

## EXECUTIVE, POLICY & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2018 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber - Council Offices.

**Present:** Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke (Chairman); Councillors Curran, Bambridge, Campbell, Dixon, Rusiecki and Wright

**In Attendance:** Councillors Bayford, Game and Messenger

### 20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

### 21. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

### 22. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Curran seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting that was held on 27 September 2018.

### 23. CRIME STATISTICS IN THANET

Chief Inspector Sharon Adley introduced Inspector Connor (Community Safety Unit Inspector) and then presented her report:

- CI Adley explained that the changes in crime recording processes were continuing to contribute to the increases in crime across the force. To put this into context, previously if four people were found fighting outside a nightclub and it was not clear who was in the right or wrong, one report of affray would have been recorded whereas now four counter allegations of assault and one of affray could be recorded.
- CI Adley stressed that this was a better reflection of the extent of offences committed against a victim to enable the appropriate assessment of any safeguarding requirements for both victims and witnesses. The increase in all crime experienced within Thanet is in line with the force.
- As expected there have been seasonal increases in the summer months particularly in May through to August as the local economy experienced increased visitor numbers coming to visit Thanet seaside areas coupled with the hot weather.
- The crime category that saw the biggest rise was violence against the person with the biggest rise experienced in the category of violence without injury;
- Locally in Thanet, police and partner agencies have continued to undertake a number of different approaches to prevent crime; during September, Thanet took part in a week long national campaign against Knife Crime (Op Sceptre). This operation included many different strands of activity, a key one being enforcement in the Night Time Economy but also included preventative work and engagement with young people.
- Criminal Damage – this category had experienced a 5% increase in the period under review;
- However, a great deal of work had been carried out by the police in collaboration with other agencies on a number of areas that included reducing anti-social behaviour and closure of premises in Margate utilising the Anti-Social Behaviour

legislation. Work had also been undertaken in Ramsgate and Westwood Cross. Street week was continuing and would be taking place in Ramsgate.

- Vehicle Crime – There had been a 5% reduction in this category between October 2017 and October 2018;
- Significant amount of work had taken place in response to a spate of mopeds being stolen in the district whereby they had been ridden in a dangerous manner and had been causing anti-social behaviour. This had resulted in some arrests with stolen mopeds being recovered.

Members then asked questions and made comments as follows:

- There appeared to be an increase in the acceptable levels for crime recording. There should be an increase in policing resources, instead of increasing the acceptable levels;
- Did the Police breakdown the reporting categories into serious and minor injuries incidents?
- Was there a percentage of the high risk crimes that resulted in prosecutions in the reports compiled by the police?
- Was human trafficking also reported in the district?
- Did the Police also monitor drug activity in the district?
- The Police were doing a great job;
- How cooperative were residents in supporting the work of the Police?
- Could the Panel be given a presentation on the Police response times to emergency calls?

Responding to Member questions Chief Inspector Sharon Adley and Inspector Connor made the following comments:

- CI Adley explained that crime categories were not broken down into serious and minor crimes but clearly there would be greater investigative investment for those crimes considered serious, which is what the public would expect – there will always be a proportionate response to individual crimes taking into account the nature of the crime and the wishes of the victim. CI Adley was unable to provide percentages relating to prosecutions.
- Human trafficking was a hidden crime that required continuous monitoring to identify the traffickers;
- The local communities did give significant support to community safety work activities for which the police were extremely grateful;
- The police response to calls could be a presentation topic on its own as CI Adley did not have this information to hand. However, she stressed that those calls graded as emergency calls were, wherever possible, responded to immediately.

Members thanked CI Adley and Insp Connor and then noted the report.

**POST MEETING NOTE:** Regarding the question 'acceptable levels for crime recording' - CI Adley had since this meeting spoken with the analyst to provide the following update: The graphs which were presented at the meeting showed two red lines which are the upper and lower control limits for the district, which are two standard deviations from the mean. This shows anticipated levels of crime. Anything outside of these two lines would be considered unusual and require further understanding. There was an upward step change in May in all crime which was due to the actual level of crime being above the average (green line) over a set number of periods. This then came down during August. (Thanet is affected by seasonal changes as explained during the meeting). These step changes generate a new average. These graphs enabled the Police to predict policing response – it did not mean that the Police were accepting of these increased levels.

**24. EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PANEL CALL-IN OF CABINET MEMBER DECISION - DIGITAL PARKING PILOT PROJECT**

Councillor Bayford, Leader of Council introduced the item for debate and led the discussion by initially responding to questions that were forwarded to him ahead of the meeting. The Leader acknowledged the fact that the decision and its related report did not provide enough content for Members to understand fully some of the issues relating to the decision. The Leader and the portfolio holder were given additional information through a briefing by officers.

Councillor Messenger spoke under Council Procedure 20.1.

In seeking clarity on the decision made by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Coastal Development, the Panel asked the following questions:

- Was the licence for the software being used for this pilot project specific to the project or was it owned by the Council so that it did not make an additional cost to Council later on?
- How many people took part in the survey? Which car parks were involved in the survey? What types of questions were being asked?
- Was there payment made for the investigative work done by Canterbury City Council?
- Will the facility for auto car registration number recordings be accessed by other agencies like the Police, if requested?
- What was the back up in instances where a credit card payment was declined?
- What was the aim of the project?
- Did the corporate management team consider this project a priority?

Responding to Member questions Councillor Bayford and Hannah Thorpe, Head of Communications and Digital said the following:

- The Council had been working with Canterbury City Council on this project and had used their procurement process to get best price for the software. The software could be used by other car parks owned by the Council;
  - A customer survey was carried out in July 2018. This was a two week survey and ninety three respondents contributed to the results of the survey;
  - The questions focused on how the car parks were used and what users would like and random times were used (which included morning, lunch time and evenings) and survey was mainly conducted between Mondays and Fridays. This was in order to capture more of the local rather than visitors needs ;
  - The six car parks that took part in the survey were Vere Road, Albion Street, Trinity Square, Dreamland, St Peters Park Road and Crofts Place car parks
  - The Digital Team conducted the survey;
  - The six car parks were selected after a benefit effort matrix was used. This looked at the access to the car park, configuration and size of the park, current income of the park and cost involved to implement the pilot project;
  - Some of the feedback included that the residents wanted to pay the exact amount that they would have parked in the car parks;
  - By working with Canterbury City Council, TDC had learnt some lessons and would avoid some of the pitfalls experienced by CCC;
  - TDC was looking to a ticketless system. This should help with addressing the likely problem of queuing to get into or out of the car park;
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- The aim of the project was to give the residents the experience of using a simple digital payment experience and reduce enforcement;
  - This would also give a personalized experience to the public;
  - The pilot is expected to be a year (although not yet confirmed);

- The public would now have to pay for exact amount of time parked and remove the need for individuals to rush back to the park to avoid affine for running out of parking time;
- Digital payment would give the Council real time information
- Pre and post pilot project revenue will be compared. The number of fines for pre and post pilot would also be compared;
- Royal Harbour Car Park was discounted from the pilot because the site was not currently owned by the Council;
- Digital facility gives flexibility and cost effective management of the car parks;
- Since parking was always a perennial problem, changing the way the service was delivered to the public might improve the experience of using car parks owned by the Council and would improve the way these parks were managed;
- The Police could request any information in the pursuit of criminal activities. There were specific protocols for requesting specific information across agencies;
- There would be a grace period to make the payment in instances where an individual's payment attempt was initially declined.

The Panel decided not to take any further action, thanked the Leader and noted the report.

## **25. ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Mr Bob Porter, Head of Housing & Planning Services and Ms Victoria May, Housing Options Manager introduced the report and requested Members to comment. Mr Porter highlighted the following:

- Councils were required by law to adopt a Housing Allocations Policy and the current policy was adopted in 2013;
- Since then there have been some legislative changes that required changes to the current policy;
- A public consultation on the proposed policy had started and any significant changes to the proposals would be presented to Cabinet on 15 January 2019;
- There were five key areas to be changed in the current policy. These included:
  - Key workers to be included in the policy under Bands B and C;
  - One suitable offer to be made to an individual on the housing waiting list;
  - Homeless Priority: Homeless households, who applied prior to 3 April 2018 and are owed a permanent housing duty by the council, will now be included in Band B;
  - The timescale for individuals on anti social behaviour orders placed in Band D would be twelve months;
  - Those individuals with arrears would be placed in Band D until they cleared their arrears.

In response to the presentation Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- What were the eligibility criteria for key worker list?
- Could the list be changed to reflect the local needs like adding care support workers?
- Did having an open policy for the armed services personnel create a significant level of attraction from this group to register on the local housing waiting list?
- Did council have a policy for not housing single mothers near neighbours with a history of anti-social behaviour?
- Why was it that victims of harassment are moved rather than the perpetrators?

Officers responded as follows:

- The key worker list was developed by the Government. However the Council could add other professional occupations to the list;
- How long an individual stayed in Band D depended on their circumstances. However it was also a requirement that they would have to clear or reduce their arrears;
- Council usually published approximate waiting times;
- There is only limited demand as there only a few households in that group that had registered on the waiting list;
- With regards to anti-social behaviour; the Council and Housing Associations initially aim to resolve disputes without the need for anyone to move, this may include mediation or enforcement action against the perpetrator. In serious cases a repossession order against the perpetrator might be sought. There is provision within the policy for victims of anti-social behaviour to be moved if this is necessary to protect them from harm. Households with a history of serious anti-social behaviour can be excluded them from lettings in areas of particular sensitivity.

There being no further comments to make Members welcomed the proposals and noted the report.

**26. REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19**

The Panel request a presentation from Councillor Savage, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Operational Services on 'How effective and efficient was the delivery of Operational Services to residents.'

The Chairman reminded Members to forward key questions related to the topic ahead of the meeting to assist the portfolio holder with the preparation for the presentation.

Members noted the report.

**27. FORWARD PLAN AND EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST FOR PERIOD 10 OCTOBER 2018 - 31 MARCH 2019**

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.30 pm