

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8TH FEBRUARY 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. R. Colella, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss and M. Middleton (substitute).

Observers: Councillor M. Sherrey (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety) – on Microsoft Teams

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms J. Willis, Ms. B. Houghton, Mr. D. Rischmiller, and Mr. M. Sliwinski.

67/22

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Baxter, H. Jones, and C. Spencer.

Councillor M. Middleton attended the meeting as a named substitute for Councillor C. Spencer.

68/22

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor whipping arrangements on this occasion.

69/22

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP 2022-23

The Community Safety Manager provided a detailed presentation updating Members on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) in Bromsgrove District. The presentation proceeded with an update on the NWCSP Plan for 2021-24 and some of the grants released by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The following was highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The NWCSP produced a rolling three-year plan that was refreshed annually through a strategic assessment, which gathered research, evidence, and intelligence along with professional expertise of those working locally. The Plan for 2021-24 included the following priorities which had been informed by the strategic assessment:

- Reducing Violence and Abuse
 - Reducing Theft and Acquisitive Crime
 - Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour, Damage and Nuisance
 - Protecting Vulnerable Communities
 - Reducing Offending and Reducing the Harm caused by Drug and Alcohol Misuse.
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- As part of the PCC's CCTV Capital Fund, Members were informed that in 2017-18 the PCC had allocated significant funding to develop and upgrade CCTV across the West Mercia force area which included an allocation of £195k of grant funding for improvements to the area's CCTV scheme. This funding was used across the three Local Authorities (Bromsgrove, Redditch, Wyre Forest) to modernise the CCTV infrastructure that served the three district areas. The upgrade included 3 moveable cameras, enhanced digital capability, improved image quality and a greater capacity to expand the scheme and/or link up to other digital systems across the region. Further funding from the PCC's CCTV Capital Fund of £65k had been received in 2020-21 and 2021-22 with £20k for 2022-23.
 - In September 2021 a new grant was released, the PCC's Fly Tipping fund. The funding available from this new grant was £100k and was for the CSPs to work with local private landowners to address the problem of fly-tipping on private land. It was reported that NWCSP had been allocated £22k of this funding and that it was firmly aimed at NWCSP's work with private landowners only and that local authorities would not be able to access this funding.
 - Tools and powers used in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases within the District and the wider North Worcestershire area were explained. Information was provided on the Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) by the Police, Council services and Social Landlords. Information was also provided regarding the Community Trigger/ASB Case Review and it was explained that this measure was introduced as part of the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 and was a facility available to victims of ASB to request a review of their reported case, if they felt that no action had been taken. It was clarified by Officers that the Community Trigger/ASB Case Review was not a complaints process but a review process and if specific complaints were made by residents, it should be through the relevant partners complaints procedure. Members were informed that CPWs were a very effective process and helped to mitigate any further necessary action as a breach of the notice would result in a criminal offence.

Following this part of the presentation Members were keen to understand further some of the areas highlighted within the presentation. These areas were as follows:

- Some Members questioned the selection process for the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel and it was noted that the Constitutional Review Working Group was the most appropriate forum at which the matter of appointments to external bodies could be reviewed.
- Engagement with the supermarkets as part of the community safety partnership – Some Members highlighted that stores in the District suffered from large amount of reported theft but stores rarely prosecuted offenders. Officers explained that the Town Centre Management Group in Bromsgrove tried to engage with businesses, including large retail stores, at a local level and there was more success in terms of engaging smaller town centre businesses in safety and anti-crime initiatives. It was noted that some stores could be reluctant to prosecute shoplifters because of the national policy on the issue.
- Employment of cameras to improve collecting evidence of crimes – Whilst Members were pleased to see the PCC distributing the CCTV Capital Fund to improve the local CCTV schemes, it was pointed out that some areas of the District lacked sophisticated CCTV monitoring with example of Hagley cited. Officers noted that at the CCTV Monitoring Centre, camera views were rotated so that Monitoring Centre Officers could focus on selected areas, and if intelligence from the Police was provided, Officers would focus their efforts on those locations.
- Application for use of covert surveillance by the local authority – Officers explained that public authorities such as councils had to submit an application to a Magistrate Court to request permission for installation of covert CCTV surveillance. This required a report that provided justification as to why such surveillance was necessary. The use of covert surveillance could then be granted if the use was deemed justified in the eyes of the courts under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). It was noted that CCTV was very heavily regulated, and the Council was regularly audited by the Surveillance Camera Commissioner and needed to be compliant.

Following the detailed discussion in respect of the work of the NWCSP, Officers provided information on the work and initiatives of the Partnership, Community Safety Project updates for 2022-23 and additional information about the NWCSP's core funding for 2022-23. During this presentation Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- Under new initiatives it was noted that in line with the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance an upper tier domestic abuse partnership had been established at County level and a Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy had been developed.
- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC) introduced an overhaul of sentencing laws. As part of the Act a requirement was introduced for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence. The draft guidance placed a new duty on

specified authorities and PCCs in relation to the Serious Violence Duty.

- A guidance had been produced by the Government with regards to establishing Combating Drugs Partnerships in local areas and guidance for local delivery partners had been produced to that effect. The boundaries of these proposed Partnership would be aligned to that of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System.
- The NWCSF Core Funding for 2022-23 was detailed by Officers and it was noted that as part of this there was a PCC grant of £20,000 for North Worcestershire Domestic Homicide Reviews – it was highlighted that 1 (with potentially another one) review was to be undertaken in Bromsgrove and there were 5 in Worcestershire.
- A breakdown was provided of the projects the Safer Bromsgrove – Tasking Fund 2022-23 would be spent on. It was highlighted that the College of Policing Event for Planning Services detailed in the spend breakdown took place on 8th February 2023 (today) and concerned designing out crime from neighbourhoods through effective spatial design. It was noted that Councillor H. Jones attended this event on behalf of Bromsgrove Council. Members were further advised that the Council's community safety team included fully qualified design out crime officers.
- A breakdown was provided with respect to the £130,000 allocation to NWCSF for CCTV funding between April 2020 and March 2022.
- A breakdown was also provided with respect to CCTV funding of £20,000 for 2022-2023.
- Community Safety Project Updates for 2022-23 were detailed as follows:
 - The Respect Programme – provided community safety awareness sessions as part of school PHSE drop down days and bespoke classroom sessions on a number of subjects such as recognising and reporting hate crime, understanding healthy relationships/domestic abuse, the dangers of substance misuse and promoting respect and community responsibility. The programme also provided a therapeutic mentoring scheme. There were now 10 youth mentors on the Programme and the 2022-23 saw the cohort that the Respect Programme works with expand further with the team receiving between 40 to 60 referrals each half term.
 - The Empowering Young People Programme – this programme included a focus on ASB, County Lines, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Misuse and Hate Crime Awareness. Over 2022-23 6 programme sessions had been delivered, taking place in both school and community settings.
 - Friday Night Diversionary Sessions – these sessions evolved from the ASDA Car Park Diversionary Project over 12 months ago. The sessions work with some of the harder to reach young people and over the past year the group had grown to a point where 100 young people were attending. Due to the complexity of

needs of the young people in the group, it had now been separated into two groups with the older teens attending on a Friday and the younger age groups attending a new Thursday session.

Youth Outreach – The Youth Hub and Outreach Bromsgrove worked with Community Safety Youth Workers, to engage with gatherings of young people in the local areas. It was reported that between 600-800 young people were engaged with during the height of the summer. This project was seen as a best practice model across the County.

Bromsgrove Listening Service – This was a volunteer Listening Service for young people who needed lower level support and interventions. During this school year the programme had been extended to the middle schools in Bromsgrove with sessions also held at St John's Middle School and Parkside Middle School.

Bromsgrove Youth Hub – The Hub was an independent Community Interest Company (CIC) and provided support and activities for young people, offering a space to socialise safely.

Young Citizen's Challenge – An interactive package made available to all Year 5 students in North Worcestershire middle schools. In 2022 this was delivered in person and was held at the Bromsgrove Police and Fire Station between 23rd and 27th May.

- It was highlighted that in total through partnership working, an additional £220,125.80 of voluntary sector funding has been awarded in the District to support youth diversionary activities and projects.

Following this part of the report, Members were keen to understand further some of the areas highlighted within the presentation and sought clarification with respect to the following:

- Use of the Mobile Metal Detector (Knife Arch) – It was reported that this was not being offered to schools but used in the night-time economy.
- It was noted that Prevent referrals had dropped considerably in the post pandemic period but were now slowly increasing again.
- Provision of qualified youth workers at youth clubs – Some Members commented that youth clubs had recently been established in Hagley but there was a lack of qualified youth workers to run these clubs. Officers replied that discussions were ongoing with the County Council (the authority responsible for youth club provision) with regards to this issue, for example to help elected Members access youth worker training.
- Patrolling of youth anti-social behaviour hotspots – It was stated that areas highlighted by Members would be added to the areas that were patrolled by the Community Safety team.
- Funding and referrals to the Respect Programme – It was reported that this programme was funded on a casual basis and this was funded as part of the Bromsgrove Youth Outreach from NWCSF Core funding. It was noted that this programme also took

place during the school time as a lot of referrals were for children who were at risk of exclusion.

- It was explained that funding for the Friday Night Diversionary Sessions came from various voluntary sector funding sources.

The Board subsequently received a presentation from the Community Safety Manager and the Community Safety Project Officer with regards to Tibberton Improvement Project. During this part of the meeting, a case study was also presented on how a long-standing ASB problem on private land on the Bromsgrove side of the West Hills, on the Hopwood boundary with West Heath, had been resolved. The following was noted:

- Tibberton Court was an area within Charford ward. Following concerns raised by residents, through the Ward Member for Charford Councillor M. Thompson, a series of long-term improvements were undertaken to the area through multi-agency partnership working to reduce ASB and crime.
- A number of examples of environmental and spatial improvements that were carried out at Tibberton Court to reduce crime opportunities were shown to Members. These improvements included removal of unused garages, alleyway improvements that reduced opportunities for loitering, improved perimeter fencing, removal of litter and fly-tipping, and the clearance of vandalised play area.
- It was noted that local residents were fully involved in the planning and design of the improvements, with Officers calling on householders to discuss the proposals. A drop-in event was held using the Mobile Police Vehicle and surveys were undertaken to ensure that improvement works were identified that would solve problems which residents were most concerned about.
- It was noted that positive results of the Tibberton Court improvement initiative could be seen with greater community cohesion in the area, lowered numbers of reported ASB, and a lower expenditure incurred by the local housing provider, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT).
- The experience of Tibberton Court project provided an estate enhancement model that was transferred to other locations and the next similar project was delivered at the Shawfield Estate in Wythall in September 2022.
- The case study was presented regarding an effective intervention to a long standing ASB problem on the Bromsgrove side of the West Hills. The case involved the misuse of off-road vehicles on private land and had created substantial concern and regular noise nuisance for local residents. In 2018, a petition of 106 names was submitted and the local MP had also been involved on multiple occasions to seek a resolution.
- Powers under the ASB legislation in the form of Community Protection was used to resolve the situation with an initial letter sent to the landlord, followed by a Community Protection Warning (CPW) and a Community Protection Notice (CPN). These requests were ignored until the senior management contact was

identified for this land and advised that the option to appeal the Notice had now expired and the boundaries of the site would now be secured by public authorities.

- Following this, the landlord responded rapidly and implemented the works as required by the CPN (and proposed by Officers) including closing four breaks in the hedgerow boundary of the land and regular inspection of the works for effectiveness.
- It was reported that the ASB issue was now largely result and the residents were kept informed throughout the process and expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the case.
- The case showed that effective use of appropriate ASB powers was very effective in tackling long-standing cases of nuisance to the public. The use of ASB legislation was also effective in reducing considerable repeat demand on various public agencies.

An overview was also provided of the number of campaigns that were in place and events that took place in Bromsgrove in relation to ASB and crime awareness. These campaigns included:

- White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Campaign (November-December 2022)
- Hate Crime Awareness Week 2022 and Conference (10th to 16th October 2022, with an in-person conference on 14th October)
- Planning Consultations – There were Community Safety Project Officers at Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils who were qualified Designing Out Crime (DOC) Officers. These Officers examined 21 planning applications relating to Bromsgrove in 2022-23, offering appropriate crime prevention and security recommendations.
- The Nominated Neighbour Scheme had continued throughout 2022-23. This scheme was available to vulnerable residents across Bromsgrove. It was reported that at the time of the meeting there were 131 residents enrolled in the scheme.
- Safe Places Scheme – it was reported that this scheme was designed to offer people with a disability, illness or learning difficulty, or anyone else who felt in danger a safe place. It was somewhere they could go to for help if they were being bullied or harassed while out and about.

Lastly ASB data for North Worcestershire and Bromsgrove was reviewed and it was noted that the data was up to 23 December 2022. It was reported that there had been a significant increase in recorded ASB incidents during the Covid-19 pandemic, mainly due to legislation introduced in response to the pandemic, and there had also been a change in recording practices whereby some of the offences that were previously classed as ASB were now classed as crimes. It was highlighted that the reported ASB had decreased significantly, in particular 'personal' ASB which was down to 5 incidents as of December 2022.

Following the presentation, Members were keen to understand further some of the areas highlighted and made a number of comments and suggestions. The following was noted:

- Some Members reported that feedback from their constituents suggested a significant increase in door-to-door scams relating to requesting payments for gardening work to be carried out. Some Members thought that the Nominated Neighbourhood Scheme could be an effective solution to this issue and expressed desire to promote this in their wards.
- Doorstep crimes were reported as being on increase and it was reported that NWCSP encouraged people to sign-up themselves and their family members to the Nominated Neighbourhood Scheme, and referrals from elected members were encouraged.
- Members spoke about anecdotal evidence of car crime in Bromsgrove and car theft methods were discussed. It was noted that an increasingly common form of car theft involves a pair of criminals using relay signals that mimic those that come from key fobs to unlock and start cars. The solution suggested was to encourage members of the public keeping key fobs in a protective Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), signal-blocking pouch. Officers undertook to check if funding could be obtained for initiatives relating to car pouch provision.
- It was noted that the White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Campaign also provided initiatives around targeting domestic abuse towards men and men-to-men violence. It was highlighted that there was a significant challenge in getting men to come forward so the issue was under-reported.
- The Chairman praised the report and work of the NWCSP and queried whether there could be a monetary representation of the impact that the Partnership had through its various schemes. Officers undertook to investigate the possibility of this.
- Members asked for the NWCSPs Annual Report to be presented at a future meeting of Council and it was highlighted that Full Council would see the full report.
- Members requested that details of the Nominated Neighbours Scheme be provided to Parish Councils in Bromsgrove. Officers undertook to communicate this information.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environmental Services and the Deputy Chief Executive and the Chair of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership requested that their thanks for the significant work and effort of the Community Safety Team be formally noted in the minutes.

In concluding this item, the Chairman requested that the impressive work of the Community Safety Team be formally noted in the minutes, and that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Members expressed thanks to all members of the team for the work carried out during the last year.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership be noted.

70/22

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

It was proposed by Members that the following items from the Cabinet Work Programme be added as pre-scrutiny items on the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme:

- Former Market Hall Site Proposal
- Grass Verge Maintenance.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Cabinet Work Programme be noted; and
- 2) the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be updated in line with the pre-amble above.

71/22

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme would be updated to reflect the discussion in respect of the Cabinet Work Programme items.

RESOLVED that subject to the pre-amble above the Overview & Scrutiny Board Work Programme be updated.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Chairman

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