

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Monday, 4 April 2022

**Present: Councillors Bailey, Bland, Goodship, Hayward, Hickey, Knight, Morton, Ms Palmer and Pound**

**Officers in Attendance:** Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager) and Mark O'Callaghan (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors Dawlings and Scott

**PRESIDING MEMBER**

OSC68/21 In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman the Committee elected a member to preside.

Councillor Ms Palmer moved, and Councillor Bland seconded, that Councillor Goodship be appointed to preside at the meeting.

**MOTION NOT CARRIED**

Councillor Hickey moved, and Councillor Knight seconded, that Councillor Pound be appointed to preside at the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That Councillor Pound be appointed to preside at the meeting.

Councillor Pound took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

OSC69/21 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chapelard, Holden (Vice Chairman) and Thompson (Chairman).

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

OSC70/21 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

**DECLARATIONS OF A PARTY WHIP**

OSC71/21 There were no declarations that any member was subject to a party whip.

**NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS REGISTERED TO SPEAK**

OSC72/21 Councillor Scott was in attendance as the relevant Portfolio Holder in respect of item OSC75/21.

There were no members of the public or Visiting Members registered to speak.

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 07 FEBRUARY 2022

OSC73/21 No amendments were proposed.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting dated 07 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

### ITEMS CALLED-IN

OSC74/21 There were no items which had been called-in.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022/23

OSC75/21 Councillor Scott, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development (which included responsibility for community safety), and Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report reviewing performance of the Community Safety Partnership Plan for the previous year and setting out proposals for next year.

Answers to questions included the following:

- It was difficult to make predictions of post-covid trends. A big spike in anti-social behaviour calls, largely related to breaches of lockdown regulations, had reduced to pre-pandemic levels. Domestic Abuse incidents were up but not as much as had been predicted. Work to encourage reporting was continuing. Overall, the current levels of incidents was believed to be the new normal.
- The Safer Streets tool was not without faults but was proving to be useful. 38 incidents had been registered. When looking closely at the mapping data it appeared that the location of incidents was not being accurately captured. Officers were working with the responsible Superintendent to see whether the tool could be made to not allow plotting at too high a level of zoom.
- The recent Police and Crime Commissioner's survey provided general descriptions of where people felt unsafe (e.g. train stations and parks) but not specific locations so would not provide actionable data. Safer Streets had provided actionable data.
- Applications for additional funding in phase 4 of the Safer Streets Fund was now open, projects building on existing success would increase chances. Any grant would need to be match-funded 1:2. Other agencies were also seeking funding.
- Early Help were looking for funding towards tackling knife crime. Whilst knife related incidents in the borough were low, the carrying of knives if detected often lead to a downward spiral.
- Domestic Abuse services were also seeking additional funding. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council were acting as referees for this.
- An increase in road traffic incidents involving young people was in line with pre-pandemic trends, so not necessarily related to the pandemic. It was suspected that the increase was due to increasing use of mobile devices and more data was being sought. Kent Wardens and other agency officers regularly attended schools to deliver road safety messages.
- The Council was working with night-time economy venues and the Commons Conservators to improve safety, particularly of women and girls. Trees blocking street lights and pathways had been cut back.

- The ethnicity of hate crime victims was recorded and discussed regularly within the Community Safety Unit. The data was available to councillors on request.
- Potential sources of funding from the Department of Levelling Up to assist in the integration of people resettling from Hong Kong and tackling related hate crime would be explored. Applications would likely be through the Police as resettlement costs would not necessarily be a community safety issue at borough level.
- Use of the Safer Streets tool had been promoted to the community, particularly during the time the Police and Crime Commissioner's survey was live.
- Data from the Safer Streets tool, whilst not perfect, was still useful particularly as it included multiple choice questions which prompted the giving of more detailed answers. Work was underway to improve the tool's flaws.
- The Council was heavily reliant on the Police both for policing the borough and for supporting the Community Safety Unit. The Assistant Chief Constable had strongly urged the Council to allow time for the "My Community Voice" platform to be in place. This would fill many of the gaps in the Safer Streets tool and would provide a single platform for the whole of Kent, saving the burden of analysing 16 separate platforms.
- Expectations needed to be managed, a multitude of different tools could cause confusion, duplication and missed reports. Safer Streets and My Community Voice were the preferred platforms.
- A local version of the Safer Streets tool could be developed but it would be limited by local resources, a lack of access to national grade technology and a lack of integration with regional and national platforms.
- Recent improvements to Safer Streets showed commitment and significant investment by the stakeholders.
- There were no known county-line gangs operating in the borough. It may be that the pandemic and restrictions to movements had resulted in the gangs adopting new operating models but this was being closely investigated.
- Culverden and Park wards tended to show above average crime statistics due to their coverage of the town centre. The town centre was often distinguished from residential areas in analysis of the data but the possibility of separating the data at source would be investigated.
- Data was available broken down into Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOA) the grouping into wards was a local convenience.

Comments in debate included:

- The report was too light in terms of tackling violence against women and girls, particularly when it comes to reliance on a flawed Safer Streets tool.
- Development of the Kent Police My Community Voice app and a Kent-wide strategy was taking too long considering this had been a high priority for residents for over a year.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Plan, including the recommended 5 priorities for 2022/23 be supported; and

2. That a further report be brought to the Committee within 6 months providing:
  - a. Location data and any other related analysis to identify causes of increased road traffic incidents involving young people;
  - b. Data and relevant analysis on the ethnicity of victims of hate crimes;
  - c. Analysis of the practicability of separating town centre crime data from residential areas; and
  - d. Analysis of the efficacy of the Safer Streets tool and comparison to potential local tools.

## **POVERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

OSC76/21 Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer introduced the report set out in the agenda proposing terms of reference for the Poverty Task and Finish Group and the nature of the review as recommended by the interim members of the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Pound, as interim chair of the Task and Finish Group commented:

- The scope of the review would include investigation of the Council's role in coordination and facilitation, not in seeking to expand the Council's operations in service delivery or to determine what other agencies should or should not be doing.
- The Task and Finish Group's interim report had met some resistance from Cabinet.
- The Task and Finish Group only consisted of three members, further help would be appreciated.
- Many of the witnesses who contributed to the interim report had since left their employment so the review would include re-engaging with those organisations.

The report was taken as read.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the Terms of Reference as set out at section 2 of the report be agreed; and
2. That the Review Initiation Document as prepared by the Task and Finish Group and set out at Appendix A to the report be agreed.

## **CONTRACTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

OSC77/21 Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer introduced the report set out in the agenda proposing terms of reference for the Contracts Task and Finish Group and the nature of the review as recommended by the interim members of the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Hickey, as interim chair of the Task and Finish Group commented:

- The purpose of the review would be to assess:
  - whether the Council was procuring and running contracts as efficiently and effectively as possible.
  - Whether all feasible alternatives were being considered.
  - Whether any improvements could be made to improve resident and stakeholder confidence.

- What improvements could be made to member involvement.
- The Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer had been consulted and agreed with the scope of the review.

Comments in debate included:

- Use of the word “questionable” used in the background information to the issue on the Initiation Document implied predetermination that something was wrong. It was agreed to find a more neutral alternative.
- The legal framework around procurement would form part of the review to identify what local discretion within the law could be applied. Improving member understanding of the rules would also be important.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the Terms of Reference as set out at section 2 of the report be agreed; and
2. That the Review Initiation Document as prepared by the Task and Finish Group and set out at Appendix A to the report be agreed.

**DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

OSC78/21 Mark O’Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer introduced the report set out in the agenda providing an update on the drafting of the Committee’s annual report and approval process. Comments included:

- The draft report set out the facts and members were invited to submit any narrative or conclusions for inclusion in the final version.

Comments in debate included:

- Details of the April meeting would be added. The report would cover the municipal year up to the date of the Annual Council Meeting.
- The report was comprehensive and the Scrutiny Officer was thanked for their work and support of the committee.
- The Committee should, as a matter of principle, be chaired by a member of the opposition.
- Page 110 of the agenda contained a mistake in the dates of the call-in hearing (should be 2021 where it states 2022). These would be corrected in the final version.

**RESOLVED –** That the Draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021-22 be approved subject to update following the April meeting and presentation to the next meeting for adoption.

**WORK PROGRAMME**

OSC79/21 The work programme was presented for information. No changes were made.

**URGENT BUSINESS**

OSC80/21 There was no urgent business for consideration.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

OSC81/21 The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 20 June 2022.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm.