

MINUTES of the SPECIAL
MEETING of the
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE held on
9TH JUNE 2008

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the meeting)

* Cllr V Duckett (Chairman)	Cllr S J O'Grady
* Cllr Mrs N Warner-O'Neill (Vice-Chairman)	* Mrs J Rawlings +
* Cllr Mrs E Cable	* Cllr I E Sampson
Cllr M Causey	Cllr Mrs J R Thomson
* Cllr S P Connolly	* Cllr K Webster
* Cllr Mrs P Ellis	Cllr R A Welland
* Cllr S L Hill	* Cllr Mrs L Wheatley
Cllr J P Hubble	* Cllr C A Wilson
Cllr Dr N Lee	* Miss P WRight +

* Present
+ Tenants' Panel Representatives

The following were also in attendance: Councillors R G Gates, Mrs C A King and R A Knowles, Mary Orton, Chief Executive, and Mr J Griffiths, Mediation First.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor V Duckett was elected Chairman for the Council year 2008/09.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Mrs N Warner-O'Neill was elected Vice-Chairman for the Council year 2008/09.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda Item 4)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J P Hubble, S J O'Grady and Mrs C E Savage. Councillor N P Holder attended as a substitute.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (Agenda Item 5)

There were no interests declared.

5. REVIEW OF FEAR OF CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 7)

5.1 The meeting was held in select committee mode. The Committee heard evidence from invited representatives from Surrey Police, Surrey County Council, Safer Hastings Partnership and the Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Safety. Representatives made their presentations after which members of the Committee and were invited to ask questions.

5.2 Waverley Borough Council Chief Executive – Mary Orton

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 led to a significant change in the responsibilities of local authorities. They now have a statutory responsibility to promote the well-being of their residents.

Waverley are one of the responsible authorities in this area who form a Community Safety Partnership – known as the Safer Waverley Partnership (SWP). The other partners are:

- Police Service
- Police Authority
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Fire & Rescue Service
- Primary Care Trust

The SWP is required to draw up a strategy, based on crime statistics in the area, to prioritise how to meet their responsibilities. On the basis of that assessment three priorities have been identified by the SWP:

- Tackling crime
- Tackling fear of crime
- Tackling anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a tangible issue that was being tackled successfully by the SWP. Litter, broken windows, graffiti and groups of youths might not be criminal activities, but are perceived as such by the public. The SWP have been very proactive in area hot-spots in tackling these issues and encouraging young people away from anti-social behaviour and is an area of their work which needs to be more widely acknowledged.

5.3 The Leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Gates, spoke in support of the review and hoped that it would go beyond fact finding and lead to some positive initiatives. The outcome of the review would be keenly considered by the Executive.

5.4 Inspector Simon Dann – Waverley Borough Neighbourhood Inspector

Inspector Dann informed the meeting that over the past 4 years statistics have shown an overall reduction in crime of 11.5% over burglary, vehicle crime, criminal damage and robbery. Violent crime figures had shown an increase, but this was due to more proactive reporting practices. However, the reduction in those statistics had not reduced the fear of crime and this would appear to be due to the public interpretation of anti-social behaviour as a crime. Police classed youth behaviour as low-level disorder, but was interpreted by the public as crime and fear of crime.

The aim of the Police was to improve the public's confidence in them and they had undertaken a survey as to how this might be achieved. Results from the survey had indicated a good level of public satisfaction with the Police and feeling of safety in the borough.

A key priority to improving confidence was by the use of:

- Citizen Focussed Policing – partnership working, positive media reporting and neighbourhood empowerment

- Safer Neighbourhood Teams – neighbourhood policing where dedicated teams of officers target local issues and forge close links with Town & Parish Councils. Engagement with the public by means of newsletters, fridge magnets and the Key Individual Network (KIN); local residents who can supply key information to the Police.
- Mapping Systems – engagement mapping whereby local services such as residents' associations can be identified, and confidence mapping where officers need to give extra support.
- Safer Neighbourhood Patrols – use of local officers (NSOs and PSCOs) to focus on local issues.

5.5 Dave Johnson, Local Area Director, Surrey County Council

The County Council's key method for reducing fear of crime was partnership working, lead by no single agency. Working in partnership towards public service agreements such as cohesive communities, reducing serious crime, reducing reoffending, reducing drugs and reducing risk from terrorism. Under the Government initiative 'Safer and Stronger Communities' some 8 targets have been identified for Local Area Agreements to work to.

Surrey County Council is working in partnership to create stronger communities and thereby reduce the fear of crime. The Surrey Together initiative was a very effective tool. Four vans visited hot-spots county-wide to engage with residents and identify issues such as sale of alcohol to minors. Unfortunately, this may become a virtual team in the near future due to resource restrictions,

The partnership works with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service at Sandy Hill giving out free smoke alarms for vulnerable families encouraging initiatives such as 'wrecks to ride' for bikes. The Youth Voluntary Agency gave advice on alternative education and training opportunities and had links to a Family Support Worker – all this would lead to stronger communities. This work would be developed in other communities.

A further partnership initiative set up as a pilot in Guildford, was the no cold-caller zone, which reduced distraction burglaries. In Guildford this reduced distraction burglaries by 70% and could be trialled next in Farncombe.

Those were some of the successes of the partnership, but there were still a number of challenges. The aim was to create stronger communities which in turn helped to reduce crime; it was also important to remember that young people were also victims of crime.

5.6 Natalie Williams, Communications Manager, Safer Hastings Partnership

Ms Williams informed the meeting that in 2001 18% of residents in Hastings were afraid to go out after dark. Safer Hastings Partnership (SHP) initiatives had helped to reduce that figure significantly and residents' confidence has been improved, mainly by communication, which had the biggest impact on the reduction in the fear of crime.

The Safer Hastings Partnership was the first Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to win one of the Home Office's prestigious Tilley Awards, and the first organisation to ever win a Tilley Award for work to tackle the fear of crime. They had recently won a Tilley Award for the GOSE region for their work engaging with young people.

The SHP had achieved huge improvements in reducing the fear of crime by introducing a number of initiatives. A survey undertaken by the SHP showed the media as the biggest cause of raising the fear of crime, and one initiative they had undertaken was to take out space in local newspapers with full editorial control. Community TV with screens in community areas such as supermarkets, fast food outlets and train stations which informed residents and visitors of SHP initiatives to reduce the fear of crime and a comprehensive website were others.

SHP meetings were held in public places such as shopping centres, schools and at local shows. There were incentives offered to encourage people to attend and talk to them, such as bike locks, personal alarms and property marking pens.

The importance of engaging with the local community, especially youths, was paramount and surveys undertaken in schools concluded that they had given young people a sense of involvement. This was particularly important as it was not only older residents who were affected by the fear of crime.

A year after Community TV and media advertising had been introduced, 81% of residents said that had heard of SHP, and the percentage of residents who said they felt safe walking out in their area and the town centre had increased significantly. Hastings also had the third biggest percentage fall nationally of peoples perception of the fear of crime. Studies had shown that communication had the biggest impact on reducing the fear of crime.

5.7 Councillor Carol Cockburn, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

In October 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government published the White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. Its aim was to give local communities more influence and power to improve their quality of life. People would be able to contact their local councillor to demand an answer to their questions through a new Community Call for Action. Councils would be encouraged to develop neighbourhood charters and Councillors would become champions for their local communities to deal with issues on the ground or demand a formal response through the scrutiny process.

5.8 Jack Griffin, Mediation First

Mediation First provided a service to residents of Waverley and East Hants. It was an independent voluntary organisation that helped to resolve many types of neighbourhood problems and disputes. They received referrals from individual households or through local community organisations. The services of specially trained mediators were available free of charge to any member of the community who applied for support in those situations.

5.9 Main questions and points raised by the Committee and other Councillors present

- 5.9.1 Members raised their concerns over the problem of getting through to the Police to report incidents, and asked what percentage of violent crime in the early hours was related to alcohol. There was scepticism about the reported reduction in crime figures, how could this be overcome?

Inspector Dann told members that he would feed this back to his call centre Superintendent. For less serious incidents, he encouraged members to contact their local neighbourhood specialist officer in the first instance as call centres had to prioritise calls. He accepted that there was a need for a non-emergency number. He confirmed that alcohol had a major impact on crime, and one of the police priorities was to combat under-age drinking with an emphasis on engaging with youths in 'hot-spots'. Inspector Dann said that the criteria for reporting statistics had not changed.

Mr Johnson said that youths were not only perpetrators of crime, but also victims. A youth intervention clinic for first-time offenders has been trialled by the Police in Waverley and Guildford which showed a significant need for support for youths with drug and alcohol problems who had been victims of crime themselves. Mr Johnson said that it was important to recognise that 98% of young people do not get into trouble and it was important to remember this when engaging with them.

- 5.9.2 Mr Johnson said that the Safer Waverley Partnership bus not only encouraged youths to participate in sporting activities, but also helped and advised on other issues such as job interviews. Cllr Mrs Ellis reminded the Committee that the Cranfold Job Seekers Club helped youngsters with interview techniques and dress codes and sought job placements. This was something other areas could replicate.

- 5.9.3 In response to a question, Ms Williams said that there was a Youth Council in Hastings, but it did not attract youngsters most in need of help and advice. It was more useful for alerting youngsters to the facilities open to them and how the Council operated on behalf of their residents. In her opinion the most effective way of combating fear of crime was through a good partnership strategy and effective communication through the media.

- 5.10 A report summarising the evidence gathered for the review would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 9.01pm.

Chairman