

Social Affairs Select – Report of a Meeting held on 30th October 2012

Members received two presentations, one from police Inspector David Coleman and the other from Stuart Albon – Risk Reduction Manager West Group, Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Inspector Coleman spoke of the challenging financial pressures facing the Authority over the next four years; it is anticipated that the service will lose 1000 support staff and 500 police officers across Kent. Despite these budgetary constraints the Chief Constable is determined to continue to deliver a high quality policing service with a well motivated and supportive force. The savings will be achieved through increased efficiency, sharing services with Essex and other collaborative initiatives and by a radical change in the way services are delivered and the police interaction with the public. Under the new model Neighbour Teams have already increased significantly with the deployment of more constables and an extension to the working day from 7 a.m. to 3 a.m.

In answer to a question about the impact that any further reduction in manned hours operated by the Council's CCTV Control Room, the Inspector, while accepting the need for saving cuts also cited the value of a 24 hour service. To another question he said that the District currently had a 30.1% crime reduction rate although he didn't have to hand the conviction figures.

He commented on the good relationship with the Community Safety Unit and commended it as a model of excellence.

The Risk Reduction Manager from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Stuart Albon, spoke about the restructuring that had taken place regrouping the County into five areas with Sevenoaks District being part of West Group, with a geographical spread from Edenbridge to Gravesend.

The service concentrated on four focus areas, two key ones being to reduce the number of traffic collisions and casualties from fire. Another priority was to 'preserve the Garden of England' by promoting flood awareness and preparedness, minimising the threat of outdoor fires in areas such as Dartford Heath and by tackling anti-social behaviour. Fourthly, helping to mitigate the risks to businesses, keeping people safe in the workplace through inspections and taking enforcement action when and where necessary.

Given the network of Motorways within the District the number of traffic accidents causing death and severe injury was high. Those most at risk were identified as young newly qualified drivers, motor cyclists and foreign lorry drivers. As part of their efforts to reduce these incidents, officers are specifically targeting those groups to offer information and advice.

To assist in reducing the number of house fires, officers work with vulnerable people, visiting them in their own homes, to talk through potential hazards and to check they

have received the relevant information and equipment. They also worked with Housing Associations and Voluntary Groups to ensure they were targeting the right people.

Mr Albon summarised his report by re-emphasising the need for high quality information, being well prepared for emergencies and helping to improve the quality of life including measures to reduce the number of unnecessary deaths and injuries.

The Head of Community Development, Lesley Bowles, reported on the proposed local Health and Wellbeing Boards being established by Kent County Council centred around the Clinical Commissioning Groups. These are due to come into effect in April 2013. Sevenoaks District was covered by two Primary Trusts and would need to be kept informed about both. She would be bringing a further report to the next meeting of the Committee.

Alison Cook
Chairman