

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Thursday, 21 March 2019

Present: Councillor Jane March (Chairman)

Councillors Weatherly (Vice-Chairman), Dr Basu, Ellis, Hill, Nuttall and Thomson

Officers in Attendance: John-Jackson Almond (Theatre Director), Nicky Carter (Head of HR, Customer Services and Culture), Julie Hawksworth (Visitor Services Manager), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager), Jeremy Kimmel (Audience Development Manager), Gary Stevenson (Head of Housing, Health and Environment) and Mark O'Callaghan (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Officers in Attendance: Chief Inspector Pete Steenhuis

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Mackonochie, Moore and Scott

APOLOGIES

COM61/18 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elliott, Huggett, Ms Palmer and Scholes.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM62/18 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM63/18 There were no Visiting Members who had registered as wishing to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 13 FEBRUARY 2019

COM64/18 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 13 February 2019 be approved as a correct record.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2019-20

COM65/18 Councillor Weatherly and Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda which included the following additional comments:

- The strategic assessment showed, during the reporting period ending October 2018, a headline rise in crime of 37 per cent. Officers were asked to investigate whether this was a sustained increase. Latest figures from February 2019 showed a more modest rise of 22 per cent.
- Tunbridge Wells maintained its position as the safest district in Kent.
- Ongoing improvements to the way figures were recorded contributed to some of the rise. Kent Police was now the best force in England for its crime recording accuracy.
- Whilst more accurate recording practices distorted comparison statistics, it resulted in a better service for victims.
- Chief Inspector Pete Steenhuis, district commander of Kent Police was in attendance to answer questions.

The discussion included consideration of the following additional matters:

- A fall in recorded anti-social behaviour offences was matched by an increase in public order offences, these were the same events recorded in a different way so it was right that anti-social behaviour remained a priority.
- Close team work between the Police, Community Safety Unit, CCTV monitors and Town Centre managers resulted in a strong response to town centre crime and made the town centre a very difficult target for criminals.
- Current policing models were based on local policing teams which provided the front line response to 999 calls and community policing teams to focus on problem areas. A return to 'Beat officers' was unlikely.
- Whilst Kent Police were considering the future of the Tunbridge Wells Police Station, it was not currently for sale. It was occupied by officers from the community policing team and community safety unit. Local policing teams had been operating from Tonbridge Police Station for over a year.
- A number of police units positioned themselves in Tunbridge Wells and response times were quicker in Tunbridge Wells than in Tonbridge.
- Marijuana had recently been licenced for medical purposes but remained a tightly controlled and potentially dangerous substance. Kent Police worked with schools to increase education on the subject, provided these efforts continued there were no specific concerns about medical marijuana becoming more prevalent.
- Car crimes were often perceived to be of low priority. Crimes such as theft of motor vehicles and theft from motor vehicles, were recorded in the report under the heading "victim based crime". Malicious damage to vehicles was recorded, along with other types, as "criminal damage".
- Reporting of domestic violence and domestic abuse was increasing. However, there remained high underreporting of such crimes.
- There were properties known in the local areas as selling drugs, these were often linked to problem social housing. The Serious Organised Crime Board included delegates from the Community Safety Unit, Housing Services, Housing Associations and others. Where problem properties were identified a partnership approach would be used to tackle various aspects as a whole. In addition to any criminal charges, having drugs was a breach of the tenancy agreement so offenders could be evicted.
- KCC's funding structure for homelessness services was changing which could reduce the eligibility for support. Agencies were acutely aware of the potential problems. The issue was being discussed at the Kent Leaders level and transitional arrangements were being sought.
- The latest figures up to the end of February 2019 would be included in the final report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported.

KENT JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE STRATEGY REFRESH

COM66/18 Councillor Dr Basu and Gary Stevenson, Head of Housing, Health and Environment, introduced the report set out in the agenda which included the following additional comments:

- Considerable work had gone into preparing the joint strategy.
- The strategy represented best practice.

Members took the report as read.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported.

WORK PROGRAMME AS AT 11 MARCH 2019

COM67/18 Members considered the work programme. No queries were raised.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme as at 11 March 2019 be noted.

URGENT BUSINESS

COM68/18 There was no urgent business in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 2972. However, the Chairman exercised her discretion to allow a discussion on the naming of 'The Amelia' cultural and learning hub.

John-Jackson Almond, Theatre Director; Nicky Carter, Head of HR, Customer Services and Culture; Julie Hawksworth, Visitor Services Manager; and Jeremy Kimmel, Audience Development Manager, was in attendance to answer questions.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

COM69/18 The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 05 June 2019 at 6.30pm in Committee Room A at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.