

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
2 MAY 2013
7.30 - 9.05 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Baily, Ms Brown, Kensall, Heydon, McLean, Turrell and Virgo

Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative

Executive Members:

Councillors McCracken, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Finnie and Gbadebo

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny

Ian Boswell, Community Safety Manager

Assistant Chief Constable John Campbell, Thames Valley Police

Chief Inspector Dave Gilbert, Chief Inspector, Bracknell Local Police Area, Thames Valley Police

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

60. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute members:

Councillor Baily for Councillor Finnie

Councillor Kensall for Councillor Mrs Birch

61. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 28 March 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Minute 52: Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner – It was clarified that the Police and Crime Commissioner considered the Police's primary role as being crime detection and apprehending perpetrators however for crime prevention to be fully effective then wider partnership working was required.

Minute 54: Community Infrastructure Levy – The Chairman had written to the Leader of the Council on 26 April 2013.

Minute 56: Residents' Survey – Action Plans would be available for the Commission to consider at its next meeting on 1 July 2013.

62. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

63. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.;

64. Public Participation

There were no representations submitted under the Public Participation Scheme.

65. Community Safety

Meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, Assistant Chief Constable John Campbell, Chief Inspector Dave Gilbert, Timothy Wheadon Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership and Ian Boswell Community Safety Manager were welcomed to the meeting.

Ian Boswell, Community Safety Manager gave a presentation in respect of the performance of the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership during 2012-13. The presentation included an overview of the Partnership's make up, priorities and challenges, resourcing and comparator data.

The Community Safety Partnership was a statutory partnership and one of the four key theme partnership groups that the Bracknell Forest Partnership was focused on currently. The Partnership was well supported by all agencies involved and both statutory and non-statutory partners were fully engaged with the Partnership's work bringing their own areas of expertise to the table.

For the past few years, Thames Valley Police and the Community Safety Team had been focused on reducing crime levels across the area and tackling the public's disproportionate fear of crime. Work that was proving successful as crime levels continued to fall. Total recorded crime levels were now at their lowest level since 1998 and between 2008/9 and 2012/13 there was a 39% drop in recorded crime. The innovative development of a Community Safety Team that was shared between the Police and the Local Authority and the strength of the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership, which attracted government financial support of £53,000 per annum, were considered to be key to this success. Measures of note for the Partnership during 2012-13 included:

- 10.8% reduction in total volume of recorded crime
- 11.4% reduction in violent offences
- 28.7% reduction in burglary non dwelling
- 28.3% reduction in hate crime
- Significant reductions in metal thefts
- An increase in the domestic abuse detection rate from 37.1% to 46.8%
- A domestic abuse repeat rate of 44.8%

It was reported that when compared against the performance of the closest fourteen comparator police areas Bracknell Forest Local Police Area (LPA) was ranked second best for domestic burglary and recorded a lower than average 12 month

rolling total of all crimes. Although the level of serious acquisitive crime had risen slightly when compared to the same period the previous year Bracknell Forest LPA continued to perform better than its comparator LPAs and the Partnership was confident that the rise could and would be reversed. At 30.1% Bracknell Forest LPA's detection rate for burglaries was the best in the Thames Valley Police area.

The Partnership had been pleased to learn that the work that was taking place to tackle people's perceptions of crime levels in the Borough was starting to pay dividends with the results of the 2012 Residents' Survey putting the low level of crime as being the third best thing about living in the Borough, after parks and open spaces and the accessibility of nature. In the previous Residents' Survey the low level of crime had been ranked in sixth place.

Key challenges for the Partnership during 2013/14, based on a strategic assessment, were:

- Keeping levels of crime and anti-social behaviour down
- Reducing levels of domestic abuse
- Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner

Tackling domestic abuse was a key priority area for the Partnership during 2013/14 not only because of the impact that it had on victims but also because of the impact that it would have on other priority areas. Domestic abuse had a broad definition that covered threats, harassment, fear of intimidation and violence against a person and whilst the statistics relating to domestic abuse were rising a significant amount of work had taken place to raise awareness of the problem and encourage reporting and the rise gave the police confidence that people were becoming more willing to come forward and report the problem. During the coming twelve months, the focus would be on developing and enhancing strategies to prevent repeat domestic abuse incidents. Victims were provided with support from specially trained officers and cases were referred to Social Services for additional support. If a victim chose to withdraw their complaint then the incident would remain on the Police database, a risk assessment would be carried out and the Police would continue to monitor both the situation and the perpetrator.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Anti-social behaviour classifications were decided at a national level
- The moving annual total of recorded anti-social behaviour had increased slightly when compared to the previous year and a significant amount of work was underway to ensure that incidents were not been double counted when amalgamating the various data sources used to compile anti-social behaviour statistics
- It was acknowledged that a degree of crime did go unreported however statistics gathered by the Crime Survey of England and Wales, an independent poll of thousands of people across the country, were starting to show a correlation between data collated by the police on reported crimes and survey data on crime suffered by those surveyed. A factor that gave the Police confidence that reported crime figures were reflective of the true picture of crime levels. Evidence that was further bolstered by data gathered through other methods for example the Residents' Survey
- The excess on insurance premiums often deterred people from reporting vehicle crime
- There were no particular hotspots for thefts from vehicles currently however a recent spike in thefts from the Tesco Car Park had resulted in a piece of joint

working with Bracknell and Wokingham College to develop equipment that would detect when car locking mechanisms were being blocked and two arrests had been made as a result of this work

- A significant number of thefts from vehicles related to the theft of number plates, a situation that was thought to be linked to petrol theft
- The Police were working with educational establishments across the Borough to provide support and advice to both students and staff to help address mephadrone abuse
- Crime data at a neighbourhood level could be obtained by signing up to Thames Valley Alert through the Police's website, and the appropriate web links would be circulated to the Commission. Those who were signed up would receive daily updates on crimes committed in their registered areas of interest
- Capacity issues currently prevented the provision of neighbourhood data relating to anti-social behaviour
- The Strategic Assessment Analysis had given no indication that rural crime was an issue in Bracknell Forest however one of the challenges was defining rural crime and work was underway to improve this
- When a person was taken into custody their mental well-being was assessed, and if any potential issues for example autism were identified then appropriate adults were provided. In addition, Thames Valley Police had a Diversity Plan the implementation of which was overseen by a lead officer
- Conviction rates were not generally reported alongside crime levels and detection rates because they were a matter for the judicial system. However regular reports on conviction rates were provided to the Criminal Justice Board which counted the Chief Constable as a member
- In addition to court convictions the Police had a range of sanctions that could be used when dealing with a perpetrator including cautions and community resolution.
- Restorative Justice was a victim-led approach and provided a proportionate approach for certain crimes
- All crimes occurring in the Borough in the previous 24 hour period were reviewed every morning at Management Team Meetings. Members would be welcome to attend.
- The Police had sharpened up their responses in relation to metal thefts including spot checks and raids on scrap metal dealers and this had resulted in a 48% fall in the number of reported metal thefts across the Thames Valley region
- When someone was arrested they are taken to the custody suites at either Lodden Valley or Maidenhead Police Stations
- A lot of work was carried out to prevent raves from happening in the first place including working with third parties for example park wardens
- Threats made through social media were only prosecuted if they were considered to present a significant threat of violence. The Community Safety Partnership worked closely with schools to reduce incidents of abuse through social media
- There was currently no specific definition associated with cyber crime and criminal acts were generally recorded according to their original status for example theft or fraud. However it was a growing problem and the matter was being examined at a national level
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The Commission thanked Assistant Chief Constable John Campbell, Chief Inspector Dave Gilbert, Timothy Wheadon and Ian Boswell for their informative update and commended the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

66. Executive Forward Plan

The Commission noted the Executive Key and Non-Key decisions contained within the report. In response to Members' questions the Chief Executive informed the Commission that the terms of the Development Agreement for the regeneration of Bracknell town centre had now been agreed and work was underway to ensure that the Development Agreement's terms matched those in the Section 106 Agreement. It was expected that the Development Agreement would be signed by the end of May 2013.

It was clarified that the Corporate Asset Management Plan was a strategic document and therefore did not have any direct financial impact. However individual properties within the Plan would have an impact and these would be detailed within any decision reports relating to a property.

67. Work Programme Update

The Commission considered a report providing an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2012-13 with particular reference to Working Groups of the Commission.

The Commission was informed that the Lead Member of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Working Group had written to the Leader of the Council to raise the Working Group's concerns about the different levies that a neighbouring local authority would be imposing on developments and the potential impacts that this might have on the Borough. It was noted that the Government were still publishing regulations in relation to the CIL something that was making the development of the CIL problematic. Consequently the Working Group would continue to monitor the situation and any material changes would be brought back to the Commission for comment.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be reflecting on the implications of the Francis Report on the review of activity at the Mid-Staffordshire Hospital Trust however it was acknowledged that reflection on the report's outcomes would help all members develop their roles further.

The Chairman of the Commission would be meeting all Directors to obtain their view of the work taking place in the coming year. Any relevant information would be fed back to the Commission.

The Commission noted the report.

CHAIRMAN

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