

Compliance and Enforcement Board

Notes of a Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **26th January 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);
Cllr. Feacey (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Bartlett (ex-officio), Buchanan, Shorter, Spain.

Apologies:

Cllr. Barrett, Director of Law and Governance, Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager.

Also in attendance:

Cllr. Ledger

Head of Planning and Development, Head of Environment and Land Management, Team Leader – Planning Enforcement, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Senior Street Scene & Open Spaces Officer, Senior Planning Lawyer, Member Services Liaison Manager.

1. Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr. Buchanan made a Voluntary Announcement as he knew one of the owners of the sites referred to in the Planning Enforcement Update report.

2. Notes of the Meeting of 27th October 2020

- 2.1 The Board agreed the notes as an accurate record.

3. Environmental Crime Enforcement in Ashford

- 3.1 The Senior Street Scene & Open Spaces Officer introduced the report which identified environmental crime enforcement activities for the period from October to December 2020, and highlighted the key points in the report. She explained that it was intended that a further Operation Assist would take place on 10 March with Kent Police, Ashford Officers and the Rural Task Force. She also explained that during this period, KCC, as part of their £250k countywide funding, had provided surveillance cameras at Petts Lane, Charing and Hare Plain Road, Bethersden, but all cameras had now been removed.
- 3.2 The Senior Street Scene & Open Spaces Officer also drew particular attention to the pie chart in the report 'Disposal Types – December 2020' and said that

the majority was household waste, including black sacks which represented 68% of the items disposed of.

- 3.3 A Member asked whether there was any information about the level of use of the 'Report it' app by the public. The Senior Street Scene & Open Spaces Officer undertook to investigate whether a report setting out this information could be produced for Members.
- 3.4 In response to a question about signing placed in the vicinity of the Rail Link route in Sevington and Aldington which advised that the areas were under surveillance, the Senior Street Scene & Open Spaces Officer confirmed that they had been provided by KCC as part of their £250k initiative to combat fly tipping.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

4 Anti-Social Behaviour in Ashford - Update

- 4.1 The report provided the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) performance update for the period from 1st September to 31st December 2020. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager ran through the performance data in relation to the Community Safety Partnership and explained that 110 ASB reports had been dealt with by the Community Safety Unit (CSU) during this period, with 932 cases being handled by Kent Police. Details of the action taken on the incidents were set out in a table in the report.
- 4.2 The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager also advised that there had been an increase in neighbour disputes which she considered could be partly attributable to the various periods of lockdown the community was experiencing. A joint patrol had also taken place within the town centre in November and the Community Safety Officer had visited the premises which had received Emergency Trauma Packs and knife wands and had also assisted with dealing with the more complex ASB cases. In terms of the Public Space Protection Orders, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that the gating orders for Henley Fields, Tenterden and for Ashford Town Centre had been extended for a further 3 year period until late 2023. Work was also continuing on dealing with the issue of modern slavery and the organisation of a virtual Safety in Action event.
- 4.3 In response to a question, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said that she understood that Kent Police considered that the overall majority of the residents of the area were abiding by the conditions of the lockdown. In terms of nuisance caused by noisy vehicles, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said that a meeting had taken place with Highways England who would be looking at solutions to deal with safety issues on the A2070. Furthermore, in terms of nuisance in car parks, she explained that members of her team monitored social media and had been able to serve

Community Protection Orders on the organisers of some recent events and also the Civic Centre car park was now being closed earlier in the evening.

- 4.4 The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that a trial was underway in another part of the country on the use of acoustic cameras to identify noisy vehicles and she said that she would report back to Members on this when the results of that exercise were known. In terms of incidents of this nature in the town, she agreed to raise these with Kent Police.
- 4.5 In response to a question from a Member about ASB in the Lower High Street, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager explained that incidents in this area had improved as a multi agency approach to the problems had been adopted by the CSU, Police and Officers from the housing department who now put forward recommended interventions to the Vulnerability Panel. Furthermore, the homeless had been placed in accommodation as one of the responses to the current covid pandemic. A Member said that he was aware that groups now gathered in the vicinity of the Tank, and the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to ask the CSU and the Monitoring Centre to monitor this area.
- 4.6 In terms of whether ABC were involved in dealing with incidents involving the inappropriate use of catapults, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager explained that this was an ongoing issue and were generally dealt with by the Police and that the issue was reflected as part of Safety in Action. She said that if Members had any particular concerns or incidents to report she would be happy to raise them with the police.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

5 Planning Enforcement Update

- 5.1 The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement introduced the report which provided an update on the work of the Planning Enforcement Team for the reporting period 1st October to 31st December 2020. She explained that the team had recruited to the Deputy Team Leader position and the second consultant employed at a senior level had now left the team as his contract had ended. One of the two Planning Enforcement Officer posts was currently vacant as the post holder was on a 12 month secondment until June 2021. Finally, the overall service had a new Head of Service following an internal appointment, and that Officer's previous post would now be filled.
- 5.2 The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement also explained that work on the Enforcement Plan was progressing and would be reported to the Cabinet in July. In terms of the period covered in the report there were 312 live cases with approximately 50 cases opened and closed within the quarter. Three of the new cases had been categorised as 'Priority 1' which required immediate action. The Team Leader then briefly summarised the Enforcement Notices issued and gave details of those which were subject to appeal.

- 5.3 A Member referred to the table on page 19 of the agenda and asked how the figures compared to the same period last year. The Team Leader explained that the information was available and that it could be incorporated in future reports to the Board.
- 5.4 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development said that he wished to highlight the significant level of work which was required to be undertaken by Officers when dealing with appeals, particularly in respect of the amount of evidence gathering and detail required. He considered that many Members did not appreciate this fact and he was keen to get this message across. The Team Leader further explained that priority 1 cases demanded immediate attention and therefore dealing with such cases had a knock on effect on other aspects of the teams work. However, she agreed to consider how best to convey the message expressed by the Portfolio Holder in this regard.
- 5.5 The Chairman thanked the Team Leader for her report and said that if the team required additional resources he would be happy to consider such a request. The Chairman also expressed strong support for the use of court injunctions to enforce planning encroachment and emphasised the importance of this service being properly resourced.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

6 Date of Next Meeting

- 6.1 Tuesday 27 April 2021 at 10.00am

Councillor Bell (Chairman)
Compliance and Enforcement Board

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