on the Council's transport budgets and staff, I work with senior officers to carefully manage and prioritise our resources, focussing on locations where there is clear evidence of a need to improve road safety and traffic congestion, in line with our statutory responsibilities and Climate Change commitments. I also work with officers to identify and support external funding opportunities that will help us deliver our key transport objectives.

6.3 I am pleased to represent Medway on the strategic board for the Kent and Medway Safer Roads Partnership, working collaboratively with Kent County Council and other key stakeholders to reduce the number of those killed and seriously injured on our roads.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The services within my Portfolio play an integral part in making Medway a safe place to live and to visit. While recognising and seeking to address the current financial challenges, there are huge opportunities to provide long-term support for our residents as well as targeting those who come to the attention of our enforcement teams. I look forward to working with colleagues and partners to bring these to fruition.

7.2 I continue to be fully supportive of the service and the work which is being undertaken in challenging circumstances and am committed to supporting continued progress.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Safety Update

Background papers

None.