**WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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| **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT** | |

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| **FROM:** | Audit and Risk Manager | **SUBJECT:** | Crime & Disorder |
| **TO:** | Head of Health & Community Protection | **DATE:** | 24 June 2013 |
| **C.C.** | Chief Executive | | |
| | Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) | | |
| | Head of Finance | | |
| | Safer Communities Manager | | |

## 1.      Introduction

1.1      In accordance with the Audit Plan for 2013/14, an examination of the above subject area has been undertaken and this report presents the findings and conclusions drawn from the audit for information and action where appropriate.  This topic was last audited in August 2010.

1.2      Wherever possible, findings have been discussed with the staff involved in the procedures examined and their views are incorporated, where appropriate, into the report.  My thanks are extended to all concerned for the help and cooperation received during the audit.

## 2.      Background

2.1      The council is an active partner in the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (SWCSP).  The vision of this partnership is that South Warwickshire 'should be an attractive and desirable place to live, work and visit, with a sense of safety which reflects the low risk of becoming a victim of crime in the area'.

2.2      Responsibility for managing crime and disorder sits mainly within the Community Protection department within the council, although other departments also have roles to play.  The Community Protection department is currently involved in lean systems experiments and it is possible that it may merge with the Environment Services department in the near future.

## 3.      Scope and Objectives of the Audit

3.1      The audit was undertaken to test the management and financial controls in place.

3.2      In terms of scope, the audit covered the following areas:

- Compliance with legislation
- Partnership working
- Performance monitoring and reporting
- Budget and project management
- Risk management.

3.3     The audit programme identified the expected controls.  The control objectives examined were:

- The council complies with relevant legislation
- Relevant partners are aware of their responsibilities
- Decisions are taken by the partnership as a whole
- Partnership management are aware of progress against agreed plans and objectives
- The effects of crime and disorder strategies are known
- Members of the public are informed of relevant performance figures
- Council budgets are appropriately managed
- Partnership funds, including those awarded to the council for specific projects, are appropriately managed
- The outcomes of individual projects are achieved or management is aware of the reasons for non-achievement
- Management are aware of the risks associated with the provision of services.

**4.        Findings**

**4.1       Compliance With Legislation**

4.1.1    The main piece of relevant legislation is the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 which is strengthened by the Police & Justice Act 2006.  Specific reference is often made to Section 17 of the 1998 Act, which requires authorities to consider crime and disorder implications in all of its functions.

4.1.2    Upon discussion with the Safer Communities Manager (SCM), examples were given where this may not always be the case.  Specific reference was made to the granting of planning consent, without any conditions being included with regards to the installation of CCTV cameras and other crime and disorder deterrents.  As relevant staff are aware of this issue, is it not thought that a specific recommendation is warranted, although it was felt worthy of being noted within this report.

4.1.3    Specific Home Office guidance relating to effective partnership working in delivering safer communities has also been published which sets out in detail specific statutory duties.  In summary, these duties are:

• The council works in partnership with other local authorities as part of the Community Safety Partnership and that membership of this group is appropriate with regular meetings being held.
• The group publishes a three year plan, which is updated annually.
• The group prepares an annual strategic assessment.
• The group holds public meetings, at least annually.
• The group has an information sharing protocol, with each authority having a nominated liaison officer.

4.1.4    As identified above, the council is a member of the SWCSP, and there are two separate groups that hold meetings: the strategic member board; and the operational group.

4.1.5    A partnership plan is in place, covering the period March 2011 – April 2014.  The SCM advised that this is being updated as it is now in its last year.  A draft copy, showing the update process for the last year of the plan, was provided.  A strategic assessment was also found to be in place for 2013/14.

4.1.6    The SCM also advised that annual public meetings are held, although they are very poorly attended, with the same people attending each year.  In order to improve the number of people able to receive the messages from the meeting, a web cast is planned for the next meeting, which is to be held shortly.

4.1.7    A copy of the information sharing protocol was also seen, and the SCM advised that he was the nominated liaison officer.  The copy held was found to have been signed in 2002 and the SCM advised that a number of new agencies, including a number of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) had now signed up.  An updated version was, therefore, being produced.

4.1.8    The SCM also advised that there was a standard form in place for requesting information and that some guidance around the use of the protocol had previously been published and distributed to staff.

4.1.9    The SCM suggested that, whilst some sanctions are possible for non-compliance with the legislation, these are very rarely applied and the only way that any sanctions would come up would be if a challenge was raised.

4.1.10   He gave an example of one challenge that had been raised regarding the installation of lighting on a footpath in Warwick.  Antisocial behaviour had not been considered when this was undertaken and this subsequently occurred. Steps were then taken to remove the lighting.

## 4.2    Partnership Working

4.2.1    A formal terms of reference document has been drawn up for the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership.  This sets out the roles and responsibilities of the two different groups (the Strategic Member Board and the Operational Group) and details the membership of both groups, in terms of positions as opposed to individual names.

4.2.2    The terms of reference sets out the timetable of meetings for the two groups, with the strategic level group due to meet twice a year.  All meetings are minuted and agreed actions are documented.

4.2.3    The January 2013 meeting minutes showed that the Strategic Assessment for 2013/14 had been appropriately endorsed by the Strategic Member Board and that the priorities were agreed.

4.2.4    It was also confirmed that formal action plans are in place to address the priorities identified within the partnership plan that are led by the district councils.

4.2.5    The SCM advised that the main focus of the Operational Group meetings was to look at progress against items within the action plans, looking at performance over the previous months and the last seven days.  This was borne out upon review of the minutes provided.

## 4.3    Performance Monitoring & Reporting

4.3.1    The SCM advised that there is a large amount of performance monitoring undertaken.

4.3.2    The performance of the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership as a whole has been reviewed as part of the normal council partnership reviews. Performance monitoring of progress against action plans is also undertaken (see above).  The SCM also highlighted that performance is covered during his team meetings.

4.3.3    There are also reviews of crime figures for the district and the South Warwickshire areas, both in terms of total crime figures and then broken down into different types of crimes.  The SCM highlighted that the number of crimes of all types had reduced over the last year, with 8 different types of crime having the lowest ever reported figures.

4.3.4    The council's website includes a number of pages on community safety, crime and disorder.

4.3.5    Performance figures on the site relate to 2011/12 (although they are erroneously stated as being for 2012/13) and there are links to the 2008-11 partnership plan.  These pages were last updated in 2012 and are, therefore, out of date.

4.3.6    The SCM advised that he was aware that the pages needed updating, but he was postponing this until the 'intervention' had been completed, so that the pages could be updated and reorganised as appropriate in one go.

## 4.4    Budget & Project Management

4.4.1    The SCM is responsible for three separate cost centre budgets.  The budget performance for 2012/13 was reviewed and very few significant variances were identified.  These were queried with the SCM who was able to provide satisfactory explanations for the material variances that had occurred for area of the budgets over which he had control.

4.4.2    The SCM advised that monies for specific projects can be bid for from funding held by the PCC.  He indicated that no specific budget codes are set for the individual projects, but he will monitor spend on individual projects, as they are generally small amounts that are easy to track.  He also advised that spending plan updates have to be submitted each quarter in respect of the community safety fund, so this is also tracked.  Sample copy documents were reviewed that confirmed this.

4.4.3    Where projects are undertaken, planning meetings are held and briefing documents are drawn up, with corresponding de-briefing meetings being held and documented after the event.  The SCM provided sample documentation for a successful project and advised that, whilst similar documentation would be completed for unsuccessful projects, these were infrequent and he could not think of any relevant, funded, projects.

## 4.5    Risk Management

4.5.1    Crime and disorder is covered under the Community Protection risk register with the entries currently being recorded on MOSS.  Four risks specific to the Community Safety Team, who are the lead team in terms of crime and disorder, are covered, along with other relevant risks relating to the effectiveness of Community Protection as a whole.

4.5.2    There is currently a programme of risk register reviews being performed, with different registers being presented to the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee each quarter.  The Community Protection risk register has not yet been through this process.

4.5.3    There is also a risk shown as part of the corporate risks on MOSS in relation to the 'safe, vibrant and sustainable local communities' corporate priority ('Local people do not feel safer').  However, these risks on MOSS are outdated, with the relevant corporate risks now being included on the Significant Business Risk Register (SBRR).

4.5.4    Upon review, it was identified that there is no risk specific to crime and disorder on the SBRR, although some related risks are included, such as the

risk of partnerships not delivering stated objectives and the risk of not complying with key legislation.

**Risk**
**Management do not consider all relevant risks.**

**Recommendation**
**The relevant risk relating to crime and disorder, as included on the old MOSS risk register, be considered for inclusion on the SBRR.**

## 5. Summary & Conclusion

5.1 Following our review, we are able to give a SUBSTANTIAL degree of assurance that the systems and controls in place for the management of Crime and Disorder are appropriate and are working effectively.

5.2 A minor issue was identified relating to the lack of inclusion of a risk relating to crime and disorder on the corporate Significant Business Risk Register.

5.3 Further issues were also identified in respect of the failure to consider crime and disorder in certain aspects of council activities and the need to update the crime and disorder related pages on the council's website, but no recommendations were thought to be warranted in these cases as relevant staff are aware of the issues.

## 6. Management Action

6.1 The recommendation arising above is reproduced in the attached Action Plan (Appendix A) for management attention.

Richard Barr
Audit and Risk Manager