

Minutes

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

20th September 2023



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Abbott	Yes	I Parker	Yes
J Beavis	Yes	R Ramage	Apologies
J Bond	Apologies	W Taylor	Yes
G Courtauld	Yes	E Williams	Apologies
P Heath (Chairman)	Yes	T Williams (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
D Holland	Yes	J Wrench	Yes
J Martin	Yes		

The meeting commenced at 7.23pm. The Chairman expressed his apologies for his late arrival, which was due to traffic issues in the Witham area.

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

6 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 31st July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

8 **TO PROVIDE THE 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

INFORMATION: The Chairman welcomed Tracey Parry, Community Services Manager, and Councillor Mary Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, to the meeting. Tracey was then invited to introduce the annual report of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Members were advised that the CSP was made up of representatives from Braintree District Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, National Probation Service, Mid & South Essex ICS (Integrated Care System), Essex County Council (Partnership Lead and Secondary education), Community360 and Eastlight Community Homes. The CSP worked together to protect their local communities from crime and helped people to

feel safer. It was noted that the CSP initiative represented a national approach to partnership working which extended beyond the remit of individual local authorities.

There was a statutory requirement for CSPs to conduct an annual strategic assessment, as per legislation in the Crime & Disorder Act Revised 2006. The priorities of the CSP for 2022/23 were:

- Protect the vulnerable;
- Promote healthy relationships;
- Keep safe online;
- Build community resilience; and
- Promote safety in our communities.

The key achievements of the CSP during 2022/23 were then listed; these included a number of initiatives such as 'Spot It Stop It' and the 'Local Exploitation Group' for addressing child exploitation; education and support by the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, and the 'Chelsea's Story' theatre production in schools; the commissioning of the 'J9' domestic abuse training campaign, a course on child-to-parent violence and abuse, 'Safer Streets' in Witham and work with the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit. Further work had also been undertaken with subgroups such as the Community Safety Hub, Domestic Abuse Subgroup and the Housing Support Subgroup.

The Chairman then opened the meeting to questions from Members of the Committee. In response to the questions raised, the following information was provided:

- It was confirmed that the issue of phone scamming had been identified by the work of the CSP. The Crime Prevention Strategy that was launched in 2022 included overarching themes such as Cyber Crime and Fraud. A data set had been subsequently identified and obtained by the CSP. Accordingly, it was likely that scamming, cyber crime and fraud would feature within the strategic assessment and planning around the CSP priorities 2024/25 that was due to commence in October.
- The 'Safer Streets' survey was not funded by the CSP, although the CSP had received a report on this which included the results and could be shared with Members. It was reported that take up for the survey had been positive and that the responses received were from a range of age groups and demographics.
- The work of the CSP was dependent on the data and intelligence received from sources such as Essex Police. The most recent data did not indicate that shoplifting was a concern, although it was acknowledged that some cases were not being reported.
- Mobile CCTV cameras used by the Council's Street Scene Enforcement team and were regularly moved to different locations across the District. The cameras could be used to tackle various offences such as anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping.
- The CSP commissioned the charity 'Safer Places' to deliver 'J9' training with funding from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Office. Many of the partners within the CSP (e.g. Fire Service) were already funded to undertake specific work within schools. Furthermore, there were alternative funding opportunities available through the CSP's various partners, especially in areas such as Health and Wellbeing.

- A small 'spike' in cases of Domestic Abuse was detected during last year's World Cup; however, awareness of the issue seemed to be increasing as more reports were being received, which was attributed to the campaign around this. The overall impact of the World Cup on cases of domestic abuse was nonetheless difficult to quantify, as it was easier to identify new cases as opposed to ongoing ones. It was added that cases identified by police were usually graded as 'standard,' 'medium' or 'high' and each incident could have a different grading.
- The priorities of the CSP were agreed following a strategic assessment and workshop held with partners. Anecdotal evidence was also a key consideration in helping to identify the priorities of the CSP (e.g. from the social care sector, Family Solutions, etc). The priorities of 2021/22 and 2022/23 were largely the same, but these could still differ in future years as they reflected current needs.
- 'Dog Watch' was an Essex Police initiative similar in concept to 'Neighbourhood Watch' and involved dog walkers reporting intelligence from their local areas on cases of crime in their local areas (e.g. cases of vandalism).
- Much of the education input in schools by the Fire Service was around early intervention, prevention and raising awareness. Such programmes were offered to all schools, although it was up to the schools themselves whether they wished to participate or not.
- With the 'J9' initiative, Members were assured that information was promoted as widely as possible. Social media was only one of the platforms used for this purpose; the CSP also utilised partners in local areas, such as Parish and Town Councils, health providers, social prescribers and Community360. The aim was to promote information as widely as possible across the District, although it was not possible to reach everyone. It was added that any ideas Members had around improving the promotion of CSP initiatives in rural areas would be gratefully received.
- Members were advised that the content of the 'Chelsea's Story' theatre production was shaped by 'Alter Ego Creative Solutions,' an experienced organisation that worked with governmental departments and schools. Liaison with schools always took place before any such productions occurred in order to ensure that the content was age appropriate for students (e.g. through a leaflet or promotional video sent to the safeguarding leads at schools). In addition, schools usually made with parents in advance of such productions.
- Members were reminded of the upcoming Member Development Evening on 6th December 2023. The session would focus on community safety and would provide Members with the opportunity to meet with the Police District Commander and also Roger Hirst, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), for a 'question and answer' session.
- In respect of Halstead, Members were advised that a bid had been submitted to the Home Office for a 'Safer Streets' initiative, the outcome of which was expected in October. It was noted that a similar bid had previously been submitted and later granted for Witham.
- There was not currently a Domestic Abuse Refuge in the District, although there were others across Essex. The funding for Refuges was received from a central pot from Essex County Council and the PFCC's office. It was noted that such places were not

always the most suitable option for a victim of such abuse, as it could cause a degree of upheaval for both the victim and their families.

- Evaluating the success of the initiatives within the CSP was the responsibility of each partner. Monitoring of initiatives such as 'Safer Streets' was provided to the Home Office on a quarterly basis, with a subsequent evaluation and report provided at the end of the year.
- Funding under the 'Safer Streets' initiative related to Witham only at the current time.
- Councillor Mary Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, confirmed that she would report the comments raised at the meeting back to the Cabinet. Due to the sensitive nature of initiatives such as 'J9,' it was felt that caution still needed to be taken as to where they were implemented.

In response to the questions raised, the following actions were agreed:

- Tracey Parry, Community Services Manager, agreed to include more statistics in future annual reports of the CSP, as Members indicated this would assist them with measuring the impact of any changes over the course of the year.
- Tracey Parry agreed to share the results of the 'Safer Streets' survey.
- In relation to the education programmes offered to schools by the Fire Service, Tracey Parry agreed to feedback the Committee's comments around increasing the rate of take up (e.g. through improved marketing).
- On the topic of 'Safer Streets,' it was suggested by a Member that there should be increased 'dashboard' and 'hotspot' areas across the District.
- Members indicated that they would appreciate further detail in advance of the upcoming Member Development Evening as this would assist them with their understanding of the session content, as well as future CSP reports.

Members also made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- Councillor D Holland wished to see increased awareness of initiatives such as 'J9' in rural localities and Parish Councils (e.g. through Parish magazines), as social media outlets were often not the first point of call for residents in such areas.
- Councillor J Beavis wished to see the 'J9' initiative linked in with and promoted through the Council's 'Live Well' campaign.
- Councillor J Beavis requested further Member training and development on the content and data held within the CSP report, as this would assist Members with their understanding in advance of future scrutiny sessions.

At the end of the discussion, the Chairman expressed his grateful thanks to both Tracey and Councillor Mary Cunningham for their contributions to the meeting.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 22nd November 2023 and would include scrutiny of the Council's initial Budget position. In preparation for this, an online training session on

finance for Members had been arranged to take place on Thursday 9th November 2023, starting at 7.00pm. All Members were encouraged to attend.

DECISION: The Corporate Scrutiny Committee reviewed the annual report and made recommendations to Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide an overview of the work that the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership delivered during 2022/23.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.29pm.

Councillor P Heath
(Chairman)