
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 17 January 2017 from 7.00 pm - 8.06 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart (Substitute for Councillor George Samuel), Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), James Hunt and Ben Stokes.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Brooke Buttfield, Steph Curtis, Kellie MacKenzie and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Alan Horton (Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Katy Coleman, Nicholas Hampshire, Harrison and George Samuel.

1109 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

1110 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 October 2017 (Minute Nos. 960 – 964) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Councillor Cameron Beart reported that he had attended the meeting as a substitute, and whilst it was noted in the hard copy of the minutes, it was not noted in the published version. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the published minutes would be updated.

1111 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

1112 COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN REFRESH 2017/18

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities, Safer and Stronger Communities Officer and Economy and Community Services (ECS) Project Officer – Community Safety Unit to the meeting. The Chairman advised that the Committee would be considering the Swale Community Safety Plan which was refreshed annually by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities thanked the Committee for inviting him to attend the meeting. He stated that they had altered their programme to ensure that the views of the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) were considered ahead of the decision-making meeting by the Swale CSP Executive on 26 January 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities drew attention to the Community Safety Plan Refresh 2017/18 attached to the agenda, and the results of the consultation in which 108 responses to the survey had been received. He noted that the public concerns and priorities were largely local issues and therefore different to the priorities identified under the Strategic Assessment.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities drew attention to the diagram on page 2 of the Community Safety Plan, which set out the recommended Swale CSP priorities for 2017/18. He spoke about each of the four priorities: Violence Against Women and Girls; Crime; Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB); and Supporting Vulnerable People.

A Member noted that 'speeding vehicles' had been raised as a concern by the public. He suggested that the Swale Joint Transportation Board (JTB) should be informed that the public considered it ASB. The Chairman stated the JTB would be made aware of this.

The Safer and Stronger Communities Officer reported that Kent County Council (KCC) and Kent Fire and Rescue Service were both progressing schemes to encourage drivers to reduce their speed.

In response to a query from a Member, the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities explained that it would be 'unusual' to add speeding vehicles under anti-social behaviour, however, road nuisance, road drifting and speeding past schools during opening and closing times could be considered ASB, so it could be included under that heading.

The Chairman noted the disappointing response to the public consultation, and asked whether more could be done to promote the survey and suggested Facebook and Twitter. The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities stated that the consultation had been promoted by other agencies within the Swale CSP, via workshops and on the Council's website. He stated that Ward Councillors also had a role to play in promoting the consultation to their constituents.

A Member noted that fly-tipping was also a concern for the public, and spoke about particular issues on the Isle of Sheppey. He explained that he had reported issues of fly-tipping only to be told that 'no tipping' signs would be erected. He doubted fly-tippers would take any notice of these signs and cameras would be more of a deterrent.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities stated that fly-tipping was more of a Council related issue. He reported that the Council could now issue fixed penalties of £400 to offenders which should help to reduce the cases of fly-tipping. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council had recently prosecuted a householder for not ensuring that their waste was disposed of correctly.

Members considered each of the recommended priorities.

A Member raised concern about the lack of CCTV cameras on some areas of the Isle of Sheppey. He spoke about particular problems in Eastchurch where a lack of policing was an issue. The Member also considered that rural crime should be

included under the 'Crime' priority as it was a particular issue on the Isle of Sheppey.

The Cabinet Member for Families and Communities stated that the decommissioning of CCTV cameras had been subject to a public consultation to ascertain their effectiveness. He was aware that Minster Parish Council had cameras which they could deploy, however they would need to ensure there was legal justification for using them. With regard to rural crime, the Cabinet Member spoke of a dedicated rural police unit and the Rural Crime Forum which he attended. He stated that details of the Forum could be circulated to Members.

A Member raised concern that family homes were being used as Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) for children and other vulnerable adults, which she considered should be included under the Supporting Vulnerable people priority. This was causing ASB problems in some communities. The Member was concerned that some of the young vulnerable people housed were not receiving adequate support and there was a risk that property developers may buy-up such properties to house children and vulnerable adults from London Boroughs, further concern was raised at how the Council would be able to check who was residing at the property.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities stated that the Multi-agency ward walks and mapping would help to monitor the situation. He was aware that other Local Authorities were proactive in licensing the concentration of HMOs in particular locations.

A Member raised concern about the lack of support for prisoners with drug and mental health issues which he considered had led to the recent unrest at Swaleside prison on the Isle of Sheppey. He was also concerned that prisoners often did not receive adequate support on leaving prison, making it difficult for them to integrate back into the local community which often led to them re-offending.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities reported that the prison service were actively involved with the Swale CSP to establish whether prisoners were coming out to a stable environment. If they were not adequate support would be provided. Mapping could also be used to identify whether they would reside in Swale on release from prison.

In response to a query from a Member about how often acquisitive crime was dealt with, the Safer and Stronger Communities Officer advised that the Swale CSP monitored this on a monthly basis. With regard to the rise in burglaries over the Christmas period, she reported that the Police were dealing with this and did not require any additional support at this stage.

The Chairman advised that some questions had been received from a Member of the Committee, not able to attend the meeting, and these were tabled for Members. The Member queried why the Swale CSP priorities of – Violence Against Women and Girls; Supporting Vulnerable people; and Crime did not appear in the top 3 or 5 priorities from the general public, and was there more the Swale CSP could do to raise awareness of these issues? In response the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities stated that it was important to ensure people were

aware of issues without increasing the fear of crime, particularly amongst the elderly. It was about ensuring the right balance was met.

Some Members considered that social media abuse should be included as a priority and considered the effects of abuse suffered from 'internet trolls'.

In response to queries raised about the definition of 'hate crime', the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities stated that this would include social media and agreed to ensure that this was made clear. He advised that 'hate crime' was defined by the victim i.e. if the victim felt it was a hate crime and they had been singled out, then that is what it would be classified as.

A Member stated that domestic violence was an issue amongst the travelling community. He raised concerns that an important support network had disappeared following the closure of Quinton Village Hall, there was nowhere for people to go and seek help and this needed to be addressed.

There was some discussion about the Swale CSP Priority – Violence Against Women and Girls. It was suggested that the title include reference to men and boys, as they were also at risk of sexual and violent abuse, and also support for those wrongly accused of such offences. A Member suggested that the title be changed to 'Domestic Abuse', however it was noted that offences often took place in a public place so was not necessarily domestic. A Member suggested 'Domestic and Sexual Crime' as the title. The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities noted the Committee's comments in respect of the title for this priority, which he would feed-back to the Swale CSP.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities, Safer and Stronger Communities Officer, and ECS Project Officer – Community Safety Unit for the report and for attending the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities thanked the Committee for their contribution which he would ensure was fed-back to the Swale CSP Executive.

1113 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Performance Officer drew attention to the Committee Work Programme which was tabled for Members. He stated that the next scheduled meeting on 22 February 2017 would be considering the Property Strategy, and he was unsure whether any other plans, policies and strategies were likely to come forward for consideration at that meeting, or whether an additional meeting would need to be scheduled for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

The Chairman advised that Members of the Committee would be notified as soon as possible if a further meeting was required.

A Member drew attention to the Council's Policy on Use of Section 215 powers, set out on page 1 of the Work Programme. He welcomed the recruitment of an officer from the Environmental Response Team to work in this area, as recommended by the PDRC Committee.

Chairman

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