

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 June 2011

7.00pm to 10.25pm

Record of the meeting

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

- Present:** Councillors: Bright (Chairman), Etheridge, Griffin, Griffiths, Adrian Gulvin, Hicks (Vice-Chairman), Hubbard, Juby, Osborne, Stamp and Turpin
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Avey (Substitute for Councillor Maisey)
Hewett (Substitute for Councillor Mackinlay)
- In Attendance:** Councillor Mike O'Brien, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer Contact and Vice-Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership
Councillor Pat Cooper, observer
Chief Superintendent Steve Corbishley, Area Commander, Kent Police and Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture
Angela Drum, Head of Legal Services
Tim England, Head of Safer Communities
Steve Griffiths, Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer
Neil Howlett, Community Safety Partnership Manager
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager
Andy McGrath, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Maurice O'Reilly, Kent Probation
Ian Wilson, Head of Capital Projects, Road Safety and Networks

77 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 17 March 2011 and of the Joint Meeting of all Committees held on 25 May 2011 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

78 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Maisey and Mackinlay.

79 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

None.

80 Declarations of interest

Councillor Griffin declared a personal interest in item 7 Petitions as her husband had submitted a petition.

Councillor Adrian Gulvin declared a personal interest in item 5 Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership and annual refresh of the Community Safety Plan 2009-2012 and item 8 Flood and Water Management Act – preliminary flood risk assessment for Medway, by virtue of being a member of Kent Fire and Rescue Service and in any reference to the Youth Offending Team as his brother is manager of that team.

Councillor Hewett declared a personal interest in any reference to Kent Fire and Rescue Service as he is a Member.

Councillor Griffiths declared a personal interest in any reference to Medway Community Healthcare as he is a non-executive director.

Councillor Stamp declared a personal interest in item 8 Flood and Water Management Act – preliminary flood risk assessment for Medway, by virtue of his employment with the Environment Agency.

Councillor Etheridge, later in the meeting, declared a personal interest in Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust by virtue of being a shadow governor of the trust.

Councillor Hicks, later in the meeting, declared a personal interest in item 8 Flood and Water Management Act – preliminary flood risk assessment for Medway by virtue of being appointed to the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board.

81 Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership and annual refresh of the Community Safety Plan 2009 - 2012

Discussion:

The Chairman welcomed Chief Superintendent Corbishley, Area Commander and Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Councillor O'Brien as Vice-Chairman of the Partnership, Maurice O'Reilly from Kent Probation and Steve Griffiths from Kent Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting.

Chief Superintendent Corbishley explained that the merge between Medway Police with Swale and North Kent would go live on 16 November 2011 and set out the implications for Medway as part of that change.

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He and Councillor O'Brien then did a joint presentation to the Committee on the achievements and challenges facing Medway from the perspective of the Community Safety Partnership and emphasised that as part of the 'Big Society' and localism agenda a whole systems approach was vital to tackle the various issues.

The presentation covered the following:

- The composition of the Community Safety Partnership
- The set up of the first Schools and Communities Together (SACT) group with Rainham Girls School and Howard School
- New projects underway – 'Sow and Grow' to encourage people to grow their own vegetables, fruit and plants and 'Silver Surfer' where pupils from Rainham Girls School were providing free computer training for older people
- A CSP fun day at the Strand
- Operation Safe Exit, Operation Elite and Operation Cubit
- Environmental Enforcement
- Community Team
- Trading Standards – Underage sales
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service activity
- Kent Probation Service activity
- End of year performance
- Current progress (April-May)
- Proposed CSP Structure
- Emerging issues group
- Current challenges including efficiency savings and in particular budget constraints
- Perception of crime being out of step with reality
- The need to engage wider partners to deal with issues
- The fact that it was being proposed that Councillor O'Brien would take over the Chairmanship of the Community Safety Partnership, although it was explained this was subject to ratification on Monday at a Partnership meeting

Maurice O'Reilly, Kent Probation, then spoke of the partnership working in relation to Kent Probation and offered to report back, later in the year, on work being undertaken with families to prevent future generations offending.

Steve Griffiths, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, spoke about the achievements of the Fire and Rescue Service including a 35% reduction in rubbish fires and stated that he was pleased with the road safety priority to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions in particular as this priority affects everyone in Medway and failure to tackle the issue cost a great deal of money and caused devastation to families.

The Committee made various comments and asked questions of the partners and officers present. Their responses included details on the following:

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- Work ongoing with young people causing anti-social behaviour in relation to motorbike usage
- Joint working between the Community Support Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)
- The Chief Superintendent offered to report back on details of a possible backlog of Community Payback Scheme projects
- The sustainability of the SOS bus. It was confirmed that both CVS Medway and Medway Council had recently contributed to its operating costs. Members agreed with the Chief Superintendent that the bus had saved lives in Medway and was a valuable resource
- With regards to acquisitive crime it was confirmed that there did not seem to have been an increase in spite of the economic downturn. The Police had, however, worked with retail outlet owners to lessen the likelihood of shoplifting
- The Chief Superintendent stated that he did not expect there to be any further mergers to take place in the near future but clarified that more collective procurement was taking place
- In respect of the night time economy, which the Committee felt to be an important priority, Councillor O'Brien referred to the intention to trial placement of temporary open urinals in Rochester for the months of July and August
- Some Members referred to what they felt were inadequate penalties issued by Magistrates in the case of fly tipping and the restrictions on tariffs set out by the Home Office
- The Chief Superintendent undertook to raise with the Community Safety Partnership the possibility of a citizen's charter to encourage more pride in the area, suggested by the Assistant Director, Front Line Services
- The Assistant Director, Front Line Services outlined the actions being undertaken to improve the street scene but explained the limitations in some cases due to land ownership issues
- Members found the glossary at the end of the document very helpful
- Steve Griffiths, responding to a question, stated that in spite of low rainfall over the first few months of the year there had not been a massive impact on deliberate fires being lit. He went on to discuss the PCSO training in schools to educate young people about the dangers and risks involved in starting a fire
- Councillor O'Brien confirmed that around 100 stray dogs are taken to a kennel per month in Medway and detailed ongoing work around getting dogs microchipped and the cost of dealing with stray dogs
- The Chief Superintendent undertook to discuss details of an incident relating to a person with mental health problems, who had been sectioned, with Councillor Etheridge outside of the meeting
- Discussion took place with regards to response times, which the Chief Superintendent said should improve later this year. He told the Committee about a new scheme would operate where the public would be given a two hour response window for calls (where there was no risk to life) during which the Police would arrive. He also explained that in relation to policing geographical boundaries no longer existed which meant that the nearest Police officers to an incident could investigate

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- An open invitation was extended to all Members to attend a visit to the Operation Room for CCTV on 12 July 2011 from 5pm-7pm
- In response to a question about lessons learnt from the safe exit campaign the Chief Superintendent explained that it was hoped this campaign could be used in other situations in future to divert people from reoffending and encourage them back into employment and better health
- The need to improve the services in Medway to drug and alcohol abusers was highlighted
- With regards to perception of crime it was stated that efforts were being made in particular through PACTs and community engagement to reinforce the message that crime levels are low in Medway
- The Chief Superintendent agreed to report back to Members about an increase in powers for PCSOs later in the year

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) thank Members of the Community Safety Partnership and officers supporting the Partnership for their presentation and responses to questions;
- (b) note the performance of the Community Safety Partnership and delivery of the 2010/2011 Community Safety Plan and recommended to Cabinet the 2011 version of the Community Safety Plan for consideration at its future meeting.

82 Community Safety Partnership response to the effectiveness and future of PACTs in Medway

Discussion:

The Head of Safer Communities introduced a report on the Community Safety Partnership's response to the Overview and Scrutiny task group's report on 'The Effectiveness and Future of PACTs in Medway' and responded to Members' questions.

A question was put forward about the areas of the recommendations, which had not been accepted by the Community Safety Partnership and whether there were any other options for assessing the effectiveness of PACTs and whether they improved the environment or reduced anti social behaviour.

Discussion took place as to whether one of the local Universities might be able to undertake some research around this topic.

In response to a question, the Head of Safer Communities stated that he could share with Members details of the venues of local PACTs but would need the permission of the PACT chairmen to release their contact details. Once these were available he hoped to add them to the Partnership website.

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The Community Safety Partnership Manager, responding to a further question, stated that the Community Officers and Police and Community Support Officers shared intelligence and passed information between the different wards in Medway.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the CSP response to the review of effectiveness and future of Partners and Communities Together (PACTs) in Medway;
- (b) request officers to consider entering into negotiations with the Universities of Kent, Canterbury Christchurch and Greenwich, to ask if they would be interested in undertaking research to evaluate the impact of PACTs working groups.

83 Petitions

Discussion:

- (a) Petition to lift the parking restrictions at Cecil Road

Councillor Griffin, on behalf of her husband who was unable to attend, introduced the petition in relation to a request to lift the parking restrictions at Cecil Road on a Saturday. The Head of Capital Projects, Road Safety and Networks explained the reasons why officers felt this request should be refused. In response to questions he stated that in view of the high volume of traffic, particularly delivering to the shops, a lifting of the parking restrictions would be likely to bring about an obstruction to the pavements for pedestrians and emergency services by unreasonable parking.

- (b) Petition for a bus shelter at the junction of Fulmar Road and Darnley Road Strood

Marion Hearn, lead petitioner addressed the Committee in support of her petition for a bus shelter at the junction of Fulmar Road and Darnley Road, Strood.

Discussion took place on the merits of a bus shelter and the potential cost of installing it. Councillor Avey, as ward councillor, stated his intention to request funding from the Members' priority fund to install a shelter and agreed to request the other ward councillor, Councillor Iles, to join him in the contribution.

In response to a question by the lead petitioner the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture explained that the cost of installing the shelter was likely to be in the region of £7,000 and, if approved, the shelter should be able to be installed within the next three to four months.

Decision:

The Committee:

- (a) noted officer response in connection with the petition relating to Cecil Road;
- (b) supported the offer made by Councillor Avey to apply for funding from the Members' priority fund for the purpose of installing a bus shelter at the junction of Fulmar Road and Darnley Road, Strood.

84 Flood and Water Management Act - preliminary flood risk assessment for Medway

Discussion:

The Head of Capital Projects, Road Safety and Networks introduced a report summarising the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and issues arising from it as required by the Flood and Water Management Act.

He explained the background to the report being produced and emphasised that the existing information available about historic flooding was very limited. This was mainly because the information previously collected had not been for this particular purpose and was in different formats and differing levels of detail.

In response to a question about why the Ports Authorities had not been consulted as part of the process he stated that the assessment could not contain any detail of potential river flooding as this was a matter for the Environment Agency. The report could only contain details of flooding unrelated to rivers.

Some Councillors put forward information about areas of flooding within their wards and the Head of Capital Projects, Road Safety and Networks stated that the intention for the future would be web based reporting and he was working with other authorities in the region to ensure data was consistent.

He then stated that there was no deadline at the moment for a final report but the initial draft would be submitted by 22 June 2011 to the Environment Agency. Members also mentioned that the report would be considered at a meeting of the Rural Liaison Committee in September. An assurance was given that there would be a further report submitted to this Committee prior to it being sent to the Cabinet.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the draft report, making the comments set out above and look forward to receiving a further report prior to its submission to Cabinet.

85 End of year performance monitoring report 2010/2011

Discussion:

The Performance Manager, Regeneration, Community and Culture introduced the end of year performance report 2010/2011 and explained the content of the three appendices.

She then gave a detailed account of the key highlights under each of the priorities and the areas requiring development.

Decision:

The Committee noted the outcomes achieved against priorities and noted that an evening visit, for all Members, to the new dynamic bus facility would be arranged in the near future.

86 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the work programme report and made specific reference to paragraph 5, which set out the process for Overview and Scrutiny Committees selecting in-depth reviews/themes.

In response to a question she explained that the reason for each Committee submitting their list of potential topics to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee for sifting and prioritisation was because that Committee had within its terms of reference the provision of guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including guidance on priorities for scrutiny activities.

Decision:

The Committee agreed that the Chairman and Opposition Spokespersons meet during June and July with appropriate officer support to draw up a shortlist of in-depth review topics and report back to this Committee on 10 August 2011.

Chairman

Date:

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