

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **6th March 2018**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett, Feacey, Hicks, Knowles, Krause, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. Mrs. Webb attended as Substitute Member for Cllr Burgess.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Miss. Martin, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllr. Bradford.

Chief Inspector Andy Somerville, Inspector Andy Bidmead, Inspector Jason Atkinson.

Head of Culture, Head of Housing, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Community Safety Team Leader, Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer, Member Services Officer.

358 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Chilton	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as a tenant of 160 Ashford close. Also a close contact for Kent Police	360
Feacey	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Bureau	360
Webb	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as Director of Ashford Volunteer Centre	360

359 Minutes

Cllr. Feacey informed the Committee that work was underway to arrange the Overview & Scrutiny training requested by several Members at the previous meeting.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 23rd January 2018 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

360 Ashford Community Safety Partnership Update

The Community Safety Team Leader introduced this item and gave a brief background to the Report. She advised that over the past year, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) had worked closely with Ashford College since its opening in September 2017 and the reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the Borough over the summer period could be attributed to this collaboration. In other areas, the CSP had continued to assist victims of domestic abuse and had facilitated a support group for individuals to help them understand the impact of domestic violence on their lives and their children's lives. Road Safety would no longer be a priority moving forward for the CSP since single agency work would continue to be delivered. Stakeholders would however continue to update Ashford CSP with any exceptional events. The Safeguarding working group had continued their work, which included raising awareness around child exploitation, gangs, substance abuse and radicalisation. Funding received from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been used to support a number of projects including OP Beacon, an initiative for young offenders, and the Ashford Winter Night Shelter that provided support to the vulnerable homeless. The Community Safety Team Leader then outlined the recommended CSP priorities for 2018/2019:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Safeguarding children and young persons
- Safeguarding adults
- Serious and organised crime

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Community Safety Team Leader for her introduction and commended the CSP, its partners and Officers involved with the fantastic work that had been undertaken and achieved.

Chief Inspector Somerville added that it was very pleasing to see a downward trend in ASB following the recent arrests of certain individuals in the Borough.

The report was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- A Member asked how the Police were dealing with the reduction to the number of Officers. CI Somerville explained that 1/3 of their staff had been relocated to

different parts of the county, but despite this reduction, there had been approximately a 10% increase in arrests and charges, demonstrating that the Ashford Officers were working even harder. The PCC had secured funding for approximately 200 additional police posts. Planning was still ongoing to decide where best to place those new resources, but it was hoped that some of them would be deployed to enhance the 101 service. The Portfolio Holder added that he expected a large number of PCSO's would apply for those new posts, but the public could rest assured that there would be no depletion in the number of PCSO's.

- In response to a question asking how often the OP Beacon group met, CI Somerville explained that they met on a six weekly basis and it provided a platform for the young people to talk candidly about their experiences in prison to dissuade and divert troubled youngsters from criminal activity. The initiative had worked extremely well and had seen an 82% success rate.
- The Committee discussed the Councils "Report it" App that was introduced in October 2016, and asked whether there were plans to publicise it further. The Community Safety Team Leader advised that Officers in Housing and the Community Safety Unit were working to publicise the app to a wider audience and Ward Members should continue to encourage residents to report all incidents. There was also a standing agenda item on the Compliance and Enforcement Board.
- A Member spoke about the need for change within the home in relation to young offenders and whether anything was in place to educate the public about the different ways in which the Police force now worked. The Community Safety Team Leader explained that several projects were in place that focussed on prevention within the home environment, to encourage positive family relationships and eliminate anger issues. The Police Youth Engagement Officer and Joint Family Officer were also on hand to offer support and advice. CI Somerville added that there were also initiatives within local schools to present a positive image of the Police to primary age children.
- In response to a query regarding organised crime recruiting youths over social media, CI Somerville explained that this was a difficult area for the Police to deal with, as technology was advancing at a rapid rate, and by the time law enforcement got control over one social media platform or app then another would appear. The Police relied mainly on educating the young around what to look out for and on the public to observe and report any concerns they had to enable the Police to investigate further.
- A Member asked whether OP Eye, the scheme that focussed on school parking issues, would continue. Inspector Andy Bidmead explained that work would continue on Road Safety and issues arising from school parking and the Community Safety Team Leader added that any problems should continue to be reported to the Civil Enforcement Officer Supervisor, Catherine Darlington.
- The Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager spoke about the Councils deployable camera and explained that it had been purchased using a £7,000

grant from the PCC. It was an effective tool for investigating ASB, but they were not allowed to use it for parking enforcement. Members agreed that they considered the deployable camera invaluable and would support the application to fund another camera via the Members grants scheme.

- A Member commented that it was important not to overlook air pollution. The Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager advised that the Committees report on Air Quality had been passed to Management Team for formulation of an action plan, but that Officers would continue to monitor air quality in relation to J10A and the A28 widening roadworks that were due to commence over the coming months.
- A Member spoke about the CSU meetings that took place each month and reminded Members that they were welcome to attend. She commented that the partnership worked very well and the progress they had made was evident in and around Ashford.
- The Committee then discussed available funding sources. CI Somerville mentioned the Community Infrastructure Levy and the ability to utilise the funds where development occurred. A Member went on to speak about working with the Met Police concerning “Safer by Design”, an initiative that looked at designing new developments in a way to minimise crime. He added that it would be useful to find out if and how the Council’s Planning Department considered this element of design and the Chairman agreed that the Committee would put forward a recommendation. CI Somerville confirmed that Kent Police already engaged in the Safer by Design principles.

Resolved:

- That
- i) The Report be received and noted,
 - ii) The CSU priorities for 2018/19 be supported,

Recommended:

That the Planning Department be asked to comment on the level of consultation undertaken with the Police in regard to Safer by Design.

361 Annual Safeguarding Report

The Committee then went on to consider the Safeguarding Annual Report and the Portfolio Holder reminded Members that they needed to complete their level 1 safeguarding training via eLearning. The Head of Culture advised that the designated Safeguarding Officer, James Hann, who had since left the Council had written the report, but that she was the Management Team Champion for Safeguarding. She explained that a number of Heads of Service were supporting safeguarding across the Council, and with the replacement Designated Officer being Rebecca Wilcox (the Housing Operations Manager), the Head of Housing was also involved. A lead safeguarding officer team, of key expertise, was also co-ordinating with the work of the CSU. All staff had completed the Level 1 safeguarding awareness training, with

level 2 and 3 rolled out to Officers whose roles meant they were more likely to come into contact with those people at risk.

Resolved:

That the Report be received and noted,

Recommended:

That the Committee recommend that all Ashford Borough Council elected Members complete Level 1 safeguarding training.

362 Corporate Performance Report

The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer introduced the report, which demonstrated brief snapshots of the online performance dashboard. He added that the team were looking to migrate to a different operating system in the future and he would keep the Committee updated on this.

One Member commented that it was important to be mindful that the footfall rate in the town centre could be misconstrued since it looked to be reducing, but at the same time vacancy rates had also fallen.

Resolved:

That the Report be received and noted.

363 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer advised efforts were being made to secure attendance by representatives from the NHS Ashford CCG at the March Overview & Scrutiny Meeting and a Member asked if it would be possible to have representation from nurses, GP's, midwives and social services. The Chairman advised that they would look into whether this was possible.

A Member asked that the actions resulting from the Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group discussed at the last O&S Meeting be included on tracker – these included the Chilmington Green Management Organisation model and the questions raised regarding A Better Choice for Property Ltd Company. The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer advised that those topics had been recorded and would be added to the Tracker once the Committee's work programme for 2018/19 had been agreed.

Members agreed that whilst discussions with the Director for Finance and Economy during the recent budget scrutiny process had provided some reassurance to Members regarding the governance of the Property Company, they felt it was still obligatory for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the company and the

Council's processes for ensuring robust accountability. A Member referred to the recent Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny in local authorities and noted that there was an obligation on the Committee to scrutinise any matters affecting the Borough or its residents. Whilst the Trading and Enterprise Board had been set up by Cabinet to scrutinise the performance and governance of the Property Company, all Members of the Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be held accountable for any failings in governance and it was important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee examined these matters carefully.

A Member queried what the Committee's powers were in regard to scrutiny of the Property Company, and it was confirmed that "the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the ability to review and scrutinise activities of the Trading and Enterprise Board (TEB), and that of any established Trading companies wholly owned by the Council".

The Chairman advised that he fully supported what the Committee were saying and felt that it was important that these issues be examined sooner rather than later. The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer advised that work was underway with the Director of Finance and Economy and Head of Corporate Property and Projects to bring reports to the Committee, and scoping documents would be presented to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman shortly, with Officers working on the basis of a presentation to the April Meeting of the Committee.

A Member asked that a date be set for the Clean Air Strategy to be on the agenda, and the Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer advised that this would be added to the work programme for the coming year.

Concerns had been raised to a Member regarding the lack of volunteers assisting in Fire Brigade Services and reassurance was required that safety was not being compromised, and Members unreservedly agreed that this issue should feature on the Tracker.

A Member referred to the planned attendance of Kent Savers at a future meeting, noting that the Group had an effective branch set up in Tenterden, and suggested that a representative from there be invited to attend.