
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 23 March 2016 from 7.00pm - 9.12 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Katy Coleman, Mike Henderson (substitute for Councillor Monique Bonney), Alan Horton, James Hunt, Peter Marchington, George Samuel and Ben Stokes.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steph Curtis, Philippa Davies, Lyn Newton and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Ken Pugh (Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health) and Ted Wilcox (Cabinet Member for Performance).

APOLOGY: Councillor Monique Bonney.

620 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman reminded Members of the evacuation procedure.

621 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2016 (Minute Nos. 525 – 530) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

622 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alan Horton declared a Disclosable Non Pecuniary Interest in respect of the Community Safety Plan item, and the Voluntary Code of Conduct for Street Entertaining and Busking in Swale item as he was the Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety.

Councillor Lloyd Bowen declared a Disclosable Non Pecuniary Interest in respect of the Corporate Equality Scheme item as he was the Deputy Cabinet Member for Performance.

623 COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Safer and Stronger Communities Officer to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which set out the Swale Community Safety Plan 2016/19. He explained it was a three-year rolling document, owned by the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP), and it set out the priorities for the next three years.

The Safer and Stronger Communities Officer (SSCO) explained that a major change this year was that a Safeguarding priority had been introduced.

The Chairman invited Members to firstly comment on pages 3 – 6 of the Plan. The Cabinet Member and SSCO answered Members questions as set out below.

Page 3

Members raised the following points and questions: Swale Action To End Domestic Abuse (SATEDA) did not seem to be mentioned as a partner; there was a One-Stop Shop on the Isle of Sheppey, and continuing provision in Sittingbourne, what about Faversham and the rural areas?; Should Councillors be included and involved in the whole process, for example in training sessions?; and what was the 'continuing provision in Sittingbourne'?

The SSCO advised that SATEDA was delivering the One-Stop Shop on the Isle of Sheppey, and the 'continuing provision in Sittingbourne' was the One-Stop Shop. Currently in Faversham there was the facility of a drop-in one-on-one service; there were plans to convert to a one-stop shop if required in the future. She stated that training could be opened up for Councillors to attend, and this could be added to the Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member explained that the CSP was a partnership, not a public forum. He praised the work that the Community Safety Unit (CSU) in Sittingbourne did and that it was a beacon in Kent for best practice. He stated that if Councillors had an issue, they could go to the CSU. Some aspects of the CSP were confidential and the Cabinet Member considered the way it operated as a partnership, rather than a public forum, was best suited for the type of work that was undertaken.

The SSCO confirmed that she would include more information on Councillors to reflect their resources and contribution to the Partnership.

A Member considered there should be more reference to schools, particularly primary and junior to reflect issues that some pupils might be going through.

The SSCO explained that schools were not a statutory partner in terms of the CSP. There had in the past been a Safer Schools Officer; the Safeguarding priority was now in place to raise awareness, and the focus was on risk groups, rather than a generic approach.

The Member raised concern with potentially ever increasing issues, such as extremism which he considered should be raised within schools, and that there should be dialogue with schools to see if there were any issues.

The Cabinet Member explained that a Local Children's Partnership Group had been launched, and this Group has representatives from local schools and would be the forum to address education based issues.

Page 4

A Member sought clarification over the term 'cross-over in priorities' as referred to in paragraph 4(i).

The SSCO explained that there was a large number of priorities within the Police and Crime Plan and the majority mirrored those in the CSP.

The SSCO agreed to look into some grammatical errors within the Plan.

Page 5

Community Concerns – a Member questioned the range of issues that were being included.

Page 6

A Member considered there should be more focus on drug issues and their impact on young people in the Borough and this should be a priority.

The SSCO explained that drugs were recognised as an issue and referenced within individual priorities in the Plan, but advised that enforcement was largely a Police issue.

Councillor Mike Henderson moved the following motion: 'That the CSP considers that the Plan be modified to include the mis-use and use of drugs and substances in the list of priorities'. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Booth.

The Cabinet Member advised that this would be submitted to the CSP for them to add as a priority if they agreed. A Member stated that he hoped adding this as a priority would not mean that another one was lost.

Members agreed the motion.

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the Priorities for 2016/17 as set out on pages 6 – 12 in the Plan.

Page 7 – Violence Against Women and Girls

In response to a question, the SSCO provided clarification on the 'standard' category of risk victims. This was achieved via a scoring system and 'standard' was used rather than 'low'.

A Member asked whether violence against men and boys was included as a priority?

The SSCO acknowledged that this was an issue, but explained that 99% of the victims coming forward were women or girls. She advised that SATEDA were happy to develop their services to include males, but currently resources were reactive to the demonstrable need.

The Member stated that men who were abused were often not comfortable coming forward and this needed to be addressed through education.

In response to a question, the SSCO explained that all work was carried out by charitable organisations and she could amend the Plan to reflect this. She advised that out of the 2622 figure, most domestic abuse incidents were reported on the Isle of Sheppey.

Page 8 – Crime

A Member requested that the statistics in the Plan be more specific.

The SSCO advised that as noted on page 6, the data generally related to the period 1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015.

A Member stated that crime rates on the Isle of Sheppey may be artificially swayed as there were specific holiday periods where the population level increased significantly. The SSCO advised that monthly figures took this into account.

Page 9 – Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Members sought clarification on the figures in the first paragraph and whether there was a cross-over, were the incidents reported to the Police and were other housing associations, apart from AmicusHorizon, included?

The SSCO explained that there may be a large crossover in the figures and advised that AmicusHorizon had the majority of the housing stock, although this was slowly changing, but there was no available data at the moment.

The Cabinet Member for Performance advised that incidents reported to AmicusHorizon were reported on a quarterly basis to the Police.

A Member reported that speeding was a high priority for residents. He explained that Kent Police were involved, as well as Kent Fire and Rescue Service, and he highlighted the Community Speed Watch initiative.

The SSCO advised that initially the CSP role was that of educational/information. She stated that she could make the Community Speed Watch more specific in the Plan. The Member explained that as speeding was such an issue, support from the CSP could help.

A Member considered the 'activities to tackle issue' did not seem to be community safety issues, e.g. environmental ASB, and suggested the wording be changed to show community safety priorities, rather than Swale Borough Council priorities.

The Cabinet Member advised that ASB was a generic term within the CSU and included all the issues listed.

A Member raised concern with the problem of lorry parking in the Borough and the associated environmental issues. The SSCO advised that the CSU were aware of this issue and also the ASB of the drivers. An enforcement-based solution was being looked into. It was a matter of managing the behaviour of the drivers, and to try and move the lorries on.

In response to a question, the SSCO explained that the Positive Ticket Pilot was a new Kent County Council (KCC) initiative to reward positive behaviour.

Page 10 – Safeguarding

A Member requested further information on safeguarding vulnerable adults; Operation Jupiter; evidence of modern slavery; and the 'emerging community'.

The SSCO explained that with regard to vulnerable adults it was about raising awareness, especially around those who were not engaging. There had been some success with Operation Jupiter which was in place to tackle gang activity. Modern slavery was a national issue, which also occurred in Swale, and there was a need to build-on intelligence. Examples where modern slavery occurred included farms, nail bars and car washes. She confirmed that emerging communities were not settled communities, i.e. they were where migrants lived.

Page 11 – Troubled Families Programme

A Member suggested the wording at the final bullet point be amended to read: '% families against the target for which a Payment by Results claim have been submitted **and accepted**'.

Page 11 – Reducing Reoffending

In response to a question, the SSCO confirmed that this did not include crime committed in prison, but dealt with offenders to support them when they came out of prison.

Page 13 – Action Plan 2016/17

The SSCO advised that under 1.5 in the table, programmes to work to reduce offending were not an alternative to prosecution. She further advised that under 3.5, although the timescale between agreement of action plan and delivery was May 2016 to March 2017, some activities would be delivered during this period.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a 'Plain English' approach to the wording in the Plan would be implemented for the final version. He would advise the CSU of the suggestions the Committee had made.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health and the Safer and Stronger Communities Officer for attending on this item.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Swale Community Safety Plan be noted and the comments made by the Committee be taken into account, particularly the recommendation to include the mis-use and use of drugs and substances in the list of priorities.**

624 VOLUNTARY CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STREET ENTERTAINING AND BUSKING IN SWALE

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Economy and Community Services Manager to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health introduced the item which set out a draft Voluntary Code of Conduct for street entertaining and busking in town centre locations in Swale. He advised that this was the first policy/code of conduct for busking in Swale and with emerging street entertainment, this would be a useful document.

The Economy and Community Services Manager (ECSM) explained that the proposal was a 'light touch' to help to create a more vibrant street scene in the Borough. The code could encourage street performers as the diary of events increased. It provided flexibility and was an informal approach. The ECSM explained that the code was voluntary at first to see how well it would be received, and it might need to have stronger terms in the future.

Members spoke and made comments on the Code as minuted below.

Members supported the proposal and a Member considered that the third bullet point – reference to assistance dogs needed to be reworded.

Discussion ensued on the proposed timings of 10am – 4pm. The ECSM advised that this time period had come after discussion with other Local Authorities. She recommended a clear cut-off point between day and night time entertainment.

Suggestions included: later time in the summer months; 10am to sunset; 10am to 7pm; 10am to 6pm; and 10am to 4pm GMT, 10am to 6pm BST.

The ECSM agreed to take a licensing comment in respect of some organisations having to purchase two licences, back to the Licensing Team.

Members discussed the recommended period that a performer could play and then have a break. A suggestion was made to play for 30 minutes with a break of at least 20 minutes, and not perform again for two hours.

Further comments included: either remove bullet point two on page 30, or make the comment stronger; it was up to the performer to arrange any copyright issues, not for the Council to advise; this was an excellent document; explanation needed regarding what was Council-owned land; some wording should be stronger; divide the document into two: voluntary code + guidance and advice; remove the word 'drumming'; make the paragraph on performing time periods clearer; 'close proximity' needed to be more specific; copyright information needed to be there for advice and guidance; remove 'please' from bullet point two on page 29; and state 'must not' on bullet point three.

The ECSM explained that the document was 'light touch' with little involvement from the Council, and the local community would act as the policing agent. In response to a question, see advised that there could potentially be issues of public liability to the Council on Council-owned land. SBC were managing land that was normally considered to be KCC land, so Council-owned was not necessarily SBC-owned. The Policy and Performance Officer advised that this could be referred to as 'public realm'.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health and the Economy and Community Safety Manager for attending for this item.

Resolved:

- (1) That the feedback and input noted in the above minute on the draft Voluntary Code of Conduct for street entertaining and busking in Swale prior to consultation be noted.**

625 CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Performance and the Policy and Performance Officer to the meeting.

The report invited the Committee to consider the Council's draft Corporate Equalities Strategy 2016-20 which was currently out for public consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Performance thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for the work he had carried out on the report. He explained that this Scheme was different to previous ones as it was focused on Swale's communities, rather than the Council's internal processes.

Members agreed that the four objectives in the Strategy were the right ones.

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the four objectives.

Page 43 - Equality Objective 1 – Supporting integration and cohesion in our local communities

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that this objective was about equality, not human rights.

A Member considered that community-led projects should be supported **and actively marketed**. Another Member considered ...where people from different backgrounds get on together....as noted in the first paragraph was not necessarily an equality issue.

Page 45 – Equality Objective 2 – Supporting our vulnerable residents

Members agreed that the 10-year difference in life expectancy across the Borough needed to be addressed. A Member requested that bullet point three be re-phrased; a suggestion was: 'supporting households with the greatest housing needs to access affordable homes'.

Page 46 – Equality Objective 3 – Ensuring easy, clear and convenient access to our services

A Member suggested the Council be more pro-active in promoting the availability of Council documents in alternative formats. The Policy and Performance Officer gave examples of documents that were issued in larger formats and explained there was a pool of staff at the Council who were fluent in foreign languages.

A Member suggested that the last bullet point on page 46 of the report be amended to include the word 'fairness'.

Page 48 – Equality objective 4 – Promoting equality as a local employer

The Cabinet Member reported that the Investors in People award indicated that SBC was a good employer.

Members praised the content of the report including the statistics in Appendix I and II and thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for his hard work.

Resolved:

- (1) That the four proposed objectives are the right ones.**
- (2) That the proposed actions under each of the four objectives are the right ones and the comments minuted above be noted.**

626 RECORD OF THANKS

The Chairman thanked Members for their input on the Committee over the past year. He outlined the policies and strategies that had been considered by the Committee and the effect the Committee had had.

The Chairman also thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for his single-handed work in the support he gave Members; he thanked officers for their reports and also the Democratic Services Team. The Chairman added that it had been a pleasure to be Chairman.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel