

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Thursday, 25 March 2021

**Present: Councillor Jane March (Chairman)
Councillors Mackonochie (Vice-Chairman), Fairweather, Ms Palmer, Simmons,
Thomson, Bruneau, Ellis, Rutland and Pope**

Officers in Attendance: Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance:

APOLOGIES

COM29/20 Apologies were received from Councillor Hill.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM30/20 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM31/20 There were no visiting Members registered to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 17 FEBRUARY 2021

COM32/20 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – The minutes of the meeting dated 17 February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 26 FEBRUARY 2021

COM33/20 Members considered the Forward Plan. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan as at 26 February 2021 be noted.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2021/22 AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2020/21

COM34/20 The report was first introduced by Councillor Carol Mackonochie, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Wellbeing:

“This is the annual presentation of the Strategic Assessment and Community Safety Partnership Plan which sets priorities for the coming year.

In summary, I'm pleased to report that Tunbridge Wells remains the safest borough in Kent, with data for the reporting period showing a 9% reduction in overall crime, building on the 6% reduction reported last year.

Clearly, 2020 was no ordinary year and some of the reductions will have been influenced by the changes and sacrifices we've all had to make in our daily lives.

For instance, residential burglaries, robberies and shoplifting are all down substantially.

On the flip side, reports of anti-social behaviour increased by 58% in 2020. But this was, to a great extent, due to residents reporting breaches of COVID-19 regulations. Every district in Kent experienced similar ups-and-downs.

For 2021-22 our priorities remain the same and we will retain a focus on violent incidents associated with substance and alcohol abuse, particularly in the night-time economy when it is back up and running.

To provide more detail on the Strategic Assessment and outline some of the plans for the forthcoming year I'll now hand you over to Community Safety Manager Terry Hughes."

Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager introduced the report that sought approval for the 2021/22 Community Safety Partnership Plan which included the following:

- To note, calendar year data had been used rather than the November to October that was usually used. For this year, it was thought important to capture the most recent data possible.
- Crime and anti-social behaviour data for the County showed that Tunbridge Wells was well placed being 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the crime types typically measured.
- The two that fell outside the top 3 were shoplifting and theft of motor vehicles, Tunbridge Wells was 4th for both this year.
- Despite an increase in the theft of catalytic convertors, there was an overall reduction in thefts from motor vehicles. A project to address this issue was initiated and TWBC provided some funding to support this initiative. TWBC may consider further funding in the future.
- An increase in violent crime moved Tunbridge Wells from 2nd place to 3rd place – Tunbridge Wells had 10 more incidents than Tonbridge and Malling last year. Given the current restrictions, the increase was a surprise so further investigation was needed.
- Nationally hate crime towards certain groups had increased, in particular, anti-Asian, Oriental hate crime and victims identifying themselves as Chinese.
- There had been little movement in hate crime in Tunbridge Wells although there were still some isolated incidents. Details of incidents were reported to the Community Liaison Officer and discussed at the monthly at the Vulnerability Board Meeting.
- Incidents of domestic abuse in Tunbridge Wells was the lowest in Kent. There was an increase of 94 reports (4% increase from the previous year) – half the increase experienced in 2019.
- Figures from the Domestic Abuse Volunteers and Support Services (DAVSS) showed a repeat rate of between 4-6% in the first three quarters of the 2020 financial year.
- Domestic calls to the police did not rise as expected, but calls to DAVSS increased by about 400 during the year (this was a West Kent figure that included Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks).
- TWBC provided DAVSS with some additional funding for a survivors programme. The programme quickly became over-subscribed.
- The new Domestic Abuse Bill currently in Parliament would require greater emphasis being provided on accommodation based support. Discussions with the Housing Team would follow to ensure that the

provisions of the Act were understood. It was expected that additional funding would be forthcoming from the Home Office.

- In terms of substance misuse and alcohol abuse, Tunbridge Wells was one of only two districts to see a reduction in trafficking offences in 2020. Across the 10 districts, Tunbridge Wells also recorded the smallest rise in possession offences.
- Violence and/or knife crime was very low in Tunbridge Wells. As they were often linked with drug supply, funding received from the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Violence Reduction Unit had been used for awareness and enforcement activities.
- The Community Alcohol Partnership undertook actions last year to prevent under 18 years of age sales. As lockdown eased there were plans to put some outreach in place near the town centre supermarkets.
- Tunbridge Wells was the 2nd best in Kent in terms of anti-social behaviour.
- Along with every other district in the Country, Tunbridge Wells had experienced a significant rise in anti-social behaviour during 2020.
- A breakdown of the data showed that many reports related to breaches to the Covid-19 regulations.
- Data was included where anti-social behaviour turned into violence related issues. This ensured that TWBC remained sited on the risks to the public from anti-social behaviour.
- All areas of Kent experienced a reduction in road casualties for the period July 2019 to June 2020. This was not unexpected due to the restrictions that were in place.
- Some police enforcement did go ahead. In December operations in Five Oak Green, Sissinghurst, Matfield, Brenchley and on Langton Green took place. 22 traffic offence reports were collected during this period. Half of the offences related to speeding within a 20mph speed limit (near a school).
- The recommended priorities for 2021/22 were:
 - o Domestic Abuse.
 - o Substance misuse and supply and alcohol abuse (including violence related issues and knife crime).
 - o Anti-social and high risk behaviour (including violence related issues).
 - o Road Safety.

Discussion and responses to Members questions included the following:

- The Crash Data team based at Kent CC would be able to provide a breakdown of accident data by ward (and in particular Southborough). Details of where accidents had occurred was also available – in particular whether any of the 5 KSI's in Southborough had happened at the Biddborough Ridge/A26 junction. It was agreed this information would be forwarded outside of the meeting.
- The level of domestic abuse was lower than expected. This was contrary to the national picture which had expected a rise in reported abuse.
- The retention of Road Safety as a priority was welcomed, particularly in the rural wards. It would be important for Councillors to work closely with CSU to obtain sufficient resources to improve road safety across the borough.
- It was confirmed that use of the speed enforcement equipment was available across the borough. In addition, the police worked closely

- with Speedwatch.
- Evidence of accident blackspots/excessive speed collected by TWBC could be submitted to Kent CC for further investigation/action.
 - Road safety was based around Enforcement, Engineering and Education. Enforcement was the remit of the police and engineering the remit of Kent CC, TWBC therefore focused its attention on education. However, it was agreed that the Plan would be revisited to see if more emphasis could be given to enforcement.
 - Engineering tended to be based on crash data for injuries rather than near misses. However, a one year trial for a near miss register was due to start on 1 April. It was hoped this might give the Council an opportunity to provide a better representation to Kent CC and/or to undertake some small projects that would raise awareness.
 - The provision of better lighting had been raised and TWBC's lighting engineers were currently investigating this issue further. However, it should be noted that this was likely to be a big project that could require significant funding.
 - A survey to gauge whether people felt safe walking at night would be useful.
 - There had been an increase in anti-social behaviour on the Common and this was something currently being addressed by the police.
 - Any correspondence received regarding lighting issues should be sent to the CSU for a response.
 - Excessive speed in the Hawkhurst area was raised as a particular concern. TWBC were aware that Kent CC had been petitioned with regards to a speed camera along the stretch of road between the lights at Flimwell and Hawkhurst. However, it was understood the accident data at this time did not support the installation of a speed camera.
 - Similar excessive speed activity had been reported on the A21 in the Flimwell area and measures to target this activity were being undertaken. Consideration would be given to see whether the proposed activity could be extended to take in the stretch of road leading to Hawkhurst (A268). Funding would be required for any enforcement measures.
 - The Speedwatch Team based in Hawkhurst had been very effective but had now been told to stand down. It was unclear as to the reasons why they were no longer permitted to operate.
 - Speedwatch was also used in Tunbridge Wells (St John's).

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

URGENT BUSINESS

COM35/20 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

COM36/20 The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 9 June 2021.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm.

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

