

Minutes

Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee

21st July 2021 at 7.15pm



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Baugh	Yes	Mrs J Pell	Yes
G Courtauld (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Mrs J Sandum	Yes
A Hensman	Yes	P Thorogood	Yes
Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)	Yes	Mrs L Walters	Yes
T McArdle	Yes		

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

6 **MINUTES**

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

7 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee (formerly the Partnership Development Group) held on 12th May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

8 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP 2020/21**

INFORMATION: The Chairman welcomed Tracey Parry, Community Services Manager at the Council, to the meeting. Tracey was then invited to introduce the annual report of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Members were informed that the CSP was made up of representatives from the Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Community Rehabilitation Company, National Probation Service, Mid Essex CCG, Essex County Council (Partnership Lead and Secondary education), Community 360 and Eastlight Community Homes. The role of the CSP was to work together in order to help protect local communities from crime and help people to feel safer.

Members were advised that there was a statutory requirement as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for Community Safety Partnerships to carry out an annual strategic assessment. The assessment collated and analysed statistical and contextual data from a

range of partners and was used to inform key findings and recommendations for priorities moving forward.

The CSP priorities for 2020/21 were:-

- Tackle the trafficking of drugs in the community;
- Increase confidence in identifying and reporting hidden harms, and;
- Drive down violence and disorder within the community.

Due to the unprecedented impacts of Covid-19, many of the CSPs were required to concentrate their time and resources on dealing with issues relating to the pandemic; as such, a number of the usual activities provided by the Partnership were unable to be undertaken, particularly those that relied on face-to-face engagement or were within education settings and had to be either postponed or redesigned.

A number of the key achievements of the CSP were then highlighted, which included the formulation of a new Local Exploitation Group aimed at the provision of early intervention to vulnerable young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or Criminal Exploitation (CE) before it could escalate to a 'high risk' level. The Local Exploitation Group emerged in response to a notable increase in the number of cases being heard at the Mid Essex Missing & Child Exploited (MACE) meetings during the course of the pandemic.

Other achievements included the use of mobile cameras to tackle crime and nuisance. Over the past year, the CSP had continued to fund the purchase of four more mobile cameras. Through the sharing of intelligence between the Council's enforcement team, Essex Police and local housing associations, mobile cameras were deployed within areas where it was believed that criminal or anti-social behaviour was occurring. To date, useful evidence had been used by police intelligence officers to disrupt the suspected supply of Class A drugs by known gang nominals from London; target prolific shoplifters; identify and deter identified individuals from causing anti-social behaviour; and to assist in gathering evidence to put in place enforcement action such as Community Protection Notices, Criminal Behaviour Orders and Closure Orders.

It was reported that the Braintree District Community Safety Hub had now switched to virtual meetings on a monthly basis in response to the pandemic, whereas previously it met on a two-weekly basis in-person at Causeway House; despite these changes, the Hub had continued to maximise the benefits of collaborative working with a variety of partners which included housing associations, social care workers, mental health teams, the community and voluntary sector, as well as improved information sharing and closer working practices in order to combat key issues that had been identified as part of the CSP Action Plan, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Police and Crime Plan, and from emerging crime trends and patterns. There was also the opportunity for organisations to put forward specific cases (e.g. individuals, hot spot areas, etc) and for multi-agency responses to be provided as a result. It was added that there had been a notable shift in the way in which the Hub responded to the issues identified; for instance, with the improved information sharing from multiple sources and partners, alternative responses to enforcement were being given consideration. For example, where cases related to individuals, there was the opportunity for the Hub to consider any other support options that could be implemented for a particular individual which could, potentially, eradicate patterns of anti-social behaviour. However, on occasions where individuals did not engage back with the Hub, enforcement action would then need to be undertaken.

Lastly, it was relayed that in the earlier stages of the previous year, there had been an increase in the number of reports received of people using nitrous oxide across the District. In response, information was subsequently provided to education settings across the District, together with advice on how to seek support and report any concerns to the relevant agencies, and key messages regarding the issue were also shared amongst partner agencies' social media channels. For the benefit of Members, it was explained that whilst the use of nitrous oxide was not illegal, the selling or dealing of nitrous oxide was, and it was this message that the Hub was attempting to impress upon the public, in addition to the importance of health and wellbeing.

Funding for the CSP was derived from the PFCC; the allocated budget for 2020/21 was £17,739. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the PFCC had also authorised a carry forward of £8,000 from 2019/20. Should additional funding be required, the CSP would need to apply via external funding.

Further to the report, the Chairman invited Members to raise any questions. In response to the questions raised, the following information was provided:-

- Members were advised to take photos where possible if they came across nitrous oxide containers (silver canisters) in their local areas and to send these to the Community Services team. Another option was for the Council to re-start the social media campaign on the issue to help raise awareness of the associated risks of nitrous oxide use to the public.
- With regard to vulnerable people and support services (e.g. drugs, alcohol), it was confirmed that the CSP was able to make referrals to such services. In respect of mental health referrals, restrictions were in place around patient confidentiality and as such, information could not be shared back in those instances. It was added that in 2019, the CSP had successfully applied for funding from the DWP towards an Intensive Prolific Offender Caseworker for a period of 12 months to work with a cohort of individuals who met with the criteria of being homeless, offending, with substance misuse issues, ill mental health and poverty as a common factor. The project, known as 'Horizon,' was a multi-agency model which provided intensive support for individuals with multiple and complex disadvantages. The aims of the project included finding ways to improve outcomes for clients; agreeing multi-agency support plans; using a person centred approach, and breaking cycles of established behaviour. Positive outcomes had been achieved for most clients as part of the project, which was currently still running.
- In terms of strategy delivery and the measure of the CSP's success against other areas, Members were advised that although the Council did not draw specific comparisons with its work and that of other Authorities due to the differing issues and priorities, there were a number of different ways in which the level of its own success could be understood. For example, best practices were often shared as part of the CSP and 'Safer Essex,' (A partnership of various stakeholders in community safety across the county) which enabled all parties to look at what had worked well and to adapt and tailor processes accordingly. Regular reviews of crime statistics were conducted with the local policing team, which enabled any trends to be monitored over a specific period of time. The Police also provided crime stats and perception ratings regularly, and in addition to this, regular questionnaires were circulated to the District's residents by the Council, which included questions around safety and wellbeing, allowing data to be collected. Furthermore, it was reported that as the Community Services Manager, Tracey Parry met regularly with partners from other District

Authorities and CSPs, whilst other representatives from the Council attended 'Safer Essex' meetings. There was also elected representation from the Council on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, the discussions of which pertained to more strategic issues.

- Members were informed that issues such as antisocial behaviour (ASB) or crime and disorder were not specific to one type of property. On the subject of ASB, it was added that there was often a public 'perception' as to what issues constituted Anti-Social Behaviour, whereas in reality this was not always the case (e.g. neighbour disputes).
- Although the budget for the CSP was a modest one, its partnership working arrangements meant that it had excellent links with organisations such as secondary schools and partnerships throughout the District (e.g. the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership, Essex Youth Service, Children's Society, etc) who often had access to their own funding, of which the CSP could potentially contribute towards in order to fund new programmes and schemes, or simply work alongside.
- Members were advised to contact Essex Police in any instance where they believed a crime had been committed. Where residents had concerns in relation to ongoing issues or the level of response provided by the Police, this should nonetheless be reported back to Essex Police via the complaints process. With regard to the CSP, it was reported that there had been previous cases where information was provided and processed as ASB (e.g. noise and other nuisances) for teams such as Environmental Health or Street Scene Enforcement to manage. Where Officers felt it was necessary due to the nature of certain cases, they would contact the Police to provide intelligence, or it would be raised with the Hub as an agenda item for its members to assess. On the subject of rural issues, it was advised that Essex Police had a dedicated Rural Engagement Team.
- Tracey Parry encouraged Members to circulate intelligence to her such as photos and reports, but added that where information was requested from other partners, this could not always be shared back due to confidentiality issues.
- The new funding that had been allocated towards the 'Horizon' project would continue to support the existing cohort of individuals who met with the necessary criteria. Occasionally, individuals who did not engage left the project and conversely, those that showed consistent engagement and progress were sometimes advised to step down if it was considered that higher levels of support were no longer needed.
- The CSP was keen to involve more local partners from the community and voluntary sector within its line of work, such as representatives from Adult Social Care. Whereas previously involvement from mental health partners was low, Tracey was pleased to report that NHS mental health services now had increased representation within the CSP. Furthermore, there were specific Officers in the Housing team who also fed into the CSP. Overall, it was believed that the CSP was successful in terms of the number and variety of partners it had within the Hub, although it was willing to engage with other potential partners as well if the opportunities arose.
- With regard to enforcement, it was relayed that the CSP was in a positive position due to the elements of crossover with issues such as ASB, nuisances and community safety, and informal protocol between different departments and housing associations like that of Eastlight Community Homes Ltd. 'Barriers' to enforcement tended to be centred around the smaller housing associations and the more limited amount of

resources that they had to address issues such as ASB and attend local meetings. It was added that enforcement was not always the most appropriate action to take in order to alleviate issues (i.e. due to individual circumstances, history, background, etc), and that it was through active communication with CSP partners which there to be a 'wider picture' established regarding individual cases.

- The priorities of the CSP for 2020/21 were retained from the previous year; this was largely due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had affected the delivery of some of the work against those priorities.
- The 'information sharing agreement' that the Council had with its Community Safety Partners meant that, where appropriate, issues which had been reported through by residents could be shared with the correct agency; however, it was emphasised that in instances where a crime had been committed, emergency services such as Essex Police should always be the first point of contact.

Following the conclusion of the evidence gathering session, the Chairman thanked Members for their questions and expressed her gratitude to Tracey Parry and Cherie Root, Corporate Director for the responses provided. Members were then requested to send any further lines of enquiry that they wished to explore as part of the Committee's Scrutiny Review into 'Enforcement' directly to the Governance Team e-mail address (governance@braintree.gov.uk).

DECISION: The Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Annual Report (Appendix 1) and had no recommendations to make to Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide an overview of the work the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership delivered during 2020/21.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.06pm.

Councillor Mary Cunningham
(Chairman)