

Compliance and Enforcement Board

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **25th October 2022**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);

Cllrs. Buchanan, Feacey, Forest, Shorter, Spain.

Apologies:

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer.

Also in attendance:

Cllr, Michael.

Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager, Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader, Team Leader Planning Enforcement, Senior Planning Lawyer, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1. Notes of the Meeting of 26th July 2022

1.1 The Board agreed the notes as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 Cllr. Shorter declared that the landowner for his small holding was referred to under item 4 on the agenda. Cllr Shorter said that he would not take part in discussion on that item.

3. Environmental Crime Enforcement in Ashford

3.1 The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report. The Chairman thanked the team and said it was pleasing to see the actions being taken.

3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- In response to a question regarding finances, the Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager explained that the service did not generate income, but that there were cost benefits overall. It had been possible to save significant costs in resources going forward under the new tender.

- A Member asked about littering from vehicles and how this was reported. The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager explained that a warning notice was sent to any vehicles involved to act as a deterrent in future, and legal advice would be sought if necessary. In response to another question, he advised that he would check and confirm whether fly-grazing offences could be reported via the corporate reporting app. He said that no such offences had been reported in the last month.
- A Member asked how members of the public could be reassured that they would not suffer from repercussions from reporting crimes. The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager said it was true that some members of the public did not want to become visibly involved in any enforcement action, and in such cases they just provided intelligence and information but were not required to come forward as witnesses.
- With regard to an issue at the Clover Leaf Roundabout, a Member asked officers to ensure that the parish council was kept updated with proposed actions to protect the Council's reputation in the area. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader reassured Members that officers were actively working on this issue at present, and were in communication with the parish council, but were limited on how much information could be shared at this stage. The Environment Contracts and Enforcement Manager said that his team would liaise with the Community Safety and Resilience Team to move this issue forward.
- Members expressed a desire to see registration numbers put on food items provided by fast food outlets in an effort to identify offenders. The Environment Contracts and Enforcement Manager agreed that it could be beneficial to work with McDonalds, and he would encourage negotiation with the company on their food packs.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

4. Anti-Social Behaviour in Ashford - Update

- 4.1 The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader introduced this item and drew Members attention to the key points within the report.
- 4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:
 - A Member noted the increased and regular use of electric scooters along footpaths, and cited in particular the area from the Designer Outlet to the station. He also noted that there was a shop in the town centre which sold electric scooters and he feared this gave rise to the impression that it was acceptable to ride scooters in public areas. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader agreed that this was

becoming an increasing problem, particularly in rural areas. She advised that one of the best approaches to tackling the problem was via education through youth groups and youth platforms, and the team was pushing for this to get more focus. Officers were aware of the situation and were working with the Police, and would continue to monitor the situation. She urged residents to report any incidents to either the CSU or the Police. The Chairman asked the Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader to include an update on this in future reports to the Board.

- A Member commented that there was some apathy among residents due to the difficulties in reporting nuisance and anti-social vehicles. He was disappointed that the system still appeared not to be working properly and he considered that many people gave up in their attempts to provide reports via the Kent Police website. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader said that this was an issue that needed to be addressed higher up the Police management line and she would be pushing for a resolution to the problem. A Member commented that he had requested more officer resources for Ashford, but the allocation was based on the reported data. With the current problems in the reporting system the issues in Ashford did not appear to demand extra resources, and the situation had become a vicious circle. He considered that the Police should be encouraged to undertake a blitz of enforcement in the town centre. Another Member advised he had requested that a Police special adviser and officers be sent to Ashford specifically for this purpose. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader said that ABC officers did investigate incidents when it was considered possible and safe to do so, but ultimately support from the Police was often required. The Chairman added that where organised crime syndicates existed there were problems getting Police support for planning enforcement and it was not possible for officers to act alone. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader suggested that a Police representative be invited to the next meeting to answer some of the questions posed by Members, and Members supported the suggestion.

4.3 The Chairman concluded by thanking the team for their hard work.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

5. Planning Enforcement Update

5.1 The Team Leader Planning Enforcement introduced this item and highlighted the key points in the report. In addition, she advised that over the August Bank Holiday the team had provided cover and there had been no call outs over land use in the Borough that weekend. The Chairman thanked her for her report, and said it was good to see real action in court to deal with enforcement.

5.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member asked about the situation regarding the Park Farm mobile mast and whether it was likely to remain open. The Team Leader Planning Enforcement advised that officers were working behind the scenes, and it was suggested that the involvement of the KCC Member for that area should be requested. She said that legal officers had been consulted and it should soon be more clear where the Council stood in terms of enforcement. She assured Members that she would be keeping the parish council and Ward Members informed on any progress.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

6. Date of Next Meetings

- 6.1 24th January 2023 at 10am
25th April 2023 at 10am
25th July 2023 at 10am
24th October 2023 at 10am

Councillor Bell (Chairman)
Compliance and Enforcement Board

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