

**COMMUNITY SAFETY, CRIME AND POLICING SELECT COMMITTEE
9 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the COMMUNITY SAFETY, CRIME AND POLICING SELECT COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 22 JULY 2014

Present: Councillors Alexander, M Burke (substituting for R Gifford), Brunning, Coventry, McPake, Morla, Small, Wallis and Webb

Officers: C Wilderspin (Head of Community Safety) and E Richardson (Overview & Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses: M Osborne (Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service)

Also Present: Councillor O'Neill, N Coolman (Partnership Inspector Thames Valley Police and N Corani-Young (Partnership Sergeant, Thames Valley Police)

CSCP03 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the Select Committee meetings held on 11 March 2014 and 11 June 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CSCP04 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer at Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) gave a presentation highlighting key points in the Services Annual Report, during which the Committee noted that:

- The performance of the FRS was better than the national average;
- Deaths from fires in the FRS region were too low to be able to present any meaningful statistical analysis (typically between 0-6 per year).
- The number of fires and the number of non-fatal fire casualties were also down and well below the national average;
- It was thought a number of factors contributed to this reduction such as increased fire prevention education, a general reduction in the number of people smoking, and particularly in Milton Keynes, the increasing use of modern fire prevention building techniques and materials;

- Despite the rapid expansion of Milton Keynes, the call-out rate for fires was down by 60% which meant that any expansion of the FRS in the Milton Keynes area was unlikely. The level of cover across the FRS's region would be reviewed as part of the new Public Safety Plan and any proposed changes would be consulted upon;
- There was however an increase in the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) in Milton Keynes, whereas in the rest of the Buckinghamshire area this figure was also falling. The FRS was of the opinion that the rise of RTCs in Milton Keynes was generally down to poor driving, although it was not called out to every RTC. Reducing the number of RTCs was a matter for the Police, rather than the FRS. The Committee also noted that SaferMK were planning a comprehensive review of RTCs in Milton Keynes.
- The FRS was trying to engage across all age ranges with its fire prevention programmes although the elderly were still statistically the most vulnerable to fires;
- The fire service needed to deliver approximately £4m in savings by 2017/18 and to this end was becoming leaner, but no less efficient or effective. It was working smarter and the need for traditional fire-fighting services was reducing. Smaller, vehicles with fewer crew members which were cheaper to run and maintain were being deployed as these could negotiate narrower estate roads more easily;
- Opportunities to save money by developing joint working with other fire services in the area were also being explored, although this could be complicated by the need to have a balanced tax base between service areas;
- The continued investment in education and engagement in bid to reduce call-outs was having an effect. Part of this was the continued campaign to install smoke alarms, generally in hallways and on landings to alert people when they were asleep. Smoke alarms in every room were not considered effective as if they went off too often people tended to take the batteries out.

RESOLVED -

1. That Mr Osborne be thanked for his report and his time in coming to talk to the Committee.
2. That the link to "Continuing the Journey 2015-2020", the consultation on the Buckingham and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service new public safety plan, be circulated to Members of the Committee.

OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Community Safety on the work of the Community Safety, Crime and Policing Select Committee over the last two years which included an explanation of its high-level role and function.

During the presentation the Committee noted that:

- In Milton Keynes the fear of crime was much higher than the actual rate of crime in the borough and that Milton Keynes was a relatively safe place to live compared to other towns of a similar size;
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was a national issue and that it was hard to engage with communities who still practised FGM. The Head of Community Safety was not aware that this was a significant problem in Milton Keynes but Council was working with GPs, schools and community groups to raise the awareness of this issue across the community;
- Thames Valley Police were aware that Asian communities had been particularly targeted recently for thefts of gold, particularly jewellery and they were working with those affected to see why or how they had been targeted. Marking pieces with Smart Water was an option but it can damage gold;
- The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was looking options for joint working with South Northamptonshire and the Bedfordshire authorities. Representatives from all the CSPs in the Thames Valley Police area meet on a regular basis to look at issues across the region and were building up good working relationships with each other;
- One of the roles of the CPS is analyse potential safety / crime issues and develop plans to deal with them and do preventative work in order to stop a serious situation developing. Joined up working with partner organisations was essential;
- The recent Ward boundary changes had affected the viability of some Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and therefore needed to be reviewed. The work being done with NAGs was still being supported by Thames Valley Police and the Council, although the Council was no longer able to send an officer to every NAG meeting. Support for NAGs was no longer a statutory obligation and there were now some local community groups doing similar work to NAGs without realising it;
- SaferMK were developing a communications, prevention and enforcement plan to deal with the increased use of substances providing a “legal high”. They were also moving away from using this particular expression as it was misleading and implied that these substances were safe to use. The preferred term was “New Psychoactive Substances”;

- Thames Valley Police were working with the Somali and East African communities in Milton Keynes to deal with the criminalisation of khat. They had already met with community elders to explain the changes in the law and what the implications were. They were also planning a drop-in event in September for khat users to highlight the services and agencies available to assist them in “kicking the habit”;
- Unsafe and obstructive parking, particularly around schools, remained an issue. The police would, if alerted, deal with obstructions but schools needed to co-operate and be part of the solution. If the police received sufficient complaints about bad parking at a particular school, then they would deploy the new mobile CCTV cameras to monitor the situation. However, CCTV on its own would not solve the problem. The solution needed to be community led; NAGs were also looking at school parking in their areas and there was a role for Community Police Service Officers in educating parents locally on the hazards of bad parking around schools.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Council’s Head of Community Safety be thanked for his presentation and update on the work of the Committee.
2. That the Committee receive a brief update at each meeting on the work of the Neighbourhood Action Groups.

CSCP06

SAFERMK STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The Committee received a report by the Head of Community Safety on the Strategic Assessment covering all areas of the SaferMK Partnership’s work and which informed its Strategy and Plan for the next three years.

During the presentation the Committee noted that:

- Acts of violence on the Redways was very rare; only 4 incidents had occurred in the past year. The Council needed to convince the public that the Redways were safe for both pedestrians and cyclists to use. Increased usage was also likely to make them safer as well;
- SaferMK was planning a complete review of serious neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour. A multi-agency approach was required in order develop a process for resolving disputes which could be explained to those involved;
- Milton Keynes was the only Community Safety Partnership to have done an impact study into the effects of the recent welfare reforms on crime and community safety. The study had noted that so far there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour, rather than in major crime such as burglary. There had been a

significant increase in shoplifting, particularly of food items for personal consumption, rather than goods which could be sold on;

- From 1 April the Council had introduced charges for the waste collection of white goods and other bulky household items, but it was too early to tell if this had produced an increase in fly-tipping. Apart from the introduction of charges, other factors, such as illegal encampments, also affected the level of fly-tipping.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Council's Head of Community Safety be thanked for his report on the Community Safety Partnership's 2014 Strategic Assessment and the report author, the Council's Community Safety Analyst, also be thanked for his work.
2. That Inspector Neil Coolman, who was retiring, be thanked for his support for and input into the work of the SaferMK Community Safety Partnership since 1998.
3. That the Committee gave their good wishes for the future to Inspector Coolman.
4. That his replacement, Sergeant Nicola Corani-Young, be welcomed to the Committee.
5. That officers be asked to make the necessary arrangements for Members of the Committee to visit the new Custody Suite at the Central Milton Keynes Police Station.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.33 PM