



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
5 JULY 2018  
7.30 - 8.50 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Mrs Angell, Brossard, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Peacey, Porter, Thompson (Substitute) and Tullett

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Birch, Finnie and Mrs Temperton

**Executive Members in attendance:**

Councillors McCracken and Heydon

**Also Present:**

Timothy Wheadon, Chairman Community Safety Partnership  
Alison Sanders, Director of Resources  
Alison O'Meara, Head of Community Safety  
Superintendent Shaun Virtue, Thames Valley Police

**4. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 10 May and 23 May 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Responses to all of the queries and requests for information raised in the meeting had been received or formed part of the agenda.

**5. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

**6. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**7. Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

**8. Community Safety**

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Community Safety Partnership, Thames Valley Police (TVP) and officers from the Community Safety team to the meeting of the Commission, in its capacity as the Crime and Disorder Committee.

Timothy Wheadon, Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) attended with Alison O'Meara, Head of Community Safety who gave a presentation to the Committee on the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) performance during 2017/18, and plans for 2018/19. Superintendent Shaun Virtue, the Local Police Area Commander of Thames Valley Police was present at the meeting for this item.

The Head of Community Safety advised that the CSP has been performing well in a national climate of rising crime. The key headlines arising from the presentation were:

- Bracknell Forest was the only CSP area to show a reduction in victim-based crime e.g. 1% with increases across the Thames Valley of 8%.
- When compared to similar demographic groupings Bracknell Forest had the lowest crime figure for 2017/18.
- There had been a national rise in violent crime which was a key priority and this was the case for the Thames Valley, Berkshire and Bracknell Forest. These increases in violence also reflected the changes in how crimes were now being recorded.
- The work undertaken within the Lexicon e.g. effective policing, patrols by Lexicon security teams as well as the impact of people no longer congregating in Jubilee Gardens had had a positive effect in the CSP's performance against alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).
- Although shoplifting figures showed a 16% reduction, the CSP was aware that not all incidents were being reported.
- Criminal damage within the Town Centre had seen a 25% reduction despite the significant increase in footfall within the town.
- In relation to Public Order crimes reported in the Town Centre, these had increased from 21 to 39 in 2017/18. However, although this was an 86% increase, this needed to be considered within the context of the number of visitors and that the majority of incidents related to breaches to an order for one individual.
- The multi-agency approach to problem-solving had led to closure orders for both drug and exploitation-related crimes.
- The increased reporting rate of domestic abuse was still interpreted as a positive outcome and the CSP was focusing on reducing repeat offences.
- The graph illustrating 'All Crime' since March 2003 showed that Bracknell Forest CSP's low figures had held steady since 2013 while all other CSPs in England and Wales has increased considerably.
- The CSP was very proud to deliver some of the lowest crime reported nationally despite widespread pressures.
- Two case studies were provided which explained the CSPs problem solving intervention and the positive impacts on specific anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.
- New priorities for the CSP included modern slavery to reflect recent legislation as well as Local Government Association recommendations that all areas need to respond to this crime type as a growing, hidden issue, and drug lines (County Lines) which would respond to national concerns around exploitation of young and vulnerable people in dealing drugs.
- The areas of focus for 2018/19 would be:
  - County lines exploitation
  - Homeless offenders who exploit
  - Offender management
  - Modern Slavery Task and Finish Strategic Group

- Shoplifting reporting: promoting and facilitating reporting incidents
- Domestic Abuse repeat rate: looking to understand issues and respond
- Although management across partners had changed over the years, the strong culture of partnership-working continued to remain particularly strong within Bracknell Forest and there was also a high level of expertise, skills and experience within the team.

Arsing from the Members' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- 15 – 20 people attend the CSP but the other people were invited dependent upon the agenda content.
- Victim-based-crime identified a victim and would exclude fraud where there was no identified victim.
- All CSPs have experienced an increase in crime and therefore it is anticipated that at some point Bracknell Forest's will increase.
- The significant change was in 2006/7 when the problem-solving approach to target hotspots and specific issues was introduced.
- Shoplifting within the Lexicon was being identified through stock takes rather than detection of incidents and therefore not reported but the shops would need to manage the detection element themselves.
- The licensed establishments were reported as having taken responsibility for managing issues.
- It was reiterated that in relation to 'Public Order 'crimes reported in the Town Centre, the increase from 21 to 39 was within the context of over ten million visitors from opening to April 2018.
- Legislation in 2015 on modern slavery included a duty on local authorities to help identify potential victims which were followed up by Local Government Association guidance on the responsibilities.
- It was re-iterated that Bracknell Forest CSP benefitted from a really good embedded culture of partnership working, as well as the established problem-solving model and a dedicated team which co-ordinated all the work described.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Commission, thanked all of the officers in the Community Safety team for their hard work as members appreciated the impact they were having and asked that their thanks be conveyed to those of the team who were not present..

Superintendent Shaun Virtue, the Local Police Area Commander of Thames Valley Police updated the Commission on 2017/18 from a policing perspective:

- There was a real positive attitude within Bracknell Forest and that was driven by Alison O'Meara but was throughout the team.
- The police were now the last resort for enforcement interventions.
- Changes had been observed in the nature of crime as door knocking and taking advantage of vulnerable people was increasing.
- There was an increased public expectation that the police would be more visible and therefore they were working on reassurance protocols.
- There had been a reduction in 400 officers across the Thames Valley.
- The 20% increase in 999 calls which had previously been identified as a spike was now business as usual.
- Thames Valley was still committed to Neighbourhood Policing including the provision of PCSOs.
- Traveller encampment issues were managed by local standards together with Thames Valley protocol with landowners having primary responsibility but

police would help disrupt activity. He commended Bracknell Forest's proactive approach.

- Bracknell Forest had the highest take up with the Thames Valley Alert App.
- Use of technology such as provision of laptops to officers was proving successful as it allowed them to input statements and update information quickly.
- Bracknell Forest was affected by national organised crime waves such as the recent spate of construction vehicle thefts from hotels to steal the power tools being stored inside.
- In addition there were crime issues associated with the movement of drugs across county lines.

As a result of the Members' questions, the following points were made:

- Loss of 400 officers equated to 10% of the force.
- The initial increase in 999 calls related to terrorist attacks but recently callers were contacting all three emergency services for much lower level incidents than before.
- Since the Overview and Scrutiny Child Sexual Exploitation Task and Finish Group, the force had become more astute at identifying risks and therefore intervention was quicker and the Sexual Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (SEMRAC) had been in operation to undertake risk assessments and identify actions. There is also a strategic Exploitation Group to steer the programme of work.
- The main frustration identified was having sufficient resources to respond to the peaks and troughs of demand, not always being able to respond as quickly as officers would like and having more intelligence resource allocation.

The Chairman thanked all those who had contributed to the item for attending the meeting.

## **9. ICT and Digital Infrastructure Strategy**

The Chairman advised the meeting that unfortunately due to an accident Steve Bruce, Chief Officer: ICT was unable to attend to facilitate a workshop on the ICT and digital infrastructure strategy. He therefore advised the meeting that this would be deferred.

**Action: Governance and Scrutiny to add ICT and Digital Infrastructure Strategy to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission forward plan.**

## **10. Development of Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2018-19**

The Commission noted the report which pulled together the proposals and consultation responses on which topics should be the priority for the Commission during the municipal year.

The Chairman corrected the inaccurate reference within the report to the Recruitment and Retention activity as a Task and Finish Group, clarified that this had been a workshop with Commission members and was not intended to be regarded as any kind of policy making initiative.

It was agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would prioritise the proposed topics within the parameters described within the report and identify topics to be considered.

**Action: Chairman and Vice-Chairman to identify topics for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the Commission and circulate to members of the Commission.**

## 11. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs)**

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSRs for the fourth quarter of 2017/18 (January to March 2018) relating to the Resources Directorate.

Alison Sanders, Director of Resources highlight in particular that the Time 2 Change project had completed during this period. It was noted that although building works had been significant there were many strands to the project and there had been wider cultural impact of being co-located in Time Square which were changing how the organisation works.

As a result of Members' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- In relation to the former landfill site at London Road it was explained that 'competitive dialogue process' was very different to the usual tender process when the outcome was known. Instead this meant that the Council, working with legal advice, was discussing with interested bidders what the outcome could be and addressing issues as they arose. It was noted this was a time-consuming and complex process similar to the creation of the PFI for RE3 and would follow the same methodology.
- It was clarified that there were two elements to the site at London Road with another parcel of land which was set apart from the former landfill site which was the subject of the proposed decision on the Executive forward plan regarding the construction of an access road.
- It was explained that further to the two CIPD workforce planning workshops work with managers was ongoing to complete a thorough process to identify and centrally map what was required through both training and behavioural change.
- It was clarified that the failure to hit the target for L233 percentage of abandoned calls to the main Council contact number did not relate to intentional activities to deflect callers to other avenues but instead reflected staff vacancies, leave and staff sickness.
- The works for moving links from Easthampstead House to the Library which had been delayed and affected the decommissioning dates had now been completed by British Telecom.

## 12. **Executive Forward Plan**

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions of a corporate nature.

The Chairman raised concerns regarding the decision reference 1074206 – Legal Services Review which was looking at the feasibility of a merged Legal Service between Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Councils. Members had been advised at the recent Licensing and Safety Committee that officers working within the merged regulatory services were experiencing issues with a number of elements such as ICT and communications which Members had previously been given assurances about. This therefore caused concern about repeating issues with the Legal Services proposal and he hoped that lessons were being learnt and that the proposed business model would be reviewed.

In response both the Chief Executive and Director of Resources reported that officers had not raised this formally within the organisation but that this would be followed up. The Director of Resources explained that 18 months of analysis had been undertaken to create the draft business case for the Legal Services merger. It was agreed that it would be a difficult decision but it was important to look at this opportunity.

**Thanks to Director of Resources**

The Chairman noted this was the last Commission meeting that Alison Sanders, Director of Resources would be attending and on behalf of the Commission extended their thanks for the work she had done for the Council and the Commission and wished her well for the future.

**CHAIRMAN**