



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14 March 2023

Report Title: Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an update on community safety activity in the borough 2022/2023

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Summary: This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the community safety annual update. The report pays particular regard to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The report details crime statistics for the borough and its positioning against other districts within the county. Ashford is shown as being a safe borough as the level of recorded crime remains low, and there has been a reduction in many crime types, including serious violence offences. The report highlights an overall decrease in reports of anti-social behaviour.

The report, which is highly positive, demonstrates the value of multi-agency working and the encouraging results that can be achieved through effective information sharing, joint decision making and coordinated activity. It shows how the partners use a wide range of approaches to reduce crime and disorder to tackle community safety issues that matter to the local community.

Information is provided on current community safety priorities, actions that have been taken to meet those priorities and raises awareness of emerging issues. The activity presented also supports delivery of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan (Making Kent Safer 2022 to 2025).

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards:	All
Recommendations:	The committee is recommended to note the information contained in this report and support the proposed priorities for 2023/24.
Policy Overview:	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is designated as the committee responsible for Crime and Disorder under the Police Justice Act 2006.
Financial Implications:	Ashford Community Safety Partnership receives a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner and this is used to fund small community projects within the borough.
Legal Implications:	Not applicable
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	None
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Agenda Item No. 4

Report Title: Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an update on the community safety activity in the borough 2022/2023

Introduction and Background

1. It remains a statutory requirement for local authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). We achieve this through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), where 'responsible partners', namely the local authority (district and county), Fire and Rescue Service, Integrated Care Board, Probation and Police, work collaboratively to make communities safer, reduce crime and the fear of crime, reduce ASB and work with businesses and residents on the issues of most concern. In addition to the statutory partners the CSP is also supported by representation from several other relevant organisations, for example, the chair of the Head Teachers Forum, Ashford College, the Department of Works & Pensions and chairs of the CSP subgroups such as the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum.
2. To set the current priorities, the CSP used police, district and county data and the local crime profile. A stakeholder engagement event assisted in the development of priorities for 2022/23:
 - Tackling violence
 - Tackling domestic abuse and sexual offences
 - Tackling ASB and concerning behaviour
 - Tackling gangs and county lines

These are explored in detail in the next section of this report.

3. CSPs are responsible for convening a strategy group of all responsible authorities (although it can invite other organisations), preparing a strategic assessment of local crime and community safety priorities using information provided by partner agencies and the community, and produce an action plan to meet those priorities. Due to the nature of this requirement, the council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) takes responsibility for coordinating activities and events.
4. Under the Crime and Disorder Regulations 2007, district and borough CSPs are required to:
 - Produce an annual strategic assessment
 - Produce a rolling partnership plan setting out priorities, with actions to deliver these priorities
 - Have a dialogue with communities to inform these processes and explain outcomes
5. Ashford's actions throughout 2022/23 flow from the annual strategic assessment undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The actions are informed by the Kent Community Safety Partnership Plan and Safer Kent 2022 – 2023, the plan of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.

6. Overall, the CSP is responsible for ensuring that the identified priorities, actions and targets will be delivered through a multi-agency approach by having:
 - Strong strategic management
 - Tasking joint resources through well-established partnership operational structures, including identifying, managing and reducing risk
 - Strong performance management
7. CSP governance has two key decision-making levels; strategic and operational.

Our approach

8. The CSP has a whole system approach to tackling crime and ASB. Experience identifies that more than one type of intervention is needed to resolve the problem. For example, enforcement is most effective if local communities support it and other activity is taking place to change behaviours.
9. A variety of interventions are applied when looking at any type of crime or anti-social behaviour issue that requires the engagement of a range of services, voluntary and community groups to find long-term solutions.

Tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour – lead agency Ashford Borough Council

10. All residents have the right to feel safe and secure where they live and the right to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes and communities. The CSP is committed to effectively tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour which can have a serious impact on wellbeing.
11. The ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 defines ASB as: “Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person’s occupation of residential premises, or conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person”.
12. A range of enforcement actions will be used against those responsible for ASB. Working closely with the Police and other enforcement bodies ensures enforcement action is appropriate, proportionate and can be escalated swiftly where the need arises. The approach is to intervene early and undertake positive interventions to change behaviours before matters lead to a criminal offence being committed.
13. The Council’s ASB policy and supporting documentation are due to be reviewed this year and we will be working closely with internal departments and external organisations to complete this to ensure the requirements under the legislation in tackling ASB are met.

ASB - Kent Police data

14. The data provided by Kent Police indicates the number of incidents of ASB reported to Kent Police for the Borough of Ashford.

15. As can be seen in the table below there has been a decrease across Kent of 12,779 reported ASB incidents over the past 12 months. In Ashford the number has decreased by 991.
16. Appendix A provides the ASB figures for all districts, this can be used to benchmark Ashford against other Kent districts. It shows that we have the 7th lowest recorded ASB in the county.

Area	December 2020 to November 2021	December 2021 to November 2022	Increase / decrease in numbers	% increase / decrease
Ashford	2886	1895	-991	-34.4% (decrease)
Kent	41,184	28,405	-12,779	-31.3% (decrease)

17. Data provided by Kent Police as shown below highlights the three wards within Ashford borough with the highest recorded ASB:

Ward	January 2021 to December 2021	January 2022 to December 2022	Difference (numbers)	Difference (percent)
Victoria	689	608	-81 (decrease)	-12%
Aylesford and East Stour	233	129	-104 (decrease)	-45%
Furley	176	87	-89 (decrease)	-51%

18. This illustrates a decreases in all of the wards listed above. Victoria ward still has the highest levels of reported ASB within the borough. This is expected due to the nature of the ward (town centre and Victoria Park)

ASB - Borough Council data

19. In addition to the police data, the borough council recorded 227 incidents in the year to December 2022, a decrease of 42% compared to the previous year.

	Jan 2021 to Dec 2021	Jan 2022 to December 2022	Difference (numbers)	Difference (percent)
Ashford	389	227	-162	-42 (decrease)

20. Reports of ASB into Ashford Borough Council are received via several methods. The most common mechanism is via the council's website where there is an option to 'Report ASB'. This allows the reporter to complete an online form with details of issues they are experiencing. The online form is automatically sent to the relevant email inbox for the officer to investigate.

21. To encourage reporting and meet the needs of residents, the 'Report It' app has been widely promoted as another platform available to use and is managed in the same way as the web link.
22. The reports received cover a number of different types of ASB but the highest types were gathering of nuisance youths, nuisance vehicles and the third highest was harassment.

Use of ASB legislation (Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014)

23. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are designed to reduce and address ASB being committed in a public place. All of the live orders within the borough are available on the council's website. If the order is breached, police and council officers can issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to the value of £100. There are currently six PSPOs within the borough (three are gating orders, and three are linked to specified locations and particular behaviours). In 2022, a total of four FPNs were issued by Kent Police. They were in relation to breaches of the PSPO for the consumption of alcohol, begging and nuisance vehicles. Two of the FPNs were paid and two were withdrawn.
24. All PSPOs must be reviewed on a three yearly basis and subject to public consultation. The council has recently carried out a consultation for the renewal of the Coney Bear/Torrington Road site which took place in December. No objections or recommendations for change were received and it was therefore renewed for another three years. Details of this PSPO and others in the Ashford borough can be found here: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/community-safety/anti-social-behaviour-asb/public-spaces-protection-order>.
25. Ashford Borough Council's CSU successfully took the Ashford MX (off-road race track) organisers using the Cloverleaf roundabout to court. The case was heard on 15 July, where the individual was found guilty of failing to comply with a Community Protection Notice. The individual failed to attend court and was fined over £3000. The CSU is now working closely with both the Legal and Planning departments concerning the next steps surrounding further enforcement work. This includes gathering evidence regarding a timeline of the events that have taken place and looking at what action can be taken about any enforcement against the landowners themselves.
26. Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) were issued to two individuals in May 2022 by Kent Police in conjunction with Ashford Borough Council concerning an ongoing neighbour dispute and impacts on the wider community matter.
27. Over the year, Kent Police have utilised their powers under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to positively respond to incidents and concerns. Dispersal areas have been implemented under Section 34 of the act on 22 occasions. Most of these relate to preventing ASB in and around the town centre. A total of 27 CPWs were issued, with ten requiring escalating to Community Protection Notices (CPNs). Fourteen relate to town centre and anti-social behaviour, where criminal offences have been identified, arrests have been made, and bail conditions imposed to prevent further offending. Officers have also proactively utilised the PSPO conditions to manage alcohol-related ASB. Kent Police also successfully obtained a civil injunction that imposed several conditions on a young person, which has been an extremely successful intervention.

28. These powers were used to respond to substantial car meets at the Ashford Business Park in Sevington. Two dispersal areas were implemented and a CPW was also issued to an organiser of these meets, alongside working closely with the landowner. These interventions have prevented any further incidents.
29. Following concerns around youth-related ASB and violence during the summer holiday, partners have instigated a new ASB strategy that sees Police, Ashford Borough Council and youth service providers adopt a shared and coordinated approach to tackling these issues. Engage, Explain, Encourage, and, where necessary, Enforce is utilised to achieve the shared objective of diverting young people from ASB and crime.
30. An aspect of the ASB strategy was delivered in the October half term and focused on the town centre. Post this event, further work and progress have been made in the organisation and mobilisation of the district youth service provisions to collectively respond to this issue in support of lead agencies for ASB and crime. Agencies delivered daily activities that increased positive guardians and maximised visibility and effectiveness by coordinating and communicating the most appropriate resource to lead in a location/ interaction to support the objectives. This new approach has received positive feedback from involved partners, young people and local businesses/ stakeholders.
31. A similar event took place in the February half term, which will see a shift towards focusing on youth services as opposed to previously being Police led enforcement of the issues. A similar approach is being explored to respond to the issues of violence and ASB where the public consumption of alcohol is a factor.
32. In 2022, Ashford Borough Council housing officers secured one closure order linked to ASB. The housing service continues to work in close partnership with Kent Police to reduce ASB and safeguard vulnerable residents in our communities.
33. Housing has also used Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices to tackle anti-social behaviour in the community and traditional housing tools concerning the tenancy. They have served 22 Community Protection Warnings, 7 Community Protection Notices and 1 Fixed Penalty Notice. These were issued for behaviour concerning residents not keeping their dogs supervised and under control, fly-tipping and noise.

ASB action plan

34. The ASB working group with the support of the CSP have completed the following work:
35. An ASB case review occurs when an individual is unsatisfied with how their ASB has been addressed. There have been eight ASB case reviews this year, colloquially known as a Community Trigger. Four cases met the threshold for a community trigger, and a review meeting took place in April 2022 for one and the other in September 2022. The other four didn't meet the threshold because they were still under investigation when the trigger was raised.
36. The Safer Streets funding was agreed upon in October 2021, but due to the Home Office's stringent funding conditions the whole project spending had to be complete

by 31 March 2022. The grant enabled the following tasks to be delivered to reduce violence against women and girls within Ashford Town Centre but is also having a broader impact across the borough:

- Installation of four CCTV cameras in Edinburgh Road Car Park
- Installation of nine public space CCTV cameras in key locations such as the station underpass and Beaver Road
- Improved monitoring of CCTV cameras at Elwick Place by switching them to the council's monitoring centres platform
- Purchase and distribution of over £5k worth of safety equipment to the public
- Educational inputs to year six pupils around staying safe and healthy relationships
- Complete replacement of the Memorial Gardens fencing
- Creation of Safe Spaces and associated bystander training for staff who work within the town centre
- Additional APAC radios were purchased to improve connectivity for businesses and Safe Spaces
- Streetwise app development – over 5000 downloads so far and the app developer is in discussion with other boroughs due to its success in Ashford
- Improvements to the street scene through alleyway mirrors, litter picking equipment and pressure washer for Biffa
- Providing Ashford Street Pastors with a purposed vehicle, the first district mobile Safe Space. The vehicle supports the Street Pastors' activity in the night-time economy, allowing them to expand their operations to safeguard more vulnerable people

37. An advisory group has been formed from interested key stakeholders and members of the community to provide independent advice and support to the delivery and promotion of this project work.
38. In addition, larger alleyway mirrors were kindly purchased by Cllr Lyn Suddards for Taylor's Passage and have recently been installed by Aspire. Conversations are ongoing with Network Rail to improve lighting by Duck Alley and associated footpaths.
39. Two multi-agency meetings have taken place to discuss ASB in the town centre following several reports from both members of the public and businesses. The first was to examine the impacts on businesses, the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), street drinkers, homelessness issues, nuisance youths and hot spot locations. Many partners were able to provide an update on matters affecting the town centre. These included Kent Police CSU, Kent Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Sk8Side, Uprising, KCC Youth Workers, Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC), Ashford Street Pastors and various ABC departments: CSU, Homelessness Team and Licensing. Their information identified the two groups that are seen as the main problem – groups of nuisance youths and the street drinking community.
40. The second meeting was an opportunity to explain to businesses what is being done to improve the situation and define the ASB strategy that is being formed. Many businesses were invited to attend, including a number that had previously reported issues of concern. Representatives from County Square were also in attendance as they could speak for many of their tenants affected by youths and their anti-social behaviour.

41. The knife bin in Stanhope has been successfully relocated and can now be found near the Stanhope Hub building. A new knife bin has also been installed for the Kennington area and is located in Bockhanger Square. Both bins will be carefully monitored and emptied regularly by the Police. More details can be found in the press release at: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/news/latest-news/knife-amnesty-bin-installed-in-kennington>.
42. The Street Work Forum started meeting again on a monthly basis from October 2022. The meetings which are chaired and managed by Sk8side Youth Group aims to coordinate local youth initiatives. The forum includes several different youth providers and is an opportunity to explore specific areas and individuals that have been highlighted as benefiting from potential engagement. A referral process is being created for any partner to refer into the process.

Tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences – lead agencies Ashford Borough Council, Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum, Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) which includes Clarion and Rising Sun.

Domestic abuse and sexual offences action plan

43. It is recognised that domestic abuse is a serious and life-threatening crime that affects victims and their families, and the priority is that victims and any children are safeguarded from further abuse.
44. The Borough Council domestic abuse service, is managed by the Housing Options team but remains a vital part of our community safety work and requires the same level of multi-agency engagement alongside the other community safety priorities.
45. The Borough Council employs a full-time Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator post within the housing service and also provides funds annually in support of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service for Ashford via the KCC commissioned Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service.
46. In Ashford, Clarion hold the contract for delivering the IDVA service and already operates the women's refuge in the town.
47. Clarion is contracted as part of the commissioning contract "To facilitate and deliver coordinated, multi-agency access points in local communities across Kent to enable access to information and support". This is known as the One Stop Shop, which Ashford Borough Council supports.
48. The contract also states that Clarion is responsible for "Working with local partnerships, delivery and facilitation of therapeutic and supportive activities to promote independence and future healthy relationships". ABC previously coordinated this group work, such as the Freedom Programme and the Phoenix Programme, but Clarion has taken over delivery this year

Domestic Abuse Coordinator

49. The post of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator was introduced to the Borough Council six years ago. Since then KCC has developed the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS), which covers Kent and Medway and provides advice and

information on services for victims, friends and family, and perpetrators of domestic violence. All local authorities in the county contribute towards this cost.

50. The coordinator's main focus is to ensure that we are delivering the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act, as well as take forward the Make a Stand campaign. This post is more customer focused than in previous years, having had a full review in the past year. In essence, the key aspects of the role includes:-
- To provide leadership with regard to the provision of services for those experiencing or escaping domestic abuse within the Borough of Ashford
 - To undertake any necessary client risk assessments and, where necessary, develop and implement safety plans as identified in the risk assessment
 - To coordinate all referrals for the Sanctuary Scheme, which is designed to help support those at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and avoid the upheaval of homelessness
 - To coordinate and manage the Safe House in Ashford and ensure clients are offered the full wrap around support
 - To participate in and support the work of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
 - To initiate and maintain effective communication with partnership agencies across all sectors at regional and national levels, including participating in the newly formed Local Partnership Board
 - To take the lead in the Make a Stand campaign.

Domestic Abuse Services in Tenterden

51. Since July 2021, there has been a new walk-in service in Tenterden where victims of domestic abuse can liaise with support services in complete safety and anonymity at the community project known as EC30. This is currently under review as the feedback has indicated that this location needs to be more suitable. Other sites are being explored.

Working with Male Perpetrators

52. In October 2021, funds from the Police & Crime Commissioner made it possible for men from Ashford to participate in the Community Domestic Abuse Programme. This is a 27-week 'roll on/roll off' programme for men who wish to amend their previously abusive behaviour and make more positive relationships. This will be reviewed this year with a view to Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum (ADAF) supporting the programme if required.

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop (OSS)

53. The Ashford OSS is a drop-in service for anyone affected, in any way, by domestic abuse where support, help and advice is given.
54. It is a free and confidential service provided weekly and no appointment is necessary. It continues to be an area for professionals to work together to provide a coordinated response to domestic abuse.
55. During the Covid-19 pandemic, figures were significantly lower than in previous years due to the restricted service.

56. For 2022 to end November a total of 167 people contacted the OSS face-to-face for assistance and 11 people contacted it virtually.

Support for Men suffering from Domestic Abuse

57. The OSS is a service men can utilise just as much as women and offers a place for them to get support and advice.

58. Dads Unlimited is an organisation that supports the emotional safety of men and those they care about through three key areas; supporting male victims of domestic abuse, supporting men with family separation; and supporting men's mental health. All of the services use an evidence-based, trauma-informed, person-centred approach. It is achieved through the provision of a family separation helpline, one-to-one mentoring advice, mental health support, peer-led support groups, education and social services liaison support, pastoral support, court support, and adult and child community activities.

59. Clarion (KIDAS provider) provide additional support for male victims and will be launching a training package for professionals to be able to utilise.

Domestic abuse action plan

60. A new action was devised in 2022, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act, and the main areas of focus are detailed below:

Priority 1: To provide a weekly drop-in service offering advice, support and assistance in Ashford.

Priority 2: To meet the demand for places on Freedom & Phoenix programmes.

Priority 3: Meeting the needs of children who experience domestic abuse.

Priority 4: Service mapping for partners to raise awareness of all services to other agencies, and members of the public.

Priority 5: Flee fund to ensure there are accessible monies to provide clients with essentials when wanting to leave their homes.

Priority 6: To ensure that the funding from KCC is allocated correctly

Priority 7: To ensure male victims of DA are provided the same service and appropriate signposting is carried out

Tackling Violence– Lead agency Kent Police

Youth Related violence

61. Kent Police undertook a targeted operation in Stanhope with the support of the PCSO Problem Solving Task Force. This took place between February and May 2022. The team conducted initial surveys, with residents' feedback being the driver for activity. A multi-agency safer communities event was held, providing youth activities and signposting to other agencies and activities. An analysis of the operation's impact identified an overall 5.6% reduction in crime compared to 2021, a 33% reduction in the incidents reported to Police, which included a 64% reduction in the ASB linked to rowdy or nuisance gatherings in public.

62. A particular focus of the operation was to reduce catapult-related incidents. There was a noticeable reduction in reporting, which is also evident across the district. A range of measures was implemented to tackle this recurrent problem, including

proactive use of powers such as CPWs and Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs), along with focused inputs to the 1200 year six pupils during Safety in Action to raise awareness of the risks.

63. The operation also aimed to reduce the impact of county line drug activity and associated serious violence. During the operation, county line activity was reduced, and there were no incidents of serious violence. Kent Police assisted Moat Housing in obtaining a civil injunction on a tenant. This was effective in preventing drug-related activity in and around the property. Whilst the operation has ceased, there continues to be a reduction in observed ASB, drug-related activity and associated serious violence in Stanhope.
64. Monthly District Contextual Safeguarding Meetings continue to bring partners together to reduce the risk associated with adolescents – as individuals, groups, and places frequented.
65. There have also been three Complex Adolescent Harm processes where specific cases are raised to manage risk and identify interventions and diversionary options.
66. Three referrals by the Police have been submitted to the Charlton Athletic Mentoring Scheme and 29 young people have or are currently being supported by this project. These referrals include young people who have been identified as carrying weapons and committing serious violent offences.
67. The Police Cadet programme is available to young people aged 13 to 17 who live in Kent, irrespective of background or financial circumstances, including those vulnerable to crime or social exclusion. The cadets undergo training and participate in voluntary work with the police in their local community. They develop essential life skills and enhance opportunities for further education, training and employment – whether within the police service or another profession. The Ashford Cadets have continued to expand significantly over this year. They have been working in the community with the CSU on several projects, including weapon sweeps, County Square Pop-up shop and bike marking.
68. Working with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), five at-risk young people agreed to wear a buddy tag. This is offered to young people to assist them in diverting away from criminality or reducing the risk of exploitation. It has effectively reduced young people's vulnerability to becoming involved in county lines.
69. During the course of the year the Violence Reduction Unit have organised a street theatre event focusing on knife crime education that was attended by over 100 local school children. The commando chef once again visited Ashford in February engaging with two of the district's schools with over 200 pupils benefiting. The VRU knife pledge has also been rolled out to The John Wallis Academy and Homewood School with others following in 2023.

Violence against Women and Girls

70. Kent Police held a public engagement meeting in October 2021 to provide information to residents on the work Kent Police is doing to tackle violence against women and girls and to listen to the local community's concerns. Partners supported this event, including Ashford Borough Council, Street Pastors, Neighbourhood Watch and Stagecoach (providing free transport). It was a well-attended event; other events,

including seven 'walk and talks' through the town centre, have taken place over the last year. This has supported the delivery and promotion of the Safer Streets project and provided an opportunity to listen to the concerns of women and girls living and visiting the district. In July, following a request from local businesses, Kent Police and Ashford Borough Council licensing officers provided input to 25 local workers at the Elwick Club, giving safety advice, briefing on the Safer Streets project and providing personal safety equipment.

71. The Borough Council's Licensing Officer has been working with the Night-Time Economy businesses to promote the "Ask Angela"¹ campaign and there have been dedicated Police patrols working in conjunction with partners including the Street Pastors to increase visibility in the Night-Time Economy. The Street Pastors have been successful in recruiting more volunteers to support their work and Safer Streets funding was able to assist in the purchase of a vehicle to become the district's first 'mobile safe space'. This has expanded the ability and scope of the Street Pastors to act as visible guardians in the night-time economy protecting vulnerable people from being exposed to harmful situations.
72. The collective work and focus of agencies has been successful in gaining the support of businesses to promote the Safe Spaces campaign, and has also seen proactive responses from both businesses and their staff in identifying and intervening in situations where vulnerable females were at risk.

Reducing Violence in the Night-Time Economy

73. Safer season operations have had a continued focus on the night-time economy with dedicated foot patrols during peak times. Interventions with offenders have included the imposition of bail conditions to prevent re-offending. Key events, including the Queen's Jubilee and subsequent public holiday periods associated with the Queen's passing, had a planned increase in policing presence in the night-time economy. The Qatar World Cup presented a unique challenge around its scheduling for the night-time economy, with a focused policing approach and close liaison with licensees; few issues were reported.
74. Close working with APAC has led to several exclusions being issued to perpetrators of violence within the night-time economy; a powerful tool for businesses to send a message to those intent on violence that it is not acceptable and has consequences.
75. The Ashford Street Pastors provide additional visibility and assist Police and Ashford Monitoring Centre (CCTV) in identifying situations that can escalate into violence. The number of Street Pastors has increased significantly this year, and training has been provided to local officers to improve working relationships.
76. The Best Bar None scheme, which recognises quality operating standards within the licensing community, was formally launched in November, with six venues being the first to be presented with the award by the Mayor of Ashford. Ashford CSP is one of the first in the County to successfully roll out the scheme, with one of the key aims being to deliver a drive to increase the quality of standards across the industry. The successful recipients were:
 - Ashford Club – also recognised as the highest scoring venue

¹ The 'Ask for Angela' campaign provided a secret code for women to find help if they were feeling unsafe on a night out. ['ASK FOR ANGELA' IF YOU ARE FEELING UNSAFE - National Pubwatch](#)

- Cameo – also recognised for excellence in promoting public safety
- Tap Room
- The County Hotel
- Truckstop
- Valerie's

Reduction in Gang and Serious Crime related violence

77. Working in conjunction with the Kent Police County Lines Team and Chief Constables Crime Squad a number of county lines networks have been disrupted.
78. Intensification activity (Op Sceptre) has involved weapon sweeps and multi-agency visits to vulnerable residents at risk of cuckooing and exploitation. There have also been many joint operations at Ashford International Station with British Transport Police and passive drug dogs resulting in some arrests with drugs and weapons seized.

Building community capacity and increasing public confidence – Lead agency Ashford Borough Council

79. It is known that often communities are best placed to tackle their own issues and key to the work of the CSP is building sustainable community capacity to enable this.
80. It is also vital to the work of the Partnership to ensure the services meet the needs of all communities, particularly the most vulnerable such as victims of hate crime.
81. There is also a need to ensure that the perception of crime within the borough reflects the reality of crime and it is known that this requires sustained community leadership and ongoing conversations and effective communications.

Building community capacity action plan:

82. The CSP has completed the following work in relation to this priority:
 - We have continued to fund Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) for another year to provide diversionary activities, one-to-one mentoring and crime reduction workshops.
 - The re-energised Ashford Partnership against Crime (APAC) has increased membership in the “Pubwatch” and “Shopwatch” schemes. APAC supports the flow of information between premises and partners, ensuring key individuals are refused entry and public safety is maintained.
 - In January 2020, the CSP received £27,000 from the VRU to develop and deliver two community engagement projects within the borough to engage young people and reduce crime and ASB in these locations. The company (C3 Collaborating for Health) has delivered the project in Bockhanger ward and Beaver ward and the associated action plan will be implemented later in 2023.

Crime Data

83. The following tables show overall crime data for the Borough compared to other districts within Kent.

Total published all recorded crime

84. The table below shows that Ashford has seen a **slight decrease** in all recorded crime.

	November 2020 to October 2021	November 2021 to October 2022	% change	No change
Ashford	10,800	10,182	-5.8%	-618
Canterbury	14,587	13,407	-8.1%	-1180
Dartford	12,187	11,251	-7.7%	-936
Dover	10,396	9486	-8.8%	-910
Gravesham	11,059	10,059	-9.1%	-1000
Maidstone	15,454	13,540	-12.4%	-1914
Medway	30,739	27,488	-10.6%	-3251
Sevenoaks	7956	7093	-10.9%	-863
Folkestone and Hythe	9589	8906	-7.2%	-683
Swale	14,491	13,291	-8.3%	-1200
Thanet	17,063	15,156	-11.2%	-1907
Tonbridge & Malling	8208	7554	-8%	-654
Tunbridge Wells	7497	6778	-9.6%	-719
Force	170,026	154,191	-9.4%	-15,835

Most Serious Violence (e.g. actual bodily harm & grievous bodily harm)

85. The table bellows demonstrates that Ashford has seen no change in the offences linked to the most serious violence. Ashford has the fifth lowest most serious violence volumes comparable with Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Folkestone and Hythe.

	November 2020 to October 2021	November 2021 to October 2022	% change	No change
Ashford	63	63	0	0
Canterbury	117	105	-10.3	-12
Dartford	72	88	+22.2	+16
Dover	82	74	-9.8	-8
Gravesham	77	94	+22.1	17
Maidstone	110	96	-12.7	14
Medway	226	247	+9.3	+21
Sevenoaks	45	57	+26.7	+12
Folkestone and Hythe	58	72	+24.1	+14
Swale	149	131	-12.1	-18
Thanet	142	143	+0.7	1
Tonbridge & Malling	45	55	+22.2	10
Tunbridge Wells	44	58	+31.8	14
Force	1230	1283	+4.3	53

Possession of Weapon Offences

86. Possession of weapon offences has **increased**; however, this is attributed to the proactive work by Kent Police linked to tackling violence and gangs.

	November 2020 to October 2021	November 2021 to October 2022	% change	No change
Ashford	62	80	+29	18
Canterbury	96	118	+22.9	22
Dartford	79	95	+20.3	16
Dover	69	93	+34.8	24
Gravesham	87	93	+6.9	6
Maidstone	100	128	+28	28
Medway	236	269	+14	33
Sevenoaks	44	69	+56.8	25
Folkestone and Hythe	95	121	+27.4	26
Swale	86	111	+29.1	25
Thanet	136	156	+14.7	20
Tonbridge & Malling	45	61	+35.6	16
Tunbridge Wells	37	68	+83.8	31
Force	1172	1462	+24.7	290

Shoplifting

87. Shoplifting has **increased** within the borough. This is attributed to very low figures due to retail premises being closed throughout 2020 and 2012 due to the pandemic.

	November 2020 to October 2021	November 2021 to October 2022	% change	No change
Ashford	630	867	+37.6	237
Canterbury	842	1088	+29.2	246
Dartford	1124	1523	+35.5	399
Dover	381	516	+35.4	135
Gravesham	447	564	+26.2	117
Maidstone	749	989	+32	240
Medway	1618	1916	+18.4	298
Sevenoaks	538	479	-11	-59
Folkestone and Hythe	456	625	+37.1	169
Swale	938	1111	+18.4	173
Thanet	662	1208	+82.5	546
Tonbridge & Malling	447			
Tunbridge Wells	438	646	+47.5	208
Force	9270	12173	+ 31.3	2903

88. Therefore, the data shows that Ashford is one of the safest boroughs in Kent to live, work and visit.

Police and Crime Commissioner grant to the CSP

89. The 2022/2023 the PCC grant to Ashford CSP totalled £31,744. The funding was split in the following ways:
90. Freedom Leisure for an employment skills project totalling £2,680. This was a 6-week course entailing 2 hours per week of employability skills and work experience placement. This will assist with making the candidates more desirable to hirers. Once the course is complete, candidates are reviewed and could be enrolled on the apprenticeship programmes resulting in lasting qualifications or supported in their employability endeavours elsewhere. They organised weekly physical activities, which allowed for socialising outside of the work placement whilst supervised in a safe environment. Activities will be varied and include gym, fitness classes and multi-sports.
91. Ashford Mediation Service, 'Keep Ashford Talking phase 2' - £15,980. This project consists of two aspects: A pilot project within local schools and youth groups to equip staff, mentors and young people with basic mediation and negotiation skills which can be deployed should they find themselves in a dispute or conflict. They have identified schools and youth groups to collaborate with and a targeted project to work in wards with the highest deprivation and ASB incidents, disagreements and disputes (Aylesford Green, Stanhope and Victoria). The project will work with community leaders to support individuals in resolving their differences before they escalate and further intervention by the police is required. By raising awareness that free mediation services are accessible, they hope to actively engage community members to choose mediation services instead of escalating conflict. This will be done through a localised media campaign and engagement with key community stakeholders and local service providers.
92. Sk8side Safety Project - £6485 The project has six strands:
- Delivery of two detached evening sessions in the Town Centre: Current ASB trends will determine the times of delivery. Team members will engage with young people who are socialising in the town, building relationships with those unknown to the team and engaging with those that are known. With the young people, they will work on what activities would engage and interest the groups whilst challenging current behaviour and attitudes.
 - The facilitation of the Street Work Forum (SWF): This forum brings together those agencies explicitly working in a street-based environment. The SWF discuss all current street-based work and the identified hot spots. Between the agencies, they will deliver projects in ongoing areas of need and work together to respond to hot spots.
 - Holiday Town Centre Youth Café
 - Safer Streets for Young Women Workshops: Sk8side will run various workshops/programmes on the ABC Safer Streets initiative. This will include safety awareness for young women, including the provision of safety equipment. They will run workshops (for which we will also take referrals) with young men about their role in ensuring the streets are safe for young women.
 - Diversionary activities: Reduction in funding generally since the pandemic has resulted in Sk8side being able to offer fewer diversionary activities. They would ensure that more programmes can be provided, particularly in holiday times. This would also ensure requests from young people identified through the street work and holiday café can be responded to.

- Drug & Alcohol Programme: They would like to build up a range of resources to target those young people currently engaging in substance misuse. Programmes will be run in outdoor and cafe environments.
93. Youth Unity - £3880 Delivering Outreach Sessions in partnership with Ashford Community Safety. Community Information Gathering and Mobile Creative Music / Podcasting for Ages 12-16 years. As well as a series of 1 hour 15 minute 'Say No, to Violence and Drugs and other forms of exploitation' (Josh's Story), Primary Need to Know classroom sessions for Transition Stage 9-11 years old.
 94. Personal Safety Equipment - £2630 to support the event run by the CSU and to support the initiatives surrounding violence against women and girls.
 95. Renewal of PSPO Signs in the Town Centre - £180. This is to support the work surrounding the ASB strategy as mentioned above.
 96. Uprising UK - £740. This is to offer Panna Football for youth within the Town centre during the February Half Term.

Other Community Safety Events

97. Safety in Action occurred at Ashford Fire Station between 20 and 28 June. The event saw important safety messages delivered to Year 6 pupils throughout the borough via various workshops covering anti-social behaviour, fire safety, mental health, drugs and alcohol and first aid. Nearly 1,200 young people attended and the feedback received was highly positive. This event was organised by Ashford Borough Council's Community Safety staff.
98. Events have taken place within Victoria Park, Stanhope and Tenterden to offer street theatre to the public on the topics of peer pressure, knife crime and the impact this has on the family. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funded these events. The events were shown on BBC South East News.
99. A multi-agency meeting took place at McDonalds in the town centre to discuss ongoing ASB issues. An initial meeting was held in February where recommendations were made that at first were successful, however, the management have since reported certain young people continue to be an issue. ABC CSU and the Police will maintain close and regular contact with the establishment to monitor the situation and enforce where necessary.
100. As a partnership we hosted an event on 29th April that included the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Scott, and Ashford MP, Mr Green, where there were presentations on the work achieved under the Safer Streets 3 project. That evening a multi-agency team were out promoting the new initiatives to the public visiting the town centre's night-time economy. This received a lot of positive feedback and further events have been organised in the town over the summer period.
101. On 25th May, the council hosted A Sporting Chance update event at Ashford Picturehouse. This allowed Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) to showcase the work they had completed within the borough over the previous nine months, utilising the funding from Ashford Borough Council, Police and Crime Commissioner and the Premier League. A highlight of this work is that they have mentored 29 young people at the highest risk of exploitation or criminal involvement and have made

positive changes to their lives. The Trust has also delivered county lines” awareness sessions to 900 secondary school pupils.

102. The ‘Safer Summer’ initiative took place in Ashford town centre during summer. It occurred on 1st July, 20th July, 29th July, 10th August and 26th August. It consisted of a multi-agency approach to ASB issues, offering a visible presence and handing out safety equipment purchased as part of the Safer Streets initiative. Kent Police, ABC CSU, Licencing and Ashford Monitoring Centre supported the event.
103. The Safer Autumn Event took place week commencing 26 October. This was an opportunity to work with Kent Police and other partner agencies during the half-term week in the Ashford Town Centre area to engage with businesses and members of the public to listen to concerns and show partnership working and a visible presence. The CSU attended daily sessions with help from youth support workers, Sk8side, AMC and Catch 22, amongst others. Hotspot areas such as Lower High Street, Memorial Gardens, McDonald's, Park Mall and County Square were visited on several occasions during each session, which ran from 15:00 (considered a busy period). Opportunities were taken to engage with young people, listen to what provisions they want, and signpost to youth provisions within Ashford.
104. On Friday 2 December, Ashford Town Centre hosted the latest Op Sparham - a road policing operation arranged by Kent Police Road Safety Unit in partnership with divisional officers and partner agencies. Ashford Borough Council joined various agencies, including Ashford Community Policing Team, Ashford Town Team, East Kent Special Constabulary, Rural Task Force and the DVSA. Many vehicles were brought into the stop site situated on Henwood Industrial Estate, in addition to several other stops on the roads of Ashford. As a result, several offences were noted and dealt with including a drug-drive arrest, nine vehicle seizures under 165 of the Road Traffic Act and 24 Traffic Offence Reports for various matters
105. Kennington's neighbouring policing week of action took place following reporting of ASB in the Kennington area increasing. It included an incident where a bus was targeted, as well as other local businesses being affected. Agencies and Kent Police have worked closely with Stagecoach and the affected businesses. Patrols have taken place on and around key bus routes to reassure passengers and the public. Further multi-agency work was carried out, including:
 - Action in speed enforcement; education to motorists, including e-scooters.
 - Hawkeye; police CCTV van at various locations across Kennington and advertised via My Community Voice and Neighbourhood watch for public engagement.
 - A specialist Domestic Abuse investigator was out for people to speak to for support, advice and guidance anonymously.
 - High visibility patrolling of officers and PCSO's across the area in vehicles and on foot
 - Weapons sweep in public spaces, schools engagement presentations at Goat leas and Phoenix Primary schools.

CSP priority setting process and identified priority areas for 2022/23

106. In January 2023 the CSP came together to agree the approach to be taken for priority identification in this year. Building on feedback from this Overview & Scrutiny meeting, the intention is to agree formally the priorities for the CSP at its next meeting in March 2023.

107. The following have been identified as potential priorities:

- Tackling violence with a focus on violence against women and girls
- Tackling domestic abuse and sexual offences
- Tackling ASB and concerning behaviour
- Tackling Serious and Organised crime

There will be a cross cutting theme of substance misuse.

108. Phase 2 will involve a deeper analysis of crime types relevant to these priorities in order to examine who is being affected or perpetrating the crimes, locational analysis at ward level and temporal analysis. This will enable the CSP to focus on the crime/problem having the most impact on the borough and have the data to drill down to exactly whom the crime/problem is affecting, when and where.

109. Phase 3 will feed all of this information into the rolling action plan process. Partnership interventions can then be designed based on this and will ensure its investments and activities will achieve the most positive impacts possible. Not only will the strategic assessment inform the rolling plan but it will also be the basis and rationale behind commissioning/grant making decisions moving forward.

110. A sub-group of the CSP will take responsibility for the delivery of each priority identified by the strategic assessment and rolling action plan. They will take the top-level action plan, build and develop it into a full, SMART action plan and ensure delivery against it.

111. The action plans created by the sub-groups are approved by the CSP and progress against them is assessed when it meets (which is three times a year). The Performance Group is responsible for monitoring progress against our key crime and fear of crime indicators, following on from sub-group intervention.

Conclusion

112. Ashford's Community Safety Partnership only exists because of the significant support given by its individual partners and by those from a whole range of organisations who are dedicated every day and night to protecting our community. The work of the partnership continues to have a positive impact on crime reduction and also inspiring confidence within our communities to report crime or ASB.

113. There has been a number of changes in the community safety arena over recent years and this has shown a change of working for most partners involved in the CSP. This report hopes to recognise this work and thank everyone involved.

Portfolio Holder's Views

114. We are committed to improving the quality of life for those living and working within our communities and in providing a safe and secure environment to enable people to live together. We work closely with Kent Police towards our communities becoming free from the negative impact of crime and ASB. The council continues to play an important role in coordinating the Community Safety Partnership and its priorities by enabling strong multi-agency work. This annual report demonstrates the work that can be achieved and I would like to thank all those involved for their hard work and dedication.

Cllr Paul Bartlett
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing

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Appendix A

Kent wide ASB figures

Area	December 2020 to November 2021	December 2021 to November 2022	Difference (number)	Difference (percent)	Position in County (highest to lowest)
Ashford	2,886	1895	-991	-34.3%	7
Canterbury	3,725	2501	-1224	-32.9%	Joint 3
Dartford	2,564	1813	-751	-29.3%	8
Dover	2,124	1781	-343	-16.1%	9
Folkestone and Hythe	2,456	1684	-772	-31.4%	11
Gravesham	2,969	1984	-985	-33.2%	6
Maidstone	3,765	2497	-1268	-33.4%	5
Medway	7,151	5065	-2086	-29.2%	1
Sevenoaks	2,050	1094	-956	-44.6%	13
Swale	3,414	2501	-943	-26.7%	Joint 3
Thanet	4,239	2770	-1469	-34.7%	2
Tonbridge and Malling	2,048	1686	-326	-17.7%	10
Tunbridge Wells	1,636	1134	-502	-30.7%	12
Kent	41,027	28,405	-12622	-30.8%	