



Minutes of the meeting of the COMMUNITY SAFETY, CRIME AND POLICING SELECT COMMITTEE held on 10 SEPTEMBER 2013 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor O'Neill (Chair)
Councillors Brunning, Eastman, Hoyle, Khan, Webb and C Williams

Officers: C Wilderspin (Interim Head of Community Safety) R Ward (Interim Lead, Neighbourhood Engagement) and Z Dhamani (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Alexander and Kennedy

Also Present: N Coolman (Partnership Inspector, Thames Valley Police) and 3 members of the public

CSCP09 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CSCP10 NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

The Committee received an update on the proposals for Neighbourhood Wardens Service post March 2014. It was noted that it had originally been proposed to stop the service as from 31 March 2013, but funding had been extended for another year to give Parish and Town Councils the opportunity to fund the wardens in their area. The deadline for expressions of interest from the Parish and Town Councils was the end of September 2013.

It was reported that the service needed to be cost neutral to the Council from April 2014 if it was to continue. There were currently 4 wardens in post with the Council and a number of Parishes also employed their own wardens, or officers, who performed similar roles. To date only two parishes had made a commitment to purchase the service which equated to less than a day a week for one warden.

Officers highlighted that once expressions of interested had been received an evaluation would take place as to whether or not the service was feasible. For this to happen, it was thought that funding would be needed for two wardens.

Members raised concerns about what appeared to be the relatively high cost being quoted to Parish and Town Councils of the Wardens Service. It was highlighted by officers that the cost included all the

on-costs, such as pensions, and the wardens would remain the employee of the Council so there was no risk to the Parish or Town Council of being an employer and having subsequent responsibilities.

Members suggested that with the figures presented it might be more cost effective for a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to be employed, rather than a warden, particularly as a PCSO also had more powers, for example, a PCSO could issue a fixed penalty notice.

The issue of VAT was also raised by Members as some smaller parishes / town councils might not be registered and this would add to their costs which might mean that a parish / town council was unable to afford to take on a warden for their neighbourhood.

The Committee highlighted that if the service did not continue there might be a number of going issues which would not be addressed, such as dog fouling. Officers explained that although prosecution for dog fouling was an option this was rarely used due to the difficulty in catching offenders. Instead, campaigns for educating people had generally led to a reduction in incidents in many areas, supported by other residents challenging dog owners about their behaviour.

Officers acknowledged that not every service currently operated by the wardens would continue. However there were other options available to residents and parish councils to address issues in their neighbourhood. For example, the Council's Enforcement Officers could be contacted to address some issues. The main loss might be the patrolling function operated by the wardens.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Committee's concerns surrounding the loss of the Neighbourhood Warden Service and the valuable contribution to the community the wardens give be noted.
2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be requested to either:
 - (a) consider establishing a Review Group as a matter of urgency to consider the loss of the Neighbourhood Warden Service; or
 - (b) request the Budget Review Group to identify potential future funding sources for the Neighbourhood Warden Service during the forthcoming budget challenge sessions, with a view to the Service being re-established under the Council's control.

3. That the Cabinet, in recommending its budget for 2014/15 be requested to consider the options to re-establish the service under the Council's control.

CSCP11 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEMES

The Committee received a summary of the Watch Schemes which operated in Milton Keynes from the Partnership Inspector for Thames Valley Police.

It was noted that there were a range of schemes currently in operation which benefited from good levels membership. The schemes included:

- Allotment Watch
- Business Watch
- Church Watch
- Country Watch
- Cycle Watch
- Dog Watch
- Forecourt Watch
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Pub Watch

The Inspector highlighted that not all schemes were coordinated by Thames Valley Police, but all were supported. He acknowledged that there were good levels of engagement from within communities, but for some schemes the average age of members was high and this might limit the options for the use of new technologies to engage with people. Therefore, it was considered important for schemes to engage more with younger people to both help promote and increase the membership of schemes.

The Committee noted that there was a Watch Scheme coordinator within Thames Valley Police who assisted with promoting schemes in neighbourhoods.

The Inspector suggested that frontline Council staff and Councillors could also highlight the schemes to residents as options for dealing with issues in their neighbourhood.

It was reported by the Inspector that 'Church Watch' did cover all faith denominations and that the renaming of this scheme would be considered.

The Committee thanked the Inspector for his presentation and expressed their praise for the wide variety of schemes available.

CSCP12 NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP, REVIEW GROUP UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Action Group Review Group on the progress made against the recommendations.

The Committee noted that the Review Group was established in September 2012 to look at the role of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and how they assist with the reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and to review the structure and effectiveness of Action Groups across Milton Keynes.

It was reported that the Review Group's report was presented to Cabinet in April 2013 which considered the recommendations. The Cabinet member undertook to use his best endeavours to ensure that, if possible, necessary resources were available to support Neighbourhood Action Groups.

The Chair of the Review Group reported that the central point of contact for the Neighbourhood Action Groups was now in post and was assisting with the coordination of communications with the Action Groups. The Safer Neighbourhoods Delivery Group, which acted as a parental role for the Action Groups, would be reporting into the Performance Group for the Community Safety Partnership to enable the Action Groups performance to be monitored and identify areas of improvement. Also a workshop was planned for October to re-launch the Action Groups which included the supporting toolkits.

The Committee noted the update.

CSCP13 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES GROUP - DEVELOPMENT DAY OUTCOMES

The Committee received an update on the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) Development Day which was held at the end of August 2013. It was noted that the aim of the day was to plan the Community Partnership going forward given changes over the past few years and the event had concluded with an action plan being drafted to plan the next stages and this included:

- a review of the terms of reference for the RAG to take into account a change in structures;
- a rationalisation of strategic analysis and planning;
- consideration of how engagement takes place; and
- development of a forward plan for the RAG inline with proposals to change the format of the RAG meetings from December 2013.

The Chair of the Committee indicated that she was present at the Development Day and reported that the feedback had been positive and those involved were keen to work together to develop the RAG.

The Committee noted the update.

CSCP14 DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE CONSUTLATION

The Committee received an update on the Domestic and Sexual Abuse consultation which was currently taking place with key stakeholders. It was noted that the aim of the consultation was to assist with the structuring and content of the Strategy and subsequent action plan in response to Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Milton Keynes and was due to close on 20 September 2013.

Officers reported that 26 responses had been received so far, which included coordinated responses from a number of organisations. The consultation had not been open to the public at this time as it was felt by officers that it was important to get the feedback from services currently providing support in the first instance.

It was noted by the Committee that there had been increase in the number of incidents being reported, but this was viewed as positive in the sense that people felt able to report cases and therefore would be able to access the necessary support systems.

Officers reported that a number of the responses received to the consultation highlighted the need to support those harder to reach groups, particularly where there were cultural differences, and this would be addressed within the Strategy.

It was noted that a report would be submitted to the Responsibility Authorities Group in September on the outcome of the consultation and plans to develop the Strategy.

The Committee noted the report.

RESOLVED

That an update on the Strategy be brought to the next suitable meeting of this Committee.

CSCP15 LATE NIGHT LEVY

The Committee received a summary of the current position in relation to the potential introduction of a Late Night Levy following the Licensing Sub-Committee's meeting held at the end of August when it considered the proposals to introduce a Levy in Milton Keynes.

It was noted that the Sub-Committee was recommending that the Licensing Committee not to introduce a Late Night Levy, at this time, but instead to request that the relevant officers investigate the viability of introducing an initiative to set up a 'Business Improvement District' within the CMK area and research other alternative options for raising funds, to be targeted at addressing any initiatives within the CMK area.

It was also noted that the Licensing Sub-Committee was recommending that the Licensing Committee should fully support the work of the SaferMK Team and request Members to offer all available support to the SaferMK Partnership when formulating bids for funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner and also consider recommending that officers consider using funding generated from the license for the Large Casino to provide funding for SaferMK Partnership.

The Committee heard from the Thames Valley Police representative present that it was the view of Thames Valley Police that the introduction of the Levy would provide funding for initiatives such as taxi marshalling and water distribution to take place at venues across Milton Keynes. It was also highlighted that it would not be restricted to venues in Central Milton Keynes.

It was recognised that premises could choose to vary the licensed hours, to hours outside the levy period and so avoid paying the Levy.

Officers reported that only Newcastle City Council had introduced a Levy so far, although seven other local authorities currently were in the consultation phase.

It was noted that the Licensing Committee would meet on 18 September 2013 to consider the recommendations from the Licensing Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED

That the following comment be submitted the Licensing Committee to be held on 18 September 2013:

"That the Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee requests that the Licensing Committee ensures that it has all the necessary information available to it to make an informed decision on the Late Night Levy, and particularly draws the attention of the Licensing Committee to its concerns about the potential costs to be levied by the Council to provide administrative support to the Scheme by the Council which appears generous and these figures should be reviewed".

RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

It was reported that at its meeting held on 23 July 2013, the Corporate Affairs and Performance Committee had recommended that:

“That the Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee be requested to consider Performance Indicator MKC 715 regarding all crime per 1,000 population further as no target has been set and seek assurances that the performance indicator is being managed.”

Officers reported that there were a number of performance indicators which fed into Performance Indicator MKC175 and that although the overall figure for crime was reducing this trend was unlikely to be sustainable.

The Committee discussed performance data and agreed that further information was required to enable it to make full response to the Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee.

RESOLVED

That, to allow the Committee to provide a response to the Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee, consideration of this matter be deferred to the December meeting of the Committee when it considers the full performance report for the SaferMK Partnership, so enabling the Committee to consider this item in more detail and to fully understand the figures that will be incorporated.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.38PM