

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 12 February 2020.

PRESENT: Councillor C S McLean (Chairman)
Councillor A S Sandhu, MBE (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor B Garden
Councillor A Gaskin
Councillor K J Grehan
Councillor P M Harman
Councillor D J Mote
Councillor T Oliver

ABSENT: None

Dartford Borough Council Officers:-

Sheri Green	– Strategic Director (External Services)
Tony Henley	– Community Safety Manager, CSU
Jade Ransley	– Community Safety Officer, CSU

CABINET MEMBERS: By standing invitation: Councillor Ann Allen MBE (Youth, Health & Wellbeing) and Councillor Richard Wells (Community Safety) and Dartford representative to the Kent Police & Crime Panel

PRESENT TO RESPOND TO ISSUES RAISED BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

C.I. Neil Loudon	– Dartford & Gravesham District Commander, Kent Police
Inspector Gavin Wade	– Dartford CSU and Bluewater Inspector, Kent Police

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were declarations of interest.

20. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2019

RESOLVED:

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

1. That the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 July 2019 be confirmed as accurate.

21. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for Members to consider.

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

There were no references from other Committees for Members to consider.

23. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman reminded Members, particularly those new to the Committee who were attending proceedings for the first time, that the Committee's principal role was to act as 'critical friend' to the Dartford & Gravesham Community Safety Partnership, in their work to combat crime and anti-social behaviour. In practical terms, this meant developing good working relationships with the Council's Community Safety Unit team, and with Inspector Gavin Wade and his Dartford Community Police team.

His experience both as Committee Chairman, and previously as Lead Member for Enforcement, was that both the CSU team and Kent Police appreciated Members' input on matters of particular concern to them and their residents. He encouraged all Members to bring their concerns to the attention of both teams, on an individual basis as Ward Councillors, and via the Committee's meetings.

24. REGULATION 9 NOTICE

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the contents of the Regulation 9 Notice for the period 15 January 2020 to 31 May 2020.

25. KENT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL (PCP) UPDATE

Members received a verbal update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety regarding discussion at the Kent Police and Crime Panel (PCP) meeting held on 6 February 2020, which he had attended in his role as Dartford representative.

PCP Members had discussed and agreed the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC's) Plan, Associated Budget and Precept proposals for **2020/21**, including approval of a proposed increase in the policing precept amounting to **£10** per year or **5.2%** increase in council tax on Band D properties. The measure would increase funding for Kent Police by an estimated **£8.4M p.a.** and be used by the PCC to:

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

- Recruit 36 new PCSOs across Kent to help tackle crime in 21 identified 'hotspots';
- 100 more police staff;
- 147 more police officers in year 1;
- a further 34 police officers in year 2 (by 31 March 2021) bringing Kent Police officer numbers up to its highest recorded level.

Panel discussion had also focussed on 'County Lines' activity across Kent, whereby young children and adolescents are directed and/or driven to other Counties and the Metropolis to deliver drugs. The Panel had agreed unanimously to support all/any measures to educate children to the dangers of participating in such activities, including the funding of more Youth Engagement officers to visit schools.

The PCC had also announced a new initiative for the formation of 10 new Police Cadet Units in Kent for 13-17 year olds, with one Unit to be located in Dartford. The Police Cadet curriculum focussed on team work and leadership skills, and prioritised engagement with vulnerable adolescents, and those who had already come into contact with the criminal justice system. Cadet Units were run on a voluntary basis and required venues for their activities.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder had asked to be kept informed regarding the proposed Police Cadet Unit for Dartford and asked Members to consider possible locations in the Borough for its operation. Two initial suggestions from Members were Darenth Parish Council Hall and the Community Hall on the Tree Estate.

The District Commander added that he was aware of a further PCC initiative for a Mini Cadet Scheme for 10-13 year olds, and hoped to provide further details for the Committee when they became available later in the year.

In response to an expression of concern from a Member, the District Commander advised that proposed savings by Kent Police of some **£9M** would not impact on front-line policing. Savings would be achieved through improved partnership working in back-office functions across Kent, including economies of scale in procurement through the bulk purchasing of vehicles, equipment and uniforms.

The Chairman and Members thanked the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for his verbal update and noted the contents of the Minutes of the PCP meeting on 24 September 2019, as submitted in the agenda papers.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the summary of discussion provided by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, regarding proceedings at the Kent Police and Crime Panel (PCP) meeting held on 6 February 2020, which he had attended as Dartford representative;

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

2. That Members note the contents of the published Minutes of the PCP meeting held on 24 September 2019 as presented in the agenda papers.

26. PUBLIC MISUSE OF NITROUS OXIDE CANISTERS

The report from the Community Safety Manager (CSM) updated Members on the current situation and implications, regarding the use of nitrous oxide (NO) as a psychoactive substance across the Borough. A map detailing 'hotspots' in Dartford where spent nitrous oxide canisters were repeatedly dumped, was attached as Appendix A to the report.

The CSM highlighted the following principal points for Members:

- Nitrous oxide (also known as laughing gas) was a substance with a number of legitimate uses in medicine and catering;
- When inhaled nitrous oxide could make users feel euphoric and relaxed, with some users reporting hallucinations, and was used recreationally in a number of settings primarily amongst 16-24 year olds in clubs, private residences, parks and car parks;
- Possession of nitrous oxide was *not* an offence, but the supply or offer to supply the substance to another, for other than legitimate uses *was* an offence, under Section 5 of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, but difficult to prove (see below).

The CSM said that he appreciated Members' concerns over the misuse of nitrous oxide as a psychoactive substance by certain sections of the public in Dartford. In particular, the unsightly dumping of spent nitrous oxide canisters which impacted significantly on the public's perception of safety within an area; defined as a 'signal' crime - any criminal incident that causes a change in the public's behaviour and/or beliefs about their security.

He advised Members that the recreational misuse of nitrous oxide presented challenges to three main agencies:

- Public Health (PH): in relation to the potentially harmful effects of the substance for recreational users. PH had been invited to send a representative to attend the proceedings to provide information on the number of A&E admissions that could be attributed to nitrous oxide ingestion. They had been unable to do so but had provided some general information. This possibly indicated the low level of concern PH held over the issue at both national and local level;
- Police: nitrous oxide could put users at risk, but the effects of nitrous oxide inhalation to the person only lasted some 30 seconds, with traces of the substance leaving the body after 10 minutes. This made it very difficult for police officers to prove *impairment*, e.g. in relation to driving a motor vehicle. Possession of nitrous oxide was *not* an offence, and the offence of '*supply or offering to supply [nitrous oxide] as a psychoactive substance to another person*' was difficult to prove, given

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

that most purchases were web-based. As a consequence, the response of the Police to 111 and 999 calls from the public regarding misuse of NO had to be prioritised against the need to deploy police resources to tackle crime;

- The Council: in terms of littering through the discarding of spent NO canisters by misusers, seen by many communities as being associated with criminal activity (see 'signal crime' above).

Given this background, the Council had identified litter enforcement as the most effective weapon to combat the current fashion in the recreational use of nitrous oxide as a psychoactive substance, and its perceived impact on the community. Litter enforcement measures were supplemented by the enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in operation in Town Ward since October 2017, and the Council's CCTV surveillance operations, including in Westgate car park, a known misuse 'hotspot'.

Detailed measures undertaken by the Council and Kent Police included:

- The issuing of a fixed penalty notice (FPN) where a spent NO canister is *seen* to be discarded by Civil Enforcement Officers (including Kingdom officers operating on behalf of the Council), Police or Police and Community Support Officers. However, the *modus operandi* around the misuse of nitrous oxide [frequently by a group in or near a motor vehicle] was not conducive to effective enforcement and fining through CCTV evidence. In the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019 two fixed penalty notices for littering had been successfully issued in Westgate car park (£75 per fine) and 1 caution for the offence in the same location. A single fly-tipping FPN for a £250 fine had been successfully issued for an offence at New Barn recycling point;
- Where evidence of a litter offence is recorded on CCTV the Council's environmental enforcement team will take appropriate action (e.g. no action, caution, fixed penalty ticket or court appearance);
- Joint working by CSU officers and the Dartford Community Police team had led to the identification, mapping and monitoring of nitrous oxide 'hotspots' [Appendix A to the report refers]. When dumping of spent NO canisters is reported by the public, prompt clearance is effected by the Council's waste contractor on average, within 1.77 days of notification. The 'hotspots' had also been subjected to a poster campaign advising against misuse of NO and the offence of supply under the Act, and the penalties such behaviour would attract.

Regarding enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) introduced by the Council in October 2017 for Town Ward to: *prohibit the ingestion, inhalation, injection, smoking, processing or otherwise use of intoxicating substances*; no prosecutions had been effected under the Act to date, and the issue of FPNs for the offence of littering therefore remained the most effective deterrent measure in the Council's armoury.

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

The Chairman thanked the CSM for summarising his report for the Committee and invited Members to pose questions.

In response to specific questions from Members, the CSM, the CSO, the District Commander and the Dartford Community Police Inspector, confirmed the following points for the Committee:

- The position of central government on the misuse of nitrous oxide was not known. Case law was being employed by local authorities and police as appropriate, given that nitrous oxide was *not* classed as a psychoactive substance under the Act, and misuse *per se* was *not* therefore an offence. Prosecutions for *supply or intent to supply [nitrous oxide] to another* under the Act, remained difficult to obtain given the preponderance of web-based sales;
- Asking central government to prohibitively tax the sale of nitrous oxide canisters [as a deterrent to misuse] would be inappropriate, given that misuse was *not* an offense and legitimate users of NO canisters e.g. food retailers and businesses, would be unfairly penalised;
- PSPOs were primarily a preventative measure, enforcement and the securing of subsequent convictions under the terms of a PSPO were notoriously difficult to obtain. The positive effect of the current PSPO was the reduction in littering in the Town Centre, as observed by Kingdom officers. All NO misuse 'hotspots' had benefited from a poster campaign by the Council. A further high-profile week-end 'blitz' of 'hotspots' by Council Enforcement officers [as proposed by a Member], would be expensive and would not attract PCC funding, which was currently targeted at violence reduction. The Cabinet Member for Youth, Health and Wellbeing undertook to examine the possibility of a contribution from her KCC Member's Fund, to finance future activity to combat NO misuse;
- Educating youngsters on the misuse of nitrous oxide was recognised as a key objective. The PCC's initiative for a Police Cadet Unit in Dartford would help in this respect in the future. Targeting schools in Dartford through the Council's promotion of National Litter Day was a possible intermediate measure for consideration. Dartford's Youth Council was another forum in which to raise the topic, and the Cabinet Member undertook to add it to a future Forum agenda;
- The publication of 'good news' stories relating to the effective tackling of nitrous oxide misuse in the Borough was acknowledged as a useful tool, including by social media and Twitter, in a format that Councillors could 're-tweet' to their constituents.

The Chairman asked whether the terms of the present PSPO in Town Ward would be reviewed, to build-in possession of nitrous oxide in a public space as part of its measures. It was his understanding that some London authorities had updated extant PSPOs to this effect.

The CSM assured the Chairman and Members that possession of NO in a public space was already covered in the terms of the existing PSPO. The key

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

issue was enforcement, and the revenue to pay for enforcement measures to secure convictions. The current PSPO had been issued in October 2017, but under subsequent GDPR restrictions (May 2018), the Vehicle Licensing Authority was no longer permitted to provide third parties with personal details of vehicle owners [observed on Council CCTV cameras dumping nitrous oxide canisters] to enable 'after the event' enforcement. The Council had therefore concentrated its efforts on issuing fixed penalty notices (FPNs) by civil enforcement officers who *observed* littering offences being committed.

The Chairman next expressed his concern that Westgate car park, a known 'hotspot' for the misuse of nitrous oxide (and the dumping of spent canisters), would become subject to increasing levels of NO misuse during the warmer summer evenings.

He asked whether the police officers regularly deployed in the town centre to deal with disorder during the hours of the night time economy, would be using the terms of the current PSPO as a tool to address NO misuse and any consequent anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Westgate car park.

He also expressed concern over the admission of NO misusers into nearby nightclubs, and asked what responsibilities door staff at those clubs had in relation to refusing admission to patrons [under the licensing laws] whom they had observed inhaling nitrous oxide in Westgate or elsewhere.

The District Commander said that he was not able to provide police resources to specifically target NO misuse in the Westgate car park, over the need to combat criminal activity taking place during the hours of the night time economy.

The Chairman made clear that there was no expectation for the police to prioritise public misuse of NO, over the need to combat other serious criminal activities, but expressed his surprise that since its inception in 2017, the police had yet to secure a single enforcement action or prosecution under the terms of the PSPO.

In response to the Chairman's further remarks, the District Commander confirmed that where police officers observed misuse of NO taking place (or the attendant litter offence of dumping of spent NO canisters); appropriate police action would be taken in relation to any consequent anti-social behaviour (ASB). However, police patrols would not be increased or dedicated to combating NO misuse in Westgate car park or elsewhere in the town centre.

The Community Safety Officer advised the Chairman that the door staff at the Atik nightclub [next to Westgate car park] were proactive in advising CSU staff of car registration plate numbers if they observed NO misuse and dumping of spent canisters from vehicles.

The CSM and the District Commander supported the CSO in her comments regarding the positive cooperation of door staff at the Atik nightclub. The Club

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

was a member of D-TAC (Dartford Town against Crime) and as such, benefitted from the exchange of information with the Council's CCTV staff, to combat crime in the town centre.

The CSM confirmed that he could explore the possibility of putting posters in known NO misuse 'hotspots' including Westgate car park, however this would require additional funding, and continue to work closely with Atik staff over the identification of offenders in the proximity of the nightclub. The District Commander added for Members' clarification, that the Police had no powers of search under the terms of the PSPO.

The Chairman thanked the CSO, CSM and the District Commander for their further points of clarification for Members, but requested that the topic of NO misuse remain on the Committee's Work Plan, and that a further invitation be issued to Public Health Kent to attend a future meeting of the Committee, to advise Members on the public health aspects of the misuse of nitrous oxide as a psychoactive substance in the community.

The Strategic Director (External Services) acknowledged the Chairman's request, but advised that Public Health England did not have a proactive position in relation to the misuse of nitrous oxide in the community. She commented that instances of NO misuse in Westgate car park were generally not associated with the Atik nightclub, as perpetrators of ASB were in the main, too young to gain admittance to such clubs. However, Council officers would relay Members' concerns to the Atik, as part of their ongoing positive relationship with the club.

She added that gating Westgate car park or closing it overnight were not options open to the Council as it was utilised by nearby residents for overnight parking, and also benefitted from an electric car charging point.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the contents of the report;
2. That the topic of '*public misuse of nitrous oxide as a psychoactive substance*' remain on the Council's rolling Work Plan for 2020/21 and beyond;
3. That a further invitation be issued to Public Health Kent to attend a future meeting of the Committee to brief Members on the health implications of NO misuse.

27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Committee went into closed session to consider the contents of the CSP's Strategic Assessment 2019 document [EXEMP Item A], which had been provided to the Committee on an '*In-Confidence*' basis.

It was confirmed that no members of the press or public were present.

28. DARTFORD AND GRAVESHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2019

The covering report from the Community Safety Manager (CSM) asked Members to note the priorities identified in the SA 2019 document as adopted by the CSP at their meeting on 16 January 2020, and their incorporation into the Partnership's Community Safety Plan (2019-2022) at that meeting.

In addition to the agenda papers Members received a PowerPoint presentation from the CSM which summarised the key elements of the comprehensive SA 2019 document, including details of comparative performance between the two Boroughs across a range of crime-types on an annual basis, and how those performances compared to that of the County as a whole.

The CSM informed Members that earlier changes to crime categories introduced by the Home Office had now been in force for some 24 months, and that an annual comparative performance exercise was now relevant and worthwhile. It was not yet possible to say that the data for the 12 month period under review (1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019) had identified definite trends in crime categories, but the data had indicated 'spikes' in certain crime-types. Further annual comparison exercises would be required to establish whether present "spikes" in certain crimes had developed into trends.

The presentation summarised the 2019 SA document under the following categories:

Key Priorities

- Tackling Violent Crime including Domestic Abuse (DA)
- Tackling Persistent Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Environmental Crime
- Preventing Offending and Reducing Re-offending
- Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities

Performance Summary

Members were referred to comparative tables in the presentation which summarised Performance in each Borough and Kent as a whole, under 12 key crime-types on an annual basis. Changes in performance for each Borough and the County were indicated by green, red or blue arrows which represented an improvement, deterioration or no change in performance respectively, for each crime-type. The CSM and District Commander explained the data and context for Members information.

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

A **SWOT [Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats]** analysis was provided to Members based on the data that was recorded within the 2019 Strategic Assessment process.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined within the Strategic Assessment 2019 document would be incorporated into the CSP's Community Safety Strategy 2019-2021.

The CSM and the District Commander added the following comments of detail in relation to specific crime-types and areas of CSP operation in relation to Dartford:

Burglary Residential: This crime-trend had experienced a rise in reported incidents in Dartford in the period under review, following the *re*-categorisation of garages, sheds and outhouses as 'dwellings'. Dartford was in a uniquely vulnerable position for cross-border crime from Essex and the Metropolis. Co-operation with Essex and the Met police forces had intensified to deal with the high negative impact of this crime on victims, as part of the Chief Constable's Kent Control Strategy. A further Chief Constable initiative had been the setting up of North, West and East Kent detective teams of highly experienced officers who had made a series of key arrests.

Theft from Vehicles: A 'spike' in the theft of tools from vehicles had been identified in the 2019 SA but on the evidence of only 12 months data it was too early to label it as a crime trend. Preventative measures included advising the public to purchase 'Smartwater' driver packs to help deter criminals.

Domestic Abuse (DA): Combating the rise in incidents of DA was a Kent Police Force priority. Positive measures being taken included; better education of victims/potential victims, and increasing awareness of DA and the surrounding issues leading to the crime. Victim reluctance, and the subsequent withdrawal of complaints by victims when made, remained issues that made prosecution difficult, despite good ongoing work being undertaken by the Vulnerability Investment Team (VIT). Prosecutions were victim-focussed and based on evidential assessment despite victims withdrawing statements, and arrests for DA had risen. In cases where prosecutions were not secured, victims were sign-posted to available support services, including DA advisors working in police stations 'out of hours' to help victims on a 24 hour basis.

Shoplifting: Measures to combat this crime in Dartford under the D-TAC (Dartford Town against Crime) Scheme had been successful in the period under review. Initiatives by the new DTAC Intelligence Manager had had a significant impact, supported by the deployment of 2 dedicated PCs in the Town Centre, which had helped to achieve the highest monthly arrest rate on record.

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB): Improved use of CPNs and CPWs had been costly, but effective.

Strengths

The funding of the Dartford CSU operation by the Council was key to its stability. The provision of some PCC funding of the Council's CCTV system had also been a significant success and provided real gains and tangible outcomes. Funding for VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) had also produced positive outcomes and enabled enhanced inter-action between Dartford and Gravesham in this field.

The Vulnerable and Organised Crime Fora had proved to be a good enabling structure for effective partnership working between the Dartford CSU, Kent Police, Social Services, Health and Housing providers, as well as the DWP. The Dartford Environmental Enforcement team had also been effective in the period under review and benefitted from attending the daily CSU briefing meetings.

Meetings to tackle cross-border and gang-related crime were held on a quarterly basis and attended by Dartford's Community Safety Officer, together with representatives from Gravesham CSU, Kent and Met Police Forces and four adjacent London boroughs.

Data Analysis

The lack of Ward-based crime-trend data and data regarding Bluewater were significant weakness in the present data gathering system which Kent Police were addressing.

Performance

MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) performance in Dartford was gauged by the number of repeat victims of DA who sought help. There had been an increase in the number of repeat victim in the period under review compared to 2018, but there had also been an increase in DA cases overall. It was seen as a positive that victims of DA continued to seek the support of MARAC services. If the present trend in repeat victims continued to rise, the MARAC measures for Dartford would be re-assessed.

Long Term Funding

Funding for VAWG was coming to end. Revenue for the Migration Fund was set to continue, to enable better understanding of the Borough's growth rate and changing population. PCC funding had also been secured for 2021 to fund existing CSP priorities.

Opportunities

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

Further insights and positive outcomes were expected to be derived from the above projects, and cross-border co-operation continued to expand and produce significant results. The CSP as a 2 borough model continued to benefit from joint training and working.

In concluding his comments to Members, the CSM paid tribute to the contribution made by the CSO in helping to compile the comprehensive 2019 Strategic Assessment document, the identification of its key priorities, and the incorporation of its recommendations into the CSP's Community Safety Plan (2019-2022).

In response to subsequent questions and expressions of concern from the Chairman and Members, the CSM, the CSO, the District Commander and the Community Police Inspector, confirmed the following points:

- The police were governed by postcodes in their reporting of crime, on occasion this could mean that an offence committed in e.g. Stone was categorised as being committed in Greenhithe;
- The police accepted the need to improve communications with residents regarding crime-trends, and appreciated the benefit of reporting 'good news' stories regarding crime prevention, solving and prosecutions; but were constrained by staff resources, only 1 press officer for both Dartford and Gravesham, and the added factor that it was difficult to get the media to take 'good news' stories;
- Increased use of Twitter, Facebook and other social media would be considered, especially to Councillors for re-tweeting to residents, also increased distribution via the Neighbourhood Watch schemes;
- The request for 2 new PCSOs for Ebbsfleet would be considered by the new Superintendent for North Division and the outcome advised to the Ward Councillors;
- Allocating further police resources to Dartford as whole, would be considered by Kent Police's Tactical Operations team in the context of the recruitment of an addition 36 PCSOs and 147 police officers for Kent announced by the PCC in his 2020/21 Plan [Min. No 25 refers]. The immediate priority was the recruitment and training of additional police officers who were warranted and had powers of arrest. In the interim, the District Commander was able to make monthly bids for increased PCSO resources on an ad-hoc basis. Police patrols had been increased around the town centre between December 2019 and February 2020 in a concerted effort to combat crime. Co-operation with the Council's CCTV team had helped to secure arrests;
- A joint initiative with British Transport Police and the Met and Essex forces had been undertaken by Kent police to combat crime at Dartford railway station and in the town centre by criminals commuting into the Borough;
- The Council's decision to retain an in-house CCTV operation had paid significant dividends in terms of a high quality operation, with highly trained staff attuned to Dartford's needs, with the skills to interpret and anticipate criminal behaviour, which allowed council and police

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

- resources to be deployed to maximum effect. The need for further CCTV installation across the Borough was not anticipated at this time;
- Funding for DA projects was coming to the end of a 3 year cycle. Gravesham had benefited from special funding for DA not available to Dartford, but Dartford benefited from joint DA working practices between the two boroughs, including an annual publicity campaign aimed at educating the public to the dangers of DA. Members proposed that a future campaign be undertaken in Dartford schools to educate children to the warning signs of DA and how to seek help;
 - The increase in deliberate fires in the Borough in the period under review had been in the Dartford Heath area. Shop owners in the area were being educated over the dangers of selling matches to children and younger adolescents. Perpetrators had been identified and dealt with;
 - The spate of thefts of catalytic converters from motor vehicles in the period under review had occurred primarily in Bluewater, but also in the town centre. The offence could be committed in a matter of minutes, making offenders difficult to recognise and prosecute. CID reviewed this crime on a daily basis to identify patterns and trends, identify offenders and make arrests, and this crime type was now significantly reduced.

In concluding the debate, the Chairman asked that the Committee's concerns regarding the need for increased communication between Kent Police and residents be raised with the PCC [given the funding implications], noted the positive aspect of increased reporting of DA and increased measures proposed to further educate the public to the dangers of DA including a programme for schools, and the thanked the CSM and the CSO for producing an excellent 2019 Strategic Assessment document.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the contents of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP's) Strategic Assessment 2019 document, presented as Item A in the EXEMPT agenda papers;
2. That Members note the priorities identified in the Strategic Assessment (SA) 2019 document agreed by the CSP at their meeting on 16 January 2020;
3. That Members note the CSP's decision to adopt the recommendations contained within SA 2019 into the CSP's Community Safety Plan (2019-2022).

29. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21 AND BEYOND

Proceedings resumed in open session to consider the report from the Committee's co-ordinating officer which enclosed at Appendix A, an updated

CRIME AND DISORDER (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

Work Plan for the remainder of the 2019-20 municipal year and beyond, as requested by Members in July 2019 [Min. No 17 refers].

Members noted the contents of the revised Work Plan document and discussed further topics for possible consideration by the Committee at future meetings including:

- An update on agency measures being taken to combat telephone and other fraud suffered by elderly and vulnerable residents [considered by the Committee in February 2019 – Min. No 23 of 2018/19 refers];
- An update on measures being taken by enforcement agencies to combat ‘County Lines’ activity by organised criminal gangs [considered by the Committee in February 2019 - Min. No 25 refers];
- A possible presentation from Public Health Kent on the health implications of the inhalation of nitrous oxide [Min. No 26 above refers].

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the contents of the updated Work Plan for 2020-21 attached as Appendix A to the report;
2. That the Work Plan be further updated to include details of subsequent Member discussion on 12 February 2020 as minuted above.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Councillor C S McLean
CHAIRMAN