

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 8 September 2011 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr Mrs A Cook (Chairman)
Cllr Ms M Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. L Ball, Cllr. R Brookbank, Cllr. A Eyre, Cllr. Mrs A George,
Cllr. M Horwood, Cllr. K Maskell, Cllr. Mrs D Morris,
Cllr. Mrs E Purves, Cllr. S Raikes, Cllr. T Searles, Cllr. J Thornton and
Cllr. P Towell

Apologies for absence: Cllr. L Ayres, Cllr. I Bosley, Cllr. Ms I Chetram,
Cllr. A Pett and Cllr. Miss L Stack

Cllr. Mrs E Bracken and Cllr. Mrs F Parkin were also present

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JUNE 2011

Cllr. Ball requested that his apologies be added for the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee on 16 June 2011.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 16 June 2011, as amended, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr. Mrs. Cook declared an interest in minute item 15 as Chairman of West Kent Mediation.

12. FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET FOLLOWING MATTERS REFERRED BY THE COMMITTEE AND/OR REQUESTS FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (PLEASE REFER TO THE MINUTES AS INDICATED):

None.

13. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

The Actions from the previous meeting were noted.

14. FUTURE BUSINESS, THE WORK PLAN 2011/12 (ATTACHED) AND THE FORWARD PLAN.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Work Plan and also to the programme of presentations to future meetings under Item 10. She explained that the meeting on 1 November 2011 would have the theme Improve Health

and Wellbeing and Members would have opportunities before that meeting to review and participate in activities including a health walk. If Members were interested in any of the activities they should notify the Head of Community Development.

A Member requested that the Committee consider visiting Self Unlimited and MacIntyre House, Sevenoaks in advance of the meeting. It was thought those bodies would appreciate Members' interest.

The Chairman hoped that for the meeting in January 2012 Mandy Wynne, Deputy Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Within Kent and Gill Shepherd-Coates, Chief Officer of Age UK Sevenoaks and District would attend. It was also hoped the Committee would be able to consider the effectiveness of the minibus services since the District Council stopped directly providing it.

15. HELPING COMMUNITIES TO FEEL SAFE AND BE SAFE

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Peter Steenhuis from West Kent Police, and Amanda Bell the Service Manager and Bev Giannoni the Restorative Justice Manager from West Kent Mediation to the meeting. Unfortunately the Chairman of Hextable Partners and Community Together (PACT) was unable to attend but the Sevenoaks District Council Community Safety Co-ordinator attended instead.

Peter Steenhuis, the new District Commander for Sevenoaks, gave a presentation about the New Policing Model which was to be implemented by Kent Police on 16 November 2011. He gave the model strong support and believed it would bring policing back to the community.

He explained that crime in Sevenoaks was the lowest in the County. He considered it a joint effort and thanked the Community Safety Partnership for its significant impact. Burglary and vehicle crime were down but there were still problems with handling stolen goods, retail theft and particularly with metal theft. The area also suffered from theft from sheds so an Officer has been redeployed from a specialist team to investigate this. Resources would be available from November in the new policing model for this function.

The new model meant there would no longer be separate sections within the police but each Officer would own a case from when it was reported until the charge. The most appropriate, available resource would deal with a matter regardless of district boundaries.

There would be an increase in neighbourhood policing with 5 teams to cover 7 days a week between 7a.m. and 1a.m.. Each team would have 5 Officers and a Sergeant. This meant that at the height of a changeover between teams there would be 12 Officers which was a significant increase on the current 3 or 4. Response officers would come out from Tonbridge.

In reply to a question the Chief Inspector acknowledged that detection for hate crimes was low, particularly compared to the rest of the County. An Officer had been assigned to review the 16 cases over the last year to ensure that all that could be done to address hate crimes had been done and that any further

action was taken if required. A Member felt it was important that an Officer came to talk to the black community and the Chief Inspector agreed to do this next time such meetings were organised.

Since the eviction of travellers from Dale Farm in Essex a Member enquired whether the District had been put on alert. The Chief Inspector reminded Members that it was a lawful lifestyle but the whole County was on notice. He did not expect to use any special powers to remove travellers as bye-laws were often effective. Extended powers would only be employed in cases of anti-social behaviour or if schools or hospitals were affected. If travellers were on private land without consent they would be monitored.

Peter Steenhuis commended the approach in Sevenoaks of using PACTs for dealing with community safety issues of importance to local communities. He felt it was effective and was best practice and he was encouraging colleagues to follow this lead.

A Member enquired about the extent Neighbourhood Watch was still used. The Chief Inspector was excited about E-Watch in West Kent. It gave residents a list of crimes in the area and linked to information to aid prevention. There was a concern with getting residents to sign up and login to the site but he hoped the mobile application in development would encourage more users.

The Portfolio Holder for Safe Community said she found the Chief Inspector's visit very informative.

The Service Manager of West Kent Mediation explained how the service also covered Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Districts and had expanded into many different types of mediation.

Victim-offender mediation had now been going for 7 years and the spin-off Parent-teenager mediation was helping to resolve some of the underlying problems. Work-place mediation was offered to all businesses in the district but was only a small income stream for them and was not actively supported. They had received funding for peer mediation for 3 years and had started in primary schools but was also now in secondary schools. Mediation was provided for those with anger habits; about 10 cases per year were dealt with and most referrals came from a single school. In October 2010 Final Warning Clinics resumed in Tunbridge Wells police station; the Service Manager felt that there was a problem with attendance levels, but when they took place it could be very effective. More than 130 cases came from parent-teen or community cases and they had dealt with 14 schools for peer mediation.

There were 2 part-time and 3 full-time staff with 35 volunteers. Funding came from all 3 district councils, Kent Probation and grants among other sources.

The Restorative Justice Manager explained that they dealt with 60-65 youth justice cases in the year to March 2011. They also used parent-teen mediation in cases where a person left prison and had nowhere to go but to their family with whom they had some conflict. West Kent Mediation had become a Restorative Justice Council member and the Restorative Justice Manager had become one of only a few accredited practitioners across the

country.

The Chairman commended the staff at West Kent Mediation and informed Members that it was the only mediation service with PQASSO accreditation.

A Member felt there may be cross-over between their services and family mediation already offered in schools.

Another Member enquired how success could be measured for restorative justice. The Restorative Justice Manager informed him that 98% of the feedback received was satisfied or very satisfied with the service. However they could not measure the impact mediation could have helping those, particularly victims, who had suffered psychological effects from serious violent crime. She felt the service played an important role after court cases had finished when there was less support for victims from other sources.

In response to a further question she suggested it was difficult to evaluate reoffending rates because although she did not tend to see youth offenders again that might be because they had reached 18 and would then be dealt with by the Probation Service.

In response to a question from a member she informed the meeting that when she wrote to schools 5 or 6 years ago 98% of them were interested in taking up the anger mediation. However, resources currently limited the service to about 10 cases per year. They were again in the process of writing to schools to investigate opportunities once schools have to buy in services.

The Community Safety Co-ordinator gave a verbal presentation on PACTs.

She described the usual procedure for PACT groups. They would start the initial meeting by asking residents the things they liked about their local community. Only after this would they discuss what the top 3 priorities were for change. The priorities for change were often speeding, litter and anti-social behaviour. At the subsequent panel meeting the community would take the lead as to what actions were required to address issues. The Community Safety Partnership would attend this. Young people would be encouraged to attend or to identify their issues separately. The PACT panel, including residents, would then co-ordinate the implementation of the action plan. The PACT would be disbanded once actions were complete and the issues had been addressed.

In Sundridge engagement with young people had addressed concerns of anti-social behaviour and provided young people with a shelter and litter bin. Brasted had established a cold-calling control zone and was funding signs, leaflets and CCTV. In Swanley and Edenbridge dog fouling initiatives were to be taken forward in late 2011 and early 2012 which focused on education and enforcement. In Crockham Hill Speed Watch was established with a speed board, trained volunteers and a PCSO available to assist.

There were currently 9 PACTs in operation with a further 4 recently completed. The completed PACTs could be brought back into operation if there were a future need.

The Community Safety Co-ordinator felt it was important that information be fed back to the community after meetings, whether this was positive or negative. They had to be honest about what problems could be resolved.

A local Member was concerned that attendance had been poor for the PACT in Swanley. The Head of Community Development noted that the large population in Swanley made it more difficult to get the community together. Evening PACT meetings held in each ward had been widely publicised but poorly attended. Often in large communities one needed to go where people gathered, for example at Meeting Point or the local supermarket. The Partnership had held community days in the 3 main towns last year and these had been repeated this year giving local people an opportunity to speak to the police and partners. The Chief Inspector added that PACTs were only one tool available to them.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers.

16. FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS' VISIT TO THE POLICE FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTRE

A Member gave a presentation about the visit 5 Members of the Council took to the Police Force Command and Control Centre in Maidstone.

It was noted that the visit had been arranged after concerns voiced by a former-Member of the Committee about how a 999 call was dealt with. The presentation explained that all calls, including the one in question, could be recalled using software they were shown. They had been informed the call was dealt with more seriously than the caller realised, with a prompt reaction and significant resources. However, the operator had not relayed this back to the caller and this training issue had been addressed with the operator concerned.

Members were shown the Control Room where the calls were received and also the Initial Crime Investigation Unit collected information relating to an incident.

The Member thanked the Chief Inspector for hosting the visit.

The Chief Inspector accepted that perception and communication can be a problem, such as with the call in question. He encouraged Members to hold him to account for any breakdown in communication.

A Member asked the Chief Inspector what should be done with calls in the evening when the local station could not be telephoned and which were not an. He explained that he expected the launch of a non-emergency number (101) to be launched in Kent around 16 November 2011. All such calls would go through to Maidstone.

17. FEEDBACK FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S VISIT TO COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT DAILY TASKING MEETING

The Chairman gave an overview of her visit to the Daily Tasking Meeting. She commented that it brought police, partners and council officers together and allowed for an holistic approach to solve those problems that occurred overnight and the previous day. In turn this allowed issues to be dealt with effectively, at an early stage. The Chairman thanked the team for allowing her to sit in.

The Chief Inspector informed the Committee that Sevenoaks had the highest satisfaction rate in the County for how matters were dealt with by its Community Safety Unit (CSU). In response to a question he confirmed that, although Community Safety Units were used elsewhere, Sevenoaks did have the best practice and he had brought visitors along to observe. He added that since CSUs had been introduced the police had become involved in more issues in a more timely way as part of the holistic approach.

A Member asked whether the impact of the meetings could be measured so as to identify strengths and weaknesses. The Chief Inspector clarified that quality assurance check surveys were taken by their staff and some external random calls were made. "Doorsteps" checks were also carried out. Any negative feedback was passed on and would be acted upon. This data could be provided to Members, if requested.

A Member provided a written report of a visit to Swanley police station. He emphasised that the use of technology was interesting and that they had a clear focus on crime prevention.

Another Member gave a verbal report on a morning spent with a Police Community Support Officer. He commented that the PCSOs had a clear reliance on their own skills and motivation. Their presence helped build relationships with the community, particularly in the high street. This meant confidence in the PCSO increased and information was more likely to be collected. He thanked all those who made the visit possible.

The Chief Inspector clarified that the PCSO had been assigned the "Red Route" for patrol, which an Officer can explore if they have spare time. The route was designed to disrupt particular crimes which were expected, based on trends. The routes were reviewed every two weeks.

18. PROGRAMME OF VISITORS TO FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE (INCLUDING A LIST OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS)

A Member enquired what information there was about Health Walks. The Head of Community Development said this could be provided.

Action: The Head of Community Development to provide information about Health Walks to Members, through Democratic Services, before the next meeting.

The Chairman asked that a visit be organised to the District Council CCTV room because information from there was used by the police Command and Control Centre in Maidstone. It was felt it would complete the Community Safety theme.

Social Affairs Select Committee - Thursday, 8 September 2011

Action: The Community and Planning Services Director to organise for interested members to visit the Sevenoaks District Council CCTV room.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.08 pm

Chairman