

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 April 2023 in the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Cullinan, J Dearing, Jacques, King, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Redford and Syson.

Also Present: Councillor Day – Leader of the Council, Councillor Hales – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources, and Councillor Falp – Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Leisure and Environment.

89. **Apologies and Substitutes**

(a) Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barton, A Dearing and Noone.

(b) There were no substitutions made.

90. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

91. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 March 2023 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

92. **The role, responsibilities and performance (2022/23) of the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership**

The Committee considered a report from Safer Communities, Leisure and Environment which set out the roles and responsibilities of the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (SWCSP) and detailed performance against priorities for 2022/23. The CSP was a statutory body for reducing crime, disorder, substance misuse and reoffending in South Warwickshire.

Local Authorities had a legal duty to undertake scrutiny of crime and disorder at least every 12 months in accordance with the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009. Warwick District Council (WDC) had taken the view that by scrutinising the effectiveness and performance of the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (SWCSP), it was fulfilling its legal duty.

The report explained the role of the SWCSP, its statutory duties and the makeup of the responsible authorities in South Warwickshire and how it operated. Section 1.9 of the report explained how the SWCSP set its priorities.

A CSP had to commission an assessment every four years to provide an audit of crime, disorder and any other relevant evidence upon which to agree strategic priorities relating to current and emerging threats, risks

and vulnerabilities. MoRiLE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement) Thematic Guidance specifically for CSPs was introduced in 2020 to assist CSPs with the setting of priorities, strategic planning, and allocation of resources. This had been recently used to re-score community safety themes based on current trends and forecasts as part of the 2022/23 “refresh” of the Strategic Assessment and was detailed in Tables 1 and 2 of the report at point 1.9.3. This process had identified two emerging risk areas of note to the SWCSP; rape and other sexual offences, and exploitation in Warwick District.

Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of the full MoRiLE analysis document. This also showed a summary of the trends between April 2022 and December 2022 and highlighted the level of risk to Warwick District within that.

In response to questions submitted by Members ahead of the meeting, the Community Safety Manager explained that:

- A performance monitoring report was submitted to the Police Crime Commissioner three times a year on the funded projects. The full year evaluation was still to be completed as the year had only just ended.
- The impact of the diversionary projects that had been run was detailed in the report, as well as target hardening.
- Particular projects, certainly music and boxing, had been targeted at vulnerable young people involved in county lines or at risk of entering these types of activities and the results had been positive.
- Vulnerable households at risk of cuckooing were targeted for target hardening with RingGo doorbells being supplied to those properties and referral to support services as well.
- Safer Street funding required similar monitoring and evaluation and it was collated by the County Council on behalf of all the District and Borough Councils.
- The Council’s project for Safer Streets 3 in 2021/22 was an extension of our emergency contact points which were directly linked to the CCTV control room in Leamington.
- Interventions for Safer Streets 4 at Eagle Recreation Ground, a hotspot for drug dealing and gang activity, were still being implemented so could not yet be evaluated. This involved installation of CCTV, additional lighting and cutting back foliage, plus other community projects and better signage in the area.

The Chair welcomed Warwickshire Police Inspector Simon Ryan who had been invited to take questions.

In response to questions from Members, Inspector Ryan, Councillor Falp, Portfolio Holder - Safer Communities, Leisure and Environment and the Community Safety Manager explained that:

- Several ways could be used to report drug offences when violence was not involved, example of such crime being people using or supplying drugs:
 - Telephoning 101 was the main method to report these sorts of crimes, but if there was actually a crime in action, 999 should be dialled.

- The Police did a lot of work with Local Authority Community Safety Teams and engaged with Councillors at all local authority tier levels was planned to give them the skills and knowledge to make referrals to the Police.
 - A charity called Crime Stoppers which supported Police activity and was wholly anonymous could be called by the public to report this type of crime.
- Both buying drugs and the supply were of equal importance to the Police. Knowing where the supply of drugs was happening facilitated tracing County Lines.
- Street lighting was controlled by the County Council, but the Police could request that street lighting remained switched on if the street was subject to an ongoing operation to eliminate the drug trade.
- A request could be made to the County Council for additional street lighting if there were concerns about crime and safety. Also speaking to the Ward County Councillor could result in a positive outcome.
- The 101 and 999 services were both manned 24/7. A new state-of-the-art operational communication centre had been opened at the end of 2022 at Ross House at Warwick Technology Park following the move from the facility at Leek Wootton. Full staffing at Ross House would be achieved in the following week. 999 and 101 calls were handled by the same call handlers; 999 calls had to receive priority over 101 calls because of the urgent nature of these calls. The aim was to reduce average response time for 101 calls to less than four minutes. Call waiting times for 101 calls had already been reduced by 50% in the last three months.
- There would be a new neighbourhood strategy for engagement for Councillors and residents to ensure that local issues could be dealt with by the right team.
- The Police liaised with national charities for crimes affecting the vulnerable because of the expertise these charities could offer. Support for these people was tailored to their requirements. There was a Victims' Charter and Victims' Code set in law which the Police had to observe and also there was a support network within this; the Council's Community Safety team was part of this, especially for repeat offending at the same locations.
- The Council's Community Safety team had a number of multi-agency partnerships, for example, with regard to violence against women and girls agenda. Those partnerships included charities and all key stakeholders whether they were statutory, voluntary or charitable.
- The Community Safety team worked closely with the Council's Housing department and any other relevant Council departments.
- The Council's CCTV operators had alerted the Police to the recent stabbing incident near the Pump Rooms and as a result arrests were made quickly, and the Police were able to ensure safeguarding for those affected by the crime.
- A tool known as "Street Safe" led by the County Council had been used to allow residents to input specific areas of concern where safety was an issue. The data had been analysed to inform the "Safer Streets" approach and the use of grant funding money from Government. This data identified areas of concern such as Eagle Recreation Ground and where people felt they were being followed. Advice was given about using well-lit direct routes rather than short

cuts through alleyways for example to students. Coupled with data from the Police on crimes, this allowed the Council to make informed decisions on where to locate CCTV. 11 new cameras would be installed over the next two years. In liaison with partners, data on crimes was reviewed to establish the causes and how to prevent reoccurrence.

- Whilst additional lighting would be good, there was a balance to be drawn on financial funding available and where the needs for additional lighting was evident.
- The use of "high, medium and low" level categorisation of crimes within MoRiLE focussed on the severity of the crime in terms of impact on the victim or the organisation. However, it was recognised that some persistent low-level crimes would blight people's lives and therefore required monitoring before they escalated. Problem solving meetings occurred monthly to review data for the month and identify areas of concern and allow a quick response. This was reported back to the CSP Board and action plans were reviewed as a result. MoRiLE was undertaken as a matter of course annually but could be done more if the need arose to review level of risk.
- A lower-level crime could escalate to a much greater crime over time. There were known patterns for certain types of crime escalating and these were risk assessed regularly.
- Fly-tipping was a specialised area of crime and the appropriate specialist officers and partners such as local authorities would be consulted for crimes of this nature. The Community Safety team had worked with staff in the Council's Neighbourhood & Assets service area last year for a campaign in Sydenham which had been identified as an area where fly-tipping was frequent. A temporary CCTV camera was trialled for effectiveness as part of this, and evidence showed that the problem moved to another location. A meeting with staff in the Council's Neighbourhood & Assets service area was planned in the near future to assess the role CCTV could play. Before any camera could be installed, a needs assessment had to be undertaken with evidence provided to justify the camera. It was a complex process and other methods to discourage fly-tipping had to be considered such as education and awareness. Dummy cameras were not used by the Council as a rule.
- The Police in liaison with licensed premises and the community safety partners worked on a drive to reduce drink spiking crimes in Leamington. Funding was used to obtain kits to quickly identify the drugs used. CCTV operators checked where victims had been so that the licensed premises where these offences occurred were identified. There was a communication campaign for safer streets and using bottle tops to keep drinks safe and the level of drink spiking across the District had reduced as a result.
- A new policing model would be starting in Warwickshire from the following week. The Police night-time economy patrols would be different with a return to officers wearing hi-vis jackets standing outside pubs engaging with people, the street pastors and marshalls. It was hoped that this would be a positive initiative, especially in areas where there were noise concerns such as Clarendon ward.
- The Council worked closely with the Street Marshalls and the university and had a street marshal partnership that met regularly

to monitor the effectiveness of the Marshal service. The announcement of Safer Streets 5 funding was imminently anticipated, and the focus would be on projects within the night-time economy and to improve the safety of people in the town at night. Over the next 12 months, the Council, in partnership the university and the County Council would be rolling out an accreditation scheme for bars and pubs, particularly those popular with students, to focus on licensed premises meeting qualities of care and good safety standards for their clientele.

- The figures for Warwick District concerning exploitation crimes against asylum seekers and refugees were relatively small. The Community Safety team, Housing department and the Police were consulted about any families or individuals who were to be housed in the District and were able to provide advice on the most suitable locations. The numbers housed in the District were minimal possibly because the rental costs in the area. Any child or adult exploitation cases were referred to the relevant vulnerability groups and then monitoring would commence to ensure appropriate support was provided. The Police had a child abuse trafficking exploitation team for young people, also a specialist to handle modern day slavery and human trafficking because it was recognised that these types of crimes were increasing but that was not currently a growing issue in the District and was more of an issue in other parts of the county. A hotel in Kenilworth housing asylum seekers was well managed and there were no reported issues.

It was suggested that the new Committee should consider whether to put forward a suggestion to Cabinet that the position on the CSP Board should be occupied by a Member of the Committee (currently occupied by the Portfolio Holder).

93. **Noise Nuisance Investigations (Noise Policy & six-month review and service area performance in respect of all forms of nuisance)**

The Committee considered a report from Safer Communities, Leisure and Environment.

The report gave an update to Members on how the Noise Policy had been taken and provided insight to further developments, following on from a previous update made to the Committee at its 9 August 2022 meeting.

The report provided:

- an overview of all forms of “statutory nuisance” investigated by the Environmental Protection team;
- Members with an update on developments and gave an overview of feedback about the Noise Policy received to-date;
- a reflection on the implementation of the Noise Policy and service area performance over the past six months; and
- a description of the working arrangement with the Police.

At the 9 August meeting of the Committee, a report was considered and supported about the implementation of a new Noise Policy. The Committee requested a review following implementation of the policy and of the service area’s performance in respect of all forms of nuisance more generally because of the importance of the subject area to residents.

Members also stated that they would welcome closer collaboration with the Police, to secure their support in addressing the issue of noise nuisance.

Appendix 1 to the report gave details of comments received between 9 August 2022 and 16 March 2023 and suggestions arising from these or action take or to be taken.

It was pointed out that if a person went on the Council's website to search for how to report noise nuisance, not all methods of reporting were listed, especially non-electronic methods to report. It was also noted that if a search was made on the university's website to report noise nuisance in a student household, its website referred people to a Council contact number. The question was asked why the university was not in the first instance dealing with the issue and if the Council should direct noise nuisance issues at the university to the university.

In response to questions raised by Members, the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, the Community Safety Manager, Inspector Ryan and Councillor Falp, Portfolio Holder - Safer Communities, Leisure and Environment explained that:

- the Noise Policy could be page numbered for easier navigation and to facilitate its scrutiny and this would be reviewed when the Policy was updated.
- The points raised about the website would be picked up when a review of the website was undertaken.
- The Council was currently liaising with the university to review the university's website to ensure the links on both websites aligned. The review would look at how the Council and the university supported each other.
- Noise issues at specific venues for large events were assessed on a case-by-case basis; the Policy was used as the framework for the steps to follow to investigate complaints. Venue specific issues required working with Licensing and Anti-Social behaviour.
- One-off events were scrutinised when a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) application was received. The Police would be able to comment on these applications, as would Environmental Health via representations. Evidence or strong justification would be required to object to a TEN. Public help was required to draw together enough evidence to object. The time to make objections to TENs was short (three days) and this was a problem over which the Council had no control.
- The noise app and sound monitoring equipment could be supplied to complainants suffering noise disturbance; officer site visits were also possible. If intent to cause distress by disturbance could be proven, then it would be used as evidence in witness statements.
- Intent to cause harm/distress by noise disturbance could form part of a criminal investigation by the Police, and the Police might work with Environmental Health to build a case, speak to neighbours and Councillors. Multi-agency liaison was required to build up a case.
- The Police had powers to seize vehicles or implement prohibition notices on vehicles which were causing noise nuisance. Specialist Police units had equipment to assess modifications made to

vehicles. Anti-car cruising events had been run at places; Stratford on Avon was cited as a case in point. Data did exist for anti-car cruising events that had been run and there had been such exercises in Warwick District, specifically Leamington. To act against the vehicle and driver, the Police relied on reports from the Public, specifically details of the vehicle and registration number and the affect it had on the person. ANPR cameras that recorded noise were very expensive but would possibly reduce in price in the future to be used to help tackle this noise issue.

- People were now informed about the noise app once they made a complaint so the existence of the app was no longer so prominent on the Council's website as it had been during the trial stage of the app. Council staff would check that the complainant was comfortable downloading an app and if they were, they would be sent information on its use.
- The actions taken for comments received as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report all had different timelines. The intention was that when the Noise Police was reviewed, all the changes detailed in Appendix 1 would be made. Some of the changes were already works in progress.
- A memorandum of understanding with the university had been started.

The Committee asked that the next update contained figures showing the comparative successful conclusions of complaints as laid out in questions the Chairman had submitted on the report prior to the meeting. Specifically, whilst the report showed that the process had become more efficient on officer time, the Committee needed validation that the process had become more efficient at resolving noise complaints and the data provided in the report was not clear on that.

Inspector Ryan made the point that organisations that provided social housing stock did not engage with them as readily as they would like.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked all of the officers, the Portfolio Holder and Inspector Ryan for attending.

An update on the report was requested in 12 months.

(Councillor Falp left the meeting.)

94. **Work Programme Update – Digital Strategy**

The Committee considered a report from Customer and Digital Services which provided an update on the Council's progress towards its Digital Strategy ambitions.

In December 2021, the Cabinets of both Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick District Councils considered and approved the creation of a Joint Digital Strategy.

The intention of the strategy was to embed digitalisation as a component of service integration; ensuring that as services from the two Councils were brought together, digital was at the forefront of the revised delivery methods.

The strategy focused the Council's activities on customer centric digital outcomes, through investment in service design, training, infrastructure, effective operational technology and several key digitalisation initiatives.

When the merger process was aborted in April 2022, the Joint Digital Strategy also ended. In August 2022, Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an update report, regarding progress towards some of the Digital Strategy outcomes and work toward a replacement.

The report provided a further update on the key workstreams which had continued to be undertaken at Warwick District Council and an overview of other works undertaken by the Customer and Digital Services (C&DS) team. Some of these were not accounted for during the previous update.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Customer and Digital Services explained that:

- The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was a cornerstone of the Council's digitisation programme. It would allow assessment of the way people interacted with the Council, not currently possible. Currently, a completed online enquiry form would simply be emailed to a back-office mailbox which a staff member would then action. There was no way to track progress on the system; a CRM system would allow collection of data and an audit trail would be created to show how this enquiry was resolved. It would show a history all communications which would be visible to staff and the resident. This could be used to measure service.
- A good system could also collect necessary data from callers to proceed with the enquiry; this would not necessitate officer time.
- If we wished to integrate our systems with other organisations, it would depend on how far WDC wished to commit, technically it was possible. The example was given of enquiries about potholes, which was the County Council's responsibility. Currently our website gave the details of where to contact at the County Council. The technology was available for WDC to collect the data on a form on our own system and then pass it straight to the County Council.
- Full automation and chatbots were not being considered from day one of implementation of the new system. The CRM system would be used to keep a record on how services were delivered and the telephone system that would sit on top of this would provide the means for residents to contact a member of staff. As the level of development on the system progressed and more services could be delivered by the CRM system, the Council might choose to introduce some automation. Automation and chatbots worked well with transactions that were very methodical in the way they happened. An example was cited about garden waste collection subscriptions which was a very simple process and only required a very limited question set and the answers required were simple, such as postcode.
- The Council was working with Openreach and with City Fibre networks to look at fibre to the offices and distributed as widely as possible. The County Council was coordinating the rollout. Data on the level of connections in different areas was available if Councillors wanted it. Discussions that would take place the

following week would be on how full fibre connectivity could be supplied to the Council's social housing and then rollout to the wider district.

The Committee emphasised the need to provide means to contact the Council that suited residents, not just the Council. Some elderly residents would find it difficult to use digitised systems and their needs had to be borne in mind and remain a priority.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Head of Customer and Digital Services.

95. **End of Term Report**

The Committee considered its annual End of Term report for the municipal year 2022/23 that would be presented to Council. This was a mandatory to Council report as required in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution. Appendix A in the report detailed the Committee's work through the municipal year with a foreword from the Committee's Chair.

The Chair thanked Members for their contribution.

Recommended to Council that the list of matters considered by the Committee during the municipal year 2022/23, as detailed in Appendix A to the report be noted.

Resolved that prior to submission to Council, the report be updated to include the meeting of the Committee 19 April 2023.

96. **Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from the Cabinet**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2023 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 to the report gave responses from the Cabinet to the comments and recommendations the Committee had made to Cabinet reports it had scrutinised.

It was noted that the annual report on Outside Bodies would be emailed to all Councillors next week. This completed both actions for the year on page 5 of the Work Programme.

Resolved that:

- (1) appendices 1 and 2 to the Work Programme report be noted;
- (2) a learning and action plan following on from the Dictate to Us report be added to the Work Programme for the meeting 20 July 2023;
- (3) a 12-month review of the new waste and recycling contract and lessons learned from the renewal particularly with the focus on events over the Easter 2023 period be added

- to the Work Programme for the meeting 3 October 2023;
- (4) the scrutiny of finance currently scheduled on the Work Programme for 3 October be moved to the August meeting.

The Chair thanked all Members of the Committee and officers for their work over the year. He also extended thanks to Portfolio Holders and guests to the meetings.

(The meeting ended at 8.20pm)

CHAIR
4 July 2023