DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on Wednesday 6 July 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor R J Wells (Chairman)
Councillor A S Sandhu, MBE (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor M J Bryant
Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill
Councillor D J Mote
Councillor Mrs J A Rickwood
Councillor M J Street

ABSENT: Councillor Mrs A D Allen

Dartford Borough Council Officers:-

Sheri Green – Strategic Director
Colin Newmarch – Enforcement Manager/CSU
Matt Roberts – Community Safety Officer/CSU

CABINET MEMBERS: Councillor D A Hammock

PRESENT TO RESPOND TO ISSUES RAISED BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Supt. Murphy – Kent Police
C. I. P Painter – Partnerships Officer, Kent Police
Insp. P Cooke – Dartford Neighbourhood Insp./CSU

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs A Allen (Committee invitee). Councillor M J Bryant had previously advised that he would be delayed.

The Chairman welcomed fellow new Members, Officers and guests from Kent Police and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Councillor R J Wells also clarified for new Committee members that Councillor Mrs Ann Allen and Councillor David Hammock had been invited to attend given their respective Lead Member portfolios for Community and Taxpayer Involvement and Licensing and Enforcement.

It was subsequently agreed and RESOLVED:
That Councillor Mrs A Allen and Councillor D Hammock be given a standing invitation to attend all future meetings of the Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2011

RESOLVED:

That in the absence of any Members who had served on the Committee during the previous municipal year, the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26 January 2011 be noted.

4. URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items for consideration.

5. TO CONSIDER REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES (IF ANY)

There were no references from other Committees.

6. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (CCFA) (IF ANY)

There were no Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA) to consider.

7. FORWARD PLAN

Members noted the contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 October 2011.

The Strategic Director clarified for new Members that the Committee would only seek to consider Forward Plan items which contained a Crime & Disorder dimension.

8. INTRODUCTION FROM THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Members received a presentation from the Strategic Director on the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) covering the Partnership’s history, primary legislation governing its activities and the context in which the CSP operated to combat crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Dartford and Gravesham.

Members were advised of the following:
The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made provision for multi-agency partnerships to develop and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder. The Act also requires Local Authorities to carry out all functions with due regard to the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area;

A Home Office review in 2006 recommended the formation of a joint Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) between Dartford and Gravesham to reduce the risk of overlap between the partnership Agencies, given the Authorities co-location in North Kent;

In June 2010 the CDRP changed its name to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), in line with national legislation aimed at increasing public awareness and understanding of Community Safety issues;

The Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005 and the Policing and Crime Act 2009 extended the responsibilities of CSP’s and Local Authority’s to include tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), substance misuse and reducing re-offending;

The CSP are required to (i) prepare an annual Strategic Assessment document effectively a “crime audit” of performance each autumn, and (ii) produce a partnership plan - Community Safety Plan based on the findings of the Strategic Assessment;


Partnership Organisational Structure: The CSP Strategic Group comprises senior representatives from each of the statutory partners and is chaired by the Leaders of Dartford and Gravesham Councils, alternating annually, Cllr. Burden is the current chair; CSP Support Group – comprises operational officers from each of the statutory partners, chaired annually and alternately by Dartford and Gravesham Members to alternate with the Strategic Group Chairman, Cllr. Hunnisett is the current chair; Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Units; CSU Sub-Groups - targeting specific priority crime areas, subject to annual review under the Strategic Assessment process; CSP Management Group comprising DBC Strategic Director, her Gravesend equivalent and Kent Police Chief Inspector responsible for Partnerships;

Dartford Community Safety Unit (CSU): formed in 2007 represents the operational arm of the CSP in Dartford providing both a framework and environment for co-located working between Council Officers and Kent Police staff. Jointly managed by Neighbourhood Police Inspector and DBC Enforcement & Regulatory Services Manager;

CSU support mechanisms include: incident reports, crime stats, Intel, and GIS hot-spot mapping;

CSU support partners include: DBC CCTV; Kent Police Neighbourhood Team; British Transport Police; DTAC (Dartford Town Against Crime); Kent Fire & Rescue Service; Ambulance Service; Arriva; KCC Community Wardens, Kent Highway Services, Trading Standards, Education, Youth Offending and Youth Services; DBC Housing and
other Registered Social Landlords; Bluewater Management; Ebbsfleet Security and Bridge Development Management;

- CSU Tools and Powers: Daily Tasking & Coordination Group (T&CG); Covert and Overt CCTV; Warning Letters; ABA’s, ASBO’s, ASBI’s; Section 59 Warnings; Dispersal Orders; S27 Orders (Direction to Leave Locality); Alcohol Control Zones; Test Purchase Operations and ‘Crack House’ Closures;
- CSU benefits – lower crime rates sustained since 2006/07;
- Crime and Disorder (O&S) Committees: Section 19 Police and Justice Act 2006 (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, required every Local Authority to establish a committee empowered to review or scrutinise decisions and actions taken by the responsible authorities (CSP as a whole), in the discharge of their crime and disorder functions and to meet at least once annually;
- Committee’s remit: Crime and Disorder related scrutiny of the CSP and Partner Agencies insofar as the Partners’ activities relate to the CSP; CSP Framework – Strategic Assessment and Community Safety Plan; Performance; Cross-cutting topics and issues of local concern e.g. Policing the Night Time Economy; Specific enterprises/interventions e.g. Grabbacab;
- Scrutiny Mechanisms: Work Programme – agreed with the CSP - covering a range of issues for the year and beyond which reflect local need; Draw – downs (ad-hoc scrutiny of crime and disorder issues); Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA) – last resort mechanism open to Ward Councillors when all other avenues have failed.

In subsequent wide-ranging Member discussion, the following points were confirmed for the Committee:

- Formation of a joint Crime and Disorder (O&S) Committee with Gravesham Council (based on the joint CSP model) would require Secretary of State approval. However, each Authority would still be bound to maintain it’s own separate Crime and Disorder (O&S) Committee under the provisions of the 1998 Act. A joint committee had previously been considered and rejected;
- A related point was that the present re-structuring of Kent Police might impact on the rationale for a joint Dartford and Gravesham CSP;
- CSP / CSU victim support mechanisms included; a CSU Public Re-assurances Officer to contact and support victims of crime. In addition, Kent Police ran a scheme for victims which coordinated support and services for victims from a wide range of support groups;
- CSU and Development Control Officers met regularly with developers e.g. Tesco over the Lowfield Street re-development. Discussions continued with Tesco over planning proposals and the potential impact on crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues for the Town Centre. Proposed measures included an upgrade to the current CCTV coverage in the area, plus linking the CSU to the internal Tesco CCTV system, similar discussions are underway for the proposed new Dartford Station and the Northern Gateway development;
Grabbacab Scheme and its funding was explained, together with plans to seek further funding for the Scheme. Officers undertook to provide further details to Members outside the meeting. As part of an integrated approach with the Dartford Street Pastors, a building in Market Street has been found to allow for the creation of a designated Safe Place for those at risk, to wait for Grabbacab transportation.

RESOLVED:

1. That new Members be invited to visit the CSU and attend the Daily Tasking & Coordination Group (T&CG) morning briefing meetings;
2. That new Members be furnished with an update on the Grabbacab Scheme together with past papers.

9. **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2010/2011 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

It was agreed and RESOLVED:

1. That the Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee Annual Report for the 2010/2011 municipal year be noted;
2. That Members and Officers be commended for their efforts during the 2010/11 municipal year;

10. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN**

The Chairman invited the Community Safety Officer (CSO) to take Members through the Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan for 2011-12.

The CSO advised Members that the annual Community Safety Plan (the Plan) agreed by the Community Safety Partnership in March each year, was informed by the Strategic Assessment (SA), a performance document agreed by all Partnership Agencies and the CSP as a whole in December/January. The SA document identified priorities based on the views of the Partnership Agencies, residents and elected Members. The identified priority areas were then taken forward for inclusion into the annual Plan which guided the work of the Partnership Agencies for the following year. This process ensured that the focus on the Community Safety Partnership’s agreed priorities was maintained.

Six priorities had been identified for the current financial year 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012:
• **Priority 1**: Reducing Violent Crime and Repeat Offences of Domestic Abuse;

• **Priority 2**: Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Associated Environmental Crime – Addressing the quality of life for teenagers was seen as crucial in making positive progress towards achieving this goal;

• **Priority 3**: Improving Safety for Young People and Reducing Youth Offending – Significantly, Teenagers as a group accounted for only 2% of crimes committed, but were resource intensive as a category for help and could be neglected as a result;

• **Priority 4**: Reducing Offences of Theft and Handling Stolen Goods – the current high value of scrap metal was a particular incentive for criminals. Preventative measures being undertaken including securing building sites and warning scrap metal dealers;

• **Priority 5**: Tackling Substance Misuse – With the exception of steroid use, the use of needles to inject class A drugs (Heroin) is not a significant problem in Dartford. However, the proximity to the Metropolitan border did pose problems with Cocaine related cross-border crime and Cannabis cultivation;

• **Priority 6**: Reducing Re-offending – Kent Probation Service held the key role. But the role of the Courts in sentencing was also crucial, combined with a holistic approach employing all Partner Agencies to achieve reductions.

The following points were clarified for Members following subsequent wide-ranging discussion with Officers and Kent Police representatives:

• DBC successfully employed Banning Orders in shops which are part of the Dartford Town Against Crime Scheme (DTAC) in Dartford town centre. The Orders covered all age groups, not just young people, and were co-ordinated under the direction of a dedicated member of staff in the CSU team;

• Other preventative measures aimed primarily at policing the night time economy in Dartford included; Drink Banning Orders, Alcohol Control Zones, up to 48 hour bans issued on the spot by police and the proactive use of CCTV in the Town Centre;

• The Shop Safe system of radio operation between retail outlets (part of the DTAC scheme) in the Town Centre, continued to be an aid to apprehending offenders;

• A recent vehicle stop check operation conducted by Enforcement Officers at Pepperhill waste facility had proved successful in helping combat vehicles involved in crime and fly-tipping;

• North Kent Police resources were targeted at making Dartford and Gravesham difficult targets for criminals, employing a variety of preventative measures, in addition to pursuing arrests;

• Bluewater was recognised to have a very high visitor through-put of non-residents which skewed the per 1,000 population crime statistics for Dartford;
Noting an increase in public perception of “rubbish and litter lying around” (Agenda page 74 – 2.2.1): Members saw a crucial role for the Council in setting a good example to tenants and residents by ensuring that rubbish and litter was collected from the streets and communal areas by Council contractors as appropriate;

Members noted a similar increase in public perception and concern over “Teenagers hanging around”: provision of amenities for teenagers through the planning process was seen as an essential element to a long-term solution. Officers assured the Committee that the Council Planning Department liaised with CSU Officers on a regular basis over such concerns and possible solutions;

It was also clarified for Members that Licensing and Enforcement issues lay within the remit of the CSU;

Members were advised that Operation Horizon, co-ordinated by Dartford CSU and deploying Council, North Kent Police and Kent Probation Service Officers through all Dartford Wards on a 3-monthly basis, continued to achieve significant successes in combating all areas of crime in the Borough including; ASB, littering, graffiti and vandalism. The CSU canvassed Ward Councillors and residents over current concerns prior to Operation Horizon visiting a Ward and deployed resources accordingly. The process was completed by publishing Operation Horizon results in Ward Newsletters. Members agreed that it was essential to publish as many “good news” stories as possible to help increase public confidence and perception of crime being tackled. Officers further advised that should the need arise, Wards could be visited more frequently within the 3 monthly schedule to tackle particularly urgent crime problems;

Community Payback Scheme: Members were invited to send suggestions to the CSU Enforcement Manager for future work areas to be undertaken by low level offenders under the Probation Service scheme. At present some 6-8 offenders undertook work every 2 weeks in Dartford, but this might be increased on request;

Members asked that both Ward Councillors and Dartford Councillors elected to Kent County Council be kept appraised of all Operation Horizon and Community Payback proposals for the Borough.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members pass suggestions for future Community Payback Scheme work to the Enforcement Manager, CSU;
2. That the Enforcement Manager liaise with Kent Probation over the possibility of extending the Community Payback Scheme in Dartford;
3. That CSU Officers keep all Councillors, including Kent County Council Members resident in Dartford, appraised of upcoming Operation Horizon activities prior to Ward’s being visited;
4. That CSU Officers and CSP Partnership Agencies ensure that all “good news stories” concerning crime prevention are published in appropriate journals and newsletters.

11. PERFORMANCE

Members were asked to note the contents of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Performance Progress Report approved by the Partnership at its meeting on 6 June 2011. The report compared Kent Police recorded crime statistics for the period April 2009 – March 2010 to the period April 2010 – March 2011.

Members were advised that the figures showed a headline reduction of recorded crime of 6.6% over the two periods. An updated performance report was due to be presented to the CSP Support Group later in July.

Member subsequently held a wide ranging discussion with Officers and Kent Police representatives on a variety of topics including:

- The distorting effect of Bluewater on the crime statistics for Dartford’s overall performance, and the particular impact on Stone. The majority of Bluewater crime was perceived as cross-border: offences not committed by Dartford residents but combined with Dartford statistics given Bluewater’s geographical location within the Borough. It was noted that the Bluewater Conference centre was due to open shortly, increasing the potential number of visitors to the complex;
- Public perception of crime versus the reality of Partner Agency performance on the ground;
- The capacity for crime surveys to throw-up misleading conclusions depending on what sections of the community were canvassed;
- The subjective nature of perception of ASB in the Community: “teenagers hanging around” - did not necessarily constitute ASB;
- Despite distortions and subjective perceptions, crime statistics enabled the CSP to monitor crime patterns and trends, especially “spikes” of increased activity in particular crime categories. However, statistics were not absolute indicators;
- The success of the Community Warden Scheme. Members were encouraged to contact the Community Warden Supervisor who ‘hot desks’ from the CSU;
- Young People needed to be encouraged and any good news stories – such as the recent Triangle Awards – publicised, to try and engender inclusion and increase a positive public perception of Young People in the community;
- PACT meetings: Ward Members should continue to report back resident’ concerns to the CSU;
- The potential impact of the 2012 Olympics for Dartford in particular and Kent in general, including the predicted influx on Olympic spectators
from the Continent via Eurostar. The proposal to designate Ebbsfleet International as the principal point of arrival/departure in Kent for spectators to Games events in Stratford was particularly significant.

RESOLVED:

1. That the CSU provide Members with details by category of population for the latest crime survey figures;
2. That the Strategic Director approaches the CSP Chairman with a view to him writing to the appropriate Minister at the Home Office concerning the potential for the new ‘crime maps’ to give a distorted view of crime statistics for the Borough, particularly regarding the location of Bluewater.

12. DRAW - DOWN (IF ANY)

No items were Drawn-down for consideration.

13. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2011-2012 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman invited the Strategic Director to advise the new Committee on possible subjects for inclusion in their Work Programme for the 2011-12 municipal year.

The Strategic Director advised Members that any overview elements proposed by the Committee for their Work Programme would require notification to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). However, ad-hoc scrutiny of performance areas (Draw-downs), were not subject to prior CSP approval.

The Strategic Director commented that since its inception in 2009, the Committee had focussed on Council and Kent Police activities. She suggested that the new Committee might wish to widen the scope of the Work Programme for 2011-12 to include the work of the other partner Agencies in the CSP, within the crime and disorder context.

She suggested a rolling work programme covering the next 2-3 years, given that the Committee only met bi-annually and made the following suggestions:

- Kent Fire and Rescue Service – a vital and active service area with scope for public education and intervention;
- Kent Probation – measures to combat re-offending and the extension of the Community Payback scheme in Dartford were of particular interest;
- NHS West Kent – scrutiny in the short-term might prove difficult given the radical changes being proposed for the Health framework;
• Kent County Council – KCC’s responsibilities for Youth, Community and Trading Standards under the 2-tier system for the County were obvious areas for Committee interest;
• London 2012 Olympics – a one-off item focussing on the impact of the Games for Dartford. In particular, the implications of the use of Ebbsfleet International for transporting participants and spectators to the Games sites in London and the potential for increased cross-border crime, including from the Continent.

In addition to the above Work Programme proposals, Members were reminded of the Committee’s statutory obligations to:

• Consider the CSP’s annual Strategic Assessment (SA) document;
• Consider the CSP’s subsequent annual Community Safety Plan document;
And
• On an ad-hoc basis, Draw-down items of local concern e.g. scrutiny of the Dartford Night-Time economy (2010/11 item).

Summarising the proposals, the Strategic Director advised that the aim was for a balanced Work Programme, substantive but not over-loaded, to enable Members to give considered and constructive feedback to the CSP and Partnership Agencies.

In subsequent discussion, Members expressed particular concern on the need to tackle mental health issues in the community; both in terms of mental health sufferers as victims and as offenders. Kent Police representatives acknowledged those suffering from mental health problems were an increasing strain on police resources. The Committee therefore asked that Health be added to the Work Programme for 2011-12.

The Strategic Director explained that consideration of West Kent NHS’s activities lay within the remit of the Committee, but only in so far as it impacted on crime and disorder. However, she was aware of more general concerns regarding the impact of mental health issues on the community and suggested it might be possible to arrange a broader, joint, consideration of mental health issues by the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees as a one-off exercise.

In further separate discussion, Members focussed on the future of the Kent Police Authority (KPA) as a CSP partner Agency, in light of proposed Government legislation to replace Police Authorities with directly elected Police Commissioners.

The Strategic Director advised that Officers would keep the situation under review and that Members would be advised of any changes in legislation and the implications for the KPA and the CSP in due course. She added that once the outcome was known, it might be appropriate to invite either a
representative of the Kent Police Authority or the Chief Executive, to brief the Committee, possibly in January 2012.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Strategic Director draw-up a draft Committee Work Programme for 2011 – 12, to include rolling items as discussed with Members on 6 July;
2. That the Strategic Director ascertain support for a broader consideration of Health issues; in particular mental health issues in the community and the impact on Kent Police and other partner agency resources; and make suitable arrangements in consultation with the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman;
3. That Officers be asked to monitor the progress of proposed Government legislation due to be laid before the House on the re-structuring of Police Authorities and the implications for the Community Safety Partnership (CSP);
4. That the Chief Executive of the Kent Police Authority (KPA) be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to update Members on developments following proposed legislative changes covering Police Authorities;
5. That the Kent Police “Olympics Liaison Officer” be asked to make a presentation to the Committee.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 25 January 2012 at 7 p.m. in Committee Room B12.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Councillor R J Wells
CHAIRMAN