

# **APPENDIX M**

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 8 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **EXECUTIVE - 7 OCTOBER 2008**

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##### **Title:**

##### **IN-DEPTH REVIEW – FEAR OF CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

[Portfolio Holder for Community Safety: Cllr Mrs Carole Cockburn]

[Wards Affected: All]

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##### **Summary and purpose:**

This report reviews the information gathered to date as part of the Committee's in-depth review of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in Waverley, and makes recommendations to the Executive.

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##### **Environmental implications:**

The levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are important factors in determining how residents view the place in which they live. Waverley is fortunate in that levels of crime and anti-social behaviour within the borough are relatively low, and it should therefore be a good place to live.

##### **Social / community implications:**

The fear of crime can impact significantly on the quality of people's lives. In Waverley, some residents have a disproportionate fear of crime, and it is hoped that this review will help to identify ways in which this fear can be reduced.

##### **E-Government implications:**

There are no direct e-Government implications arising from this report.

##### **Resource and legal implications:**

If accepted by Members, the implementation of some of the proposals in this report could require some additional resources, but the sums involved are small.

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##### **Introduction**

1. At its meeting on 12 November 2007, the Committee agreed the terms of reference for its in-depth review of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in Waverley.

2. The review commenced with a special meeting of the Committee on 9 June 2008 when evidence was received from Mary Orton (Chief Executive of Waverley and Chair of the Safer Waverley Partnership) Simon Dann (Borough Inspector for Waverley), Dave Johnson (Local Area Director, Surrey County Council), Councillor Carole Cockburn (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety) and Natalie Williams (Communications Manager, Safer Hastings Partnership). A report of the meeting is attached as Annexe 1.

### **Background**

3. According to crime statistics, Waverley is one of the safest boroughs in Surrey, which in turn is one of the safest counties in England. However it would seem, certainly on the basis of anecdotal evidence, that at least some residents of Waverley continue to have a relatively high fear of crime.
4. Measuring the fear of crime is difficult due to its subjective nature. The perception of risk to personal safety or possessions varies according to an individual's experiences in life and is affected by factors such as age and gender, perception of media reports, whether the person has been a victim of crime in the past, and what they think about the risk of the same thing happening again. A person's fear of crime can also be an indication of the fact that they are fearful that someone they know, rather than they themselves, may become a victim.
5. Reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour has been a strategic priority for the Safer Waverley Partnership since its establishment in 1998, and over the years there have been a number of projects and initiatives aimed at tackling this problem. Nevertheless, the most recent large-scale survey of the fear of crime in the borough, conducted by Safer Waverley in 2003, revealed that there had been very little change in the levels of the fear of crime since the first survey conducted in 1999.

### **Evaluation of information collected to date**

6. The following paragraphs address the issues set out in the original scoping report, drawing on the presentations made to Members at the Committee's special meeting on 9 June 2008 and information gathered by officers.

#### **(i) What are the current crime figures in Waverley?**

7. Despite public perception, levels of crime continue to fall. This is demonstrated by the following table, which gives information obtained from the British Crime Survey, and compares the number of reported crimes per 1,000 population nationally, in Surrey and in Waverley. As will be seen, between 2006/07 and 2007/08 there was a decrease at each level. It is worth noting that the crime rate per 1000 population in Waverley is approximately half of the national rate and significantly lower than Surrey as a whole.

	06/07	07/08	Percentage Change
<b>National</b>			
Total Notifiable Offences	5,427,600	4,950,700	-8.8%
Total Notifiable Offences/1000 population	99	91	-8.8%
<b>Surrey</b>			
Total Notifiable Offences	73,773	68,947	-7.0%
Total Notifiable Offences/1000 population	68	64	-7.0%
<b>Waverley</b>			
Total Notifiable Offences	5,489	5,282	-3.8%
Total Notifiable Offences/1000 population	47	45.2	-3.8%

8. In his presentation to Members on 9 June 2008, Inspector Dann drew attention to the reductions in some of the more serious types of crime in Waverley for the same period which were as follows:

Burglary from dwelling – 35.6% reduction  
 Burglary (other) - 25.6% reduction  
 Theft of and from a vehicle – 15% reduction  
 Criminal damage – 4.6% reduction  
 Robbery – 70% reduction  
 Violent crime – 20.8% reduction

On the basis of these figures, fear of crime in Waverley should be relatively low.

(ii) What are the levels of fear of crime in Waverley?

9. As mentioned above, the last survey of the fear of crime in Waverley was carried out in 2003. This showed that levels of worry about becoming a victim of crime and the likelihood of actually becoming a victim were significantly different. For example: 76% of respondents were very or a bit worried about becoming a victim of a break in at home, with 30% thinking it very or fairly likely that they would be a victim in the next 12 months, with 4% actually experience this type of crime in the last 12 months. Annexe 2 provides further details of a comparison between the fear of crime and the reality for several other crime types. Since 2003, the main source of information on this issue has been the general household satisfaction survey, carried out every three years, although the questions in this survey have concentrated on anti-social behaviour rather than fear of crime generally.
10. The table attached as Annexe 3 shows that between 2003/04 and 2006/07 the percentage of survey respondents who considered that anti-social behaviour was a real problem in Waverley, decreased from 31% to 11%. Indeed for each of the seven types of anti-social behaviour covered by the survey there was a drop in the levels of concern that these behaviours caused

for respondents. These statistics indicate an improving picture in terms of the impact of anti-social behaviour in Waverley.

11. The next survey of residents – the Place survey - will be carried out in the autumn of 2008 and will include specific questions on community safety and the fear of crime. It will also address the issue of how safe residents feel during the day and after dark. These questions are attached as Annexe 4.
12. While information on the responses to surveys of this kind is normally presented in terms of percentages of the total number of respondents, Members may feel that it would be worthwhile to commission the researchers to provide a more detailed analysis based on age and gender. There is likely to be a small additional cost for this work, but the results could help the Council and the Safer Waverley Partnership (SWT) to target resources on those sections of the community which appear to be most fearful of crime and anti-social behaviour.

(iii) What is the Council's role in relation to crime reduction?

13. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gave all local authorities a statutory responsibility to work towards a reduction of crime in their local area. More recently the Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities a further statutory responsibility to promote the well-being of their residents. Waverley carries out these responsibilities in a number of ways.
14. First, Waverley is one of the responsible authorities which form the Safer Waverley Partnership (SWP), the other partners being the Police Service, the Police Authority, Surrey County Council, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and the South West Surrey Primary Care Trust. Waverley, along with the other partners, contributes towards the budgets of the SWP in both direct funding and officer time, and plays a major role in delivering the priorities of the SWP's Strategies, the most recent of which covers the period 2008-11. Waverley also makes a significant contribution to a Domestic Abuse Outreach Service, which now covers the boroughs of Guildford and Waverley.
15. In addition to its work with the SWP, Waverley has a number of officers whose work contributes, either directly or indirectly to crime reduction in the borough. Waverley employs a full-time Community Safety Officer who is responsible for co-ordinating partnership activity and running specific community safety projects on behalf of both the Borough and Partnership. The Council also has an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer in the Housing Section who works with the Council's tenants to try to resolve neighbour disputes arising from anti-social behaviour.
16. Officers in the Environmental Services Section make a significant contribution towards improving the quality of the environment for Waverley residents by removing graffiti, litter and abandoned vehicles, while the Environmental Health officers deal with problems of noise nuisance. Finally, officers in the Licensing Section play an important role in ensuring that licensed premises adhere to the terms of their licence, including opening hours, noise and under-

age drinking. They are also responsible for the administration of the licence application process, which enables the Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue, members of the public and Environmental Health officers to challenge the conditions attached to a licence and to ask for the terms of a licence to be reviewed. The licensing system is also administered in relation to taxis and private hire vehicles, the primary objectives of which include the safety and security of passengers.

(iv) What work is being undertaken by the Safer Waverley Partnership (SWP) to reduce the fear of crime?

17. The SWP's Strategy has three priorities for 2008-11 which are aimed at reducing the fear of crime. These are:

- Priority 1 - Reducing crime
- Priority 2 - Feeling safe, being safe and building confidence in our communities
- Priority 3 - Tackling anti-social behaviour.

18. With regard to the reduction of crime, the SWP is working towards improving the use and sharing of intelligence, introducing more targeted policing, increasing the use of CCTV and working with the Council to ensure the rapid removal of graffiti.

19. Much of the work aimed at making Waverley's residents feel and be safe is taking place on a long-term basis in the areas of education and prevention to improve awareness of safety and provide reassurance. The continuation of multi-agency work to regenerate and strengthen the most vulnerable neighbourhoods in Waverley, has been an important contributor to this objective.

20. As mentioned previously in this report, the last general household satisfaction survey in 2006/07 revealed an encouraging improvement in residents' perception of anti-social behaviour in Waverley. However, the Partnership has continued to work towards reducing further incidents of anti-social behaviour. Its Town Centre Disorder Group delivers a multi-agency response to hot spots of crime and anti-social behaviour in town centres, and problems related to licensed premises while the Surrey Together Team has been used to engage young people who are at risk of getting involved in anti-social behaviour by encouraging sporting activities.

21. Examples of work undertaken by Waverley and the Partnership to increase a feeling of safety are set out in Annexe 5.

(v) Why is there a gap between the perception of anti-social behaviour and statistical information on incidences of anti-social behaviour?

22. From the evidence presented in this report, it is difficult to establish exactly why there is a gap between the perception of anti-social behaviour and the statistical information on incidents of such behaviour. As already mentioned,

the surveys that have been conducted since 2000 appear to indicate a significant improvement in how safe residents feel, and this is supported by survey undertaken by the Police. In his presentation to the Committee's special meeting on 9 June 2008, Inspector Dann referred to the results of a recent Police survey which showed that 80.9% of respondents feel safe when walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. National research indicates that people's fear of crime is greatly influenced by the television they watch and the newspapers that they read.

23. It may therefore be the case that those who continue to feel unsafe and worried about crime simply do not believe the statistics published by the Police and other organisations. There is apparently some scepticism amongst members of the public about the reported reduction in crime, and it would seem that this feeling is exacerbated by the fact that, as mentioned during the debate at the Committee's special meeting on 9 June 2008, some residents have experienced difficulty in getting through to the Police to report incidents. With regard to this latter point, the Police have devoted considerable resources to handling calls from members of the public, and some Members of the Committee were able to see the Call Centre in operation when they visited Mount Browne on 10 July 2008. However, Inspector Dann has undertaken to raise these concerns with the Superintendent of the Call Centre, and to report back in due course on his findings.
24. Against this background, it is suggested that perhaps the best way of tackling these negative feelings would be to invest more resources in communicating with members of the public, placing greater emphasis on the achievements of Waverley, the Police and their partner organisations in the Safer Waverley Partnership. This in turn would help to counter the more negative stories reported by national and local media. It is also suggested that greater publicity needs to be given to the role of the local neighbourhood specialist officer, since it is these officers who are best placed to deal with the concerns of residents in the first instance. As mentioned by Inspector Dann at the special meeting, the Police have already distributed a large number of leaflets and magnetic contact cards which advise members of the public how they can get in touch with their local neighbourhood officer
- (vi) What is best practice with regard to reducing the fear of crime and what additional mechanisms might be implemented to reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime in Waverley?
25. The presentation given to Members by Natalie Williams, Communications Manager of the Safer Hastings Partnership, at the special meeting on 9 June 2008, highlighted the effectiveness of improving communication with all sections of the community, as a way of combating the fear generated by stories in the media.
26. The initiatives taken by the Safer Hastings Partnership include:

- Producing and distributing their own dedicated newsletters across Hastings to ensure accurate and adequate reporting of community safety matters
  - holding public meetings in shopping centres, schools and at local shows and at local shows and encouraging attendance by offering free personal alarms, property marking pens etc
  - seeking the views of young people through targeted surveys
  - competitions in schools
  - a dedicated community safety website
  - publishing booklets on how to keep safe
27. Officers supporting the SWP already provide advice to the towns and parishes on community safety issues, promote the use of litter and graffiti clearing teams and respond to the concerns of residents raised through the Police Panels and the Neighbourhood Support Officers. However, it is suggested that there is scope for Waverley and the SWP to adopt at least some of the initiatives being undertaken by the Hastings Partnership.

(vii) How and what will be the impact of the Councillor Call for Action

28. In October 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities suggesting ways of giving local communities more influence and power to improve their quality of life. One of the proposals in the White Paper is for the introduction of a 'Councillor Call for Action' whereby a Councillor can raise with the relevant service provider the concerns of local residents on matters relating to crime and disorder. If the Council does not respond, then it is proposed that the Councillor will be able to raise the matter directly with the Executive. The aim of this proposal is to strengthen the role of the local ward councillor. The White Paper indicates that a Councillor Call for Action should be considered as a last resort and should be used sparingly.
29. At the time Members agreed the scope of their review of the fear of crime, it was anticipated that the Councillor Call for Action would be put in place very shortly. However, the Government has yet to produce any detailed guidance as to how the scheme might work, although there are pilot schemes running in Winchester and Tonbridge Wells. A further report will be presented to Members as soon as the detailed guidance is published.

**Conclusion**

30. From the evidence presented to the special meeting on 9 June 2008 and the research by officers, it is clear that at least some sections of the local community have still to accept that Waverley is indeed a safe place to live and that they should not be so fearful of crime and anti-social behaviour. There appears to be a genuine disbelief of the statistical information provided by the Police, and some members of the public are experiencing difficulty when trying to report a crime to the Police. While surveys of Waverley's residents seem to indicate that there has been quite a marked reduction in levels of concern about anti-social behaviour, this is contradicted by anecdotal evidence.

31. Following detailed discussion about the findings of the review, the Committee agreed to make the following recommendations to the Executive, that the Committee:-
1. notes that substance abuse is the causative factor in most crime, especially youth crime.
  2. supports Waverley and the Safer Waverley Partnership using enhanced communications to underline the general safety of and low levels of crime in Waverley.
  3. encourages greater clarity of communication about how to contact the police, both for emergencies and non-emergencies, including greater publicity for the Mount Browne Call Centre.
  4. supports the approaches of the Safer Waverley Partnership and the Waverley Community Safety team to reducing the fear of crime and recommends its continuation.
  5. supports the role of Police Community Support Officers in Waverley and encourages use of Council communications media to publicise their role and activities.
  6. recommends that an in-depth analysis of the responses to the forthcoming Place Survey should be commissioned, with a view to identifying those sections of the community which are particularly fearful of crime and anti-social behaviour, so that resources can be targeted towards these groups.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive considers the findings of the In-depth review and endorses recommendations 2 to 6 of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in paragraph 31.

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### **Background Papers (CEX)**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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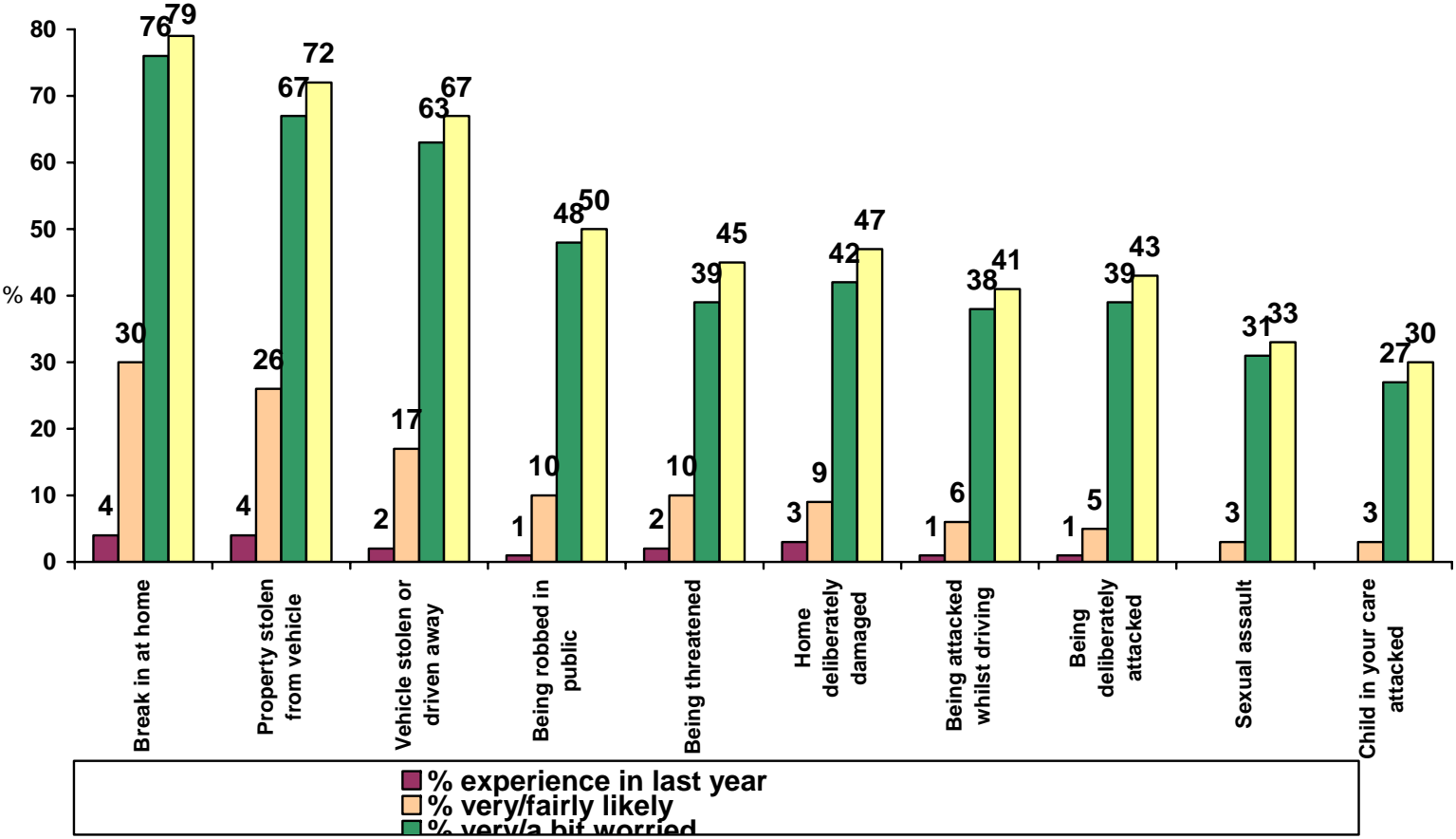
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# The Fear of Crime v The Reality



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