

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
6 OCTOBER 2022
6.30 – 8.27PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell, Temperton, Mrs Birch, Gibson, Mrs Mattick, Brossard, Gbadebo

Present virtually:

Councillors Porter, McLean and Mossom

Executive Members:

Councillors Birch, Harrison, Mrs Hayes, Heydon

Also Present:

Councillor Suki Hayes

In Attendance:

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, Bracknell Forest Council

Ann Moore, Assistant Director: Democratic & Registration Services, Bracknell Forest Council

Alison O'Meara, Head of Community Safety, Bracknell Forest Council

Superintendent Helen Kenny, Thames Valley Police

24. Apologies for absence were received from

Councillor Virgo and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

25. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 1 September 2022 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.

26. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

27. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

28. Public Participation

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

29. Community Safety

The presentation relating to Bracknell Forest CSP's progress report noted:

- The CSP has recently prepared some information resources. This includes a FAQ on the CSP, a FAQ on Anti-Social Behaviour and an infographic on how to report crime to the police and Crimestoppers.
- The crime survey for England and Wales is an important tool used to understand the true level of crime – a key feature of the survey is its ability to find out about crimes that aren't necessarily reported. Only 4 in 10 crimes are reported to the police so the survey offers a lot of value. Nationally, estimated crime continues to decrease
- Over the twelve months leading up to March 2022, Bracknell Forest Council had the 9th lowest level of recorded offences, out of 59 English unitary authorities.
- Most similar groups (MSGs) are groups of CSP areas that have been judged to be most similar to each other, based on analysis of demographics, and social and economic characteristics. Within their MSG, Bracknell Forest CSP had the 4th lowest levels of crime per 1,000 residents between Aug 2021 and July 2022.
- Crime trends across Thames Valley for 2021/22 demonstrated some reassuring figures – residential burglary saw a significant decrease of 40% over a 5-year average and a 23% decrease in personal robbery offenses over the same time period.
- Serious violence can be defined as the following: A person of 25 or younger in possession of a knife, any incident of violence, burglary, robbery, sexual offence, or public order offence that can be linked to a weapon (used, threatened or mentioned), serious assaults and supply of drug offences by a person of 25 or younger.
- Data taken from the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for 2021 shows that large urban areas have the highest rates of serious violence. Bracknell is 5th lowest and sits just above the rural CSP areas.
- Violence against the person crimes have increased in Bracknell Forest and the Thames Valley. It is important to understand the context behind these changes in trends. An example is that Bracknell has seen a significant rise in reported offences from a local secure hospital as a result of changes in partnership practices and streamlining of some of the processes.
- In the last HM Inspectorate of Constabulary PEEL inspection for 2020/21, Thames Valley Police (TVP) was graded Good for their crime data integrity (how crime is recorded). It has been a particular area of focus for TVP and, in turn, has led to a change in recording practices which could explain why Violence Against the Person trends have changed in the area.
- There was an 8% increase in knife crime in Bracknell Forest in 2021/22 which, in real numbers is an increase of 3 offences. Knife crime generally is quite low in Bracknell, in part due to the preventive work TVP do. There is an existing long-term operation on tackling serious violence prevention where the police work in partnership with the VRU TVP uses intelligence to target habitual knife carriers and proactive operations are carried out when there is a risk. There is also a long-term youth project to raise awareness of knife crime in schools
- There is additional scrutiny on all knife crime investigations to ensure they are investigated robustly, that there is the right level of supervision, and that the outcomes are appropriate.
- Despite being low, knife crime continues to be a top 3 priority for the area.
- Formal action taken against Domestic Abuse has gone up 12% in 2020/21 which is slightly higher than the TVP average of 10%. Domestic Abuse can be

difficult to prosecute so numbers may appear low. However, TVP are committed to continuing the improvement of outcomes.

- Supporting victims of Domestic Abuse is much more than just prosecuting the offender in court. Domestic Violence Protection Notices are a good way to ensure the victim has the right support to move forward. Police can apply to the court for a 28-day order to prevent an offender from doing a series of things including contacting the victim.
- Over the last 6 months, there has been a 167% increase in formal action taken against Sexual Offences.
- Tackling Rape and Other Sexual Offences is a priority in Bracknell Forest and the whole of the Thames Valley. On 26 September, a new team of detectives was established, and they are dedicated to improving outcomes for survivors of rape and serious sexual assault offences. The team will strive to ensure local investigations exhaust all lines of inquiries, maximize all legislative opportunities and make sure national practices are considered and used. The team will also work across the whole force area helping to progress investigations, offering bespoke advice and providing additional training. They also work closely with the Crown Prosecution Service on complex cases.
- The new team is led by a detective superintendent who is supported by a detective inspector, 3 detective sergeants and 3 detective constables. The team is very experienced in rape investigations. The introduction of the team demonstrates the importance TVP is putting on improving investigations in these areas.
- Newly amended legislation has increased certain powers available to police officers when dealing with unauthorised encampments. This includes the power of arrest and the power to seize property and vehicles. The types of harm have broadened, and the period of non-return has increased.
- In Bracknell, there have been 4 unauthorized encampments since the start of the year, compared to 15 in Wokingham. Out of those 4, TVP have only needed to use the new powers on 1 occasion.
- The first key focus of the CSP for 2022/23 is to tackle exploitation and serious violence across all ages. Children who are at risk of exploitation are overseen by the Council's Makesafe team and Ofsted's recent inspection of the Council's children services highlighted effective risk management meetings and sharing of information.
- This year a new triage system has been introduced which ensures every child who is screened is discussed at a multi-agency meeting. This adds an extra level of scrutiny around decision-making and ensures there is no duplication.
- The Council has always been proactive in safeguarding under 18s but the CSP is looking to address a gap in over 18s. Thanks to the VRU, the CSP now has access to data on habitual knife carriers and individuals at risk. A group will be piloted this month to look at both of these issues. This will be a multi-agency initiative and the first time the approach has been adopted for this age group in the Bracknell Forest area.
- The new Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 includes a serious violence duty which will require local partnerships (the CSP) to collaborate to prevent serious violence through a strategic needs assessment, and a strategy.
- The CSP is alert to the risk of some sponsors exploiting guests of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. There have been some case studies from across the country which, with recommendations on how to prevent those situations from occurring, have been shared with BFC officers. Useful guidance is increasingly being developed in various languages which is being shared through our guest and sponsor networks including practitioners. The CSP has

also developed prompt cards on signs to spot, questions to ask and what to do should they suspect that a guest is being exploited.

- The CSP recognises the importance of staying on top of emerging themes within exploitation. An example of this is child financial exploitation. The Children's Society has said nationally there is insufficient recognition and intervention on this problem. Consequently, the CSP is exploring how they can build awareness amongst colleagues and partners at a local level.
- The second key focus of the CSP is to reduce town centre anti-social behaviour and crime. There was a steep increase in this in the second half of last year. This was mostly associated with a group of young people many of whom were known to services due to their difficult home environments. Preventative and diversionary activity was prioritised through a program called Act Now, which was initiated by police in conjunction with a local youth engagement provider. 14 of the most vulnerable children were engaged in mentoring and activities focusing on respect, decision-making, and self-confidence. In addition to this, the children attended coffee mornings and charity car washes as part of a community engagement project. The program was well received and an extension of it ran into the summer holidays which was funded by the police and the local authority.
- The CSP became aware that some neighbouring authorities were also experiencing similar patterns of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their town centres, and we were supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to submit a consortium bid against the Government's safer streets fund, which was successful. The project will shortly begin and will comprise detached youth work, mentoring and diversion and the creation of safe and inclusive spaces for young people. This will run from October 2022 until September 2023.
- The CSP has been ensuring that premises act within the terms of their licenses and that they work with the CSP on reducing ASB. An example of this is the CSP's work with McDonald's in recent months. This saw problem-solving work take place including the training of all managers on conflict resolution, closing off the upper level after 7pm, an incident log being implemented and banning letters being issued. In this and other cases, the CSP worked with the police, the Lexicon, the Public Protection Partnership and the premise management to ensure a robust set of measures were introduced. This led to a reduction in demand on the police and the Lexicon security staff, increased confidence by premise staff, and a more enjoyable experience for visitors.
- To increase the capacity for enforcement of some police powers within the town centre, AMB (the company appointed by the Lexicon to provide security services) has applied for a range of delegated powers under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). It will consist of 9 powers and 6 members of AMB will be trained. Commencement of these powers should start from mid-October.
- The CSP has been working with Police, Housing, the Rough Sleeper Team, Youth Services, Parking Management, and Street Cleansing on issues associated with a rough sleeper behaving criminally, organised begging and organised busking.
- The CSP has seen 8 fixed penalty notices issued by police in recent months to vehicles driving across Bond Square, most commonly by food delivery vehicles and the Lexicon has been instrumental in supporting with vehicle registration numbers.
- The Town Centre Partnership Problem-Solving Group (PPSG) meets monthly to resolve the more complex cases of crime and disorder and resolved 16 such issues in 21/22.

- The opening of the Deck (hopefully in 2024) will likely increase footfall into the town centre and as some of the new establishments are going to be alcohol-led, the CSP will need to ensure the town centre is prepared for any additional demand on their services. Discussions have started on this and the CSP will be working on it in the coming months.
- The third key focus area is reducing harm caused by domestic abuse. There are 2 parts to this, first is the management of perpetrators and enforcement. Bracknell Forest has 4 perpetrator-focused initiatives. The first is called MATAAC (Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination) which focuses on perpetrators who pose the highest risk. In 21/22, the group worked with 47 cases.
- Operation Vocal is a police-run operation which focuses on perpetrators who won't consent to MATAAC but still pose a current and repeat risk.
- DAPS (Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service) is a 1to1 perpetrator programme delivered by the Council which monitors reoffending levels too. Over the last 4 years, 10 perpetrators have reoffended out of 87 clients that have completed the programme.
- When an individual doesn't fulfil the criteria for existing services, Plain Talking can fill the gap. It's a free 1to1 service available to individuals who recognise their relationship is becoming problematic and the work includes identification of trigger point, communication skills, and conflict resolution.
- A new program called Who's in Charge was started in autumn 2021 specifically for adolescents who are violent or abusive to their parents. This program has been partly funded by the OPCC's Community Safety Fund and, to date, 22 families have accessed the program with parents reporting less violence and fewer callouts to the police.
- The second part of the third focus is to make further progress with the 3-year Safe Accommodation Strategy. It was launched 9 months ago, and in that time, a new sanctuary scheme has been launched, a DA Specialist has been employed to be based in Housing as a single point of contact for victims and other partners and agencies, the Refuge provision has been retendered, and an Emergency Survivor Fund has been launched.
- There remains a lot of ambitious and challenging work to do over the next two years of the strategy. This includes setting up reciprocal arrangements for use of refuge, dispersed and short-stay accommodation and increasing options in the private rental sector for survivors
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is reported to the police but also to the Council's Community Safety Service. Over the last year, the Service has received over 234 queries and, while some are quickly resolved through signposting to the lead agency, others are far more complex and can take many months to resolve. Most of the ASB issues comprise drug-related concerns, noise and harassment.
- If the lead agency is unable to resolve the issue, the case can be referred to the partnership problem-solving groups (PPSGs). If there is a substantial case involving many partners, a task and finish group is formed. In 2021/22, 44 complex cases of crime and anti-social behaviour were resolved by PPSGs, 43 the year before.
- The ASB in Parks and Open Spaces group has been running since 2020 and is another multi-partnered approach involving Youth Services, Fire, Rangers, and Parish Councils. This summer there has been an increase in arsons and the Fire Service have led on awareness-raising, targeted work in schools and 1to1 work with people involved in the offences. They have also been proactive in water safety messaging.
- Partnership problem-solving example 1 – Vehicle ASB. Background: Late night/early morning vehicle ASB at Sainsbury's, Ringmead, Birch Hill. There

were numerous reports to police and Community Safety. Approaches to the vehicle owners took place but were unsuccessful. Therefore, Community Safety and Police held discussions with Sainsbury's management and Mitie (facilities management) to explore solutions. An ANPR car parking system was installed at the car park and police patrolling was increased, particularly on the days of the week and at times when the problem was known to be most acute. No further reports of vehicle ASB at this location.

- Partnership problem-solving example 2 – A person with medical and mental health needs who had escalating problematic behaviours was causing high demand and alarm across services and the community. They lived independently with no social care needs. They were difficult to engage and declined mental health support. A single point of contact was established to connect professionals and a profile was raised amongst all relevant partners including the housing provider. The Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) reviewed all possible care pathways, and a referral was made to Social Prescribing and Age Concern. A process was agreed upon to collect evidence from partners to support enforcement if required. The outcomes from this work included: The housing provider organised a lock change to secure house (keys had been lost), essential maintenance at the property was carried out, a food bank delivery was arranged, a deep clean organised, an independent living assessment was organised to support the move to supported living accommodation, a pay-as-you-go phone was provided for contact with support agencies, a re-referral to Adult Social Care to explore a support package while the move was facilitated took place and a working group was formed to look at developing better working practices and protocols due to the increase of similar referrals.

The following questions were asked:

- In response to a request for actual figures on crime (specifically stalking) rather than percentages, Superintendent Helen Kenny agreed to include those in next year's presentation.
- In response to a query of clarification on how many sexual offenses there were, Helen Kenny explained that 26 cases are actual offenses recorded but the 3 mentioned previously were the number of outcomes that were detected.
- A query was raised on domestic burglary trends and Helen Kenny detailed that there has been an overall reduction taken over a five-year average. Numbers were very low during Covid due to people being at home more often so less opportunity for domestic burglary. However, now people are starting to spend less time at home again there is now an increasing opportunity for burglary.
- In response to a question on whether a burglary offence involving a knife would be recorded as a knife crime or burglary statistic, Helen Kenny stated it would be recorded as a knife crime.
- A query was put to Helen Kenny on whether specific crimes, such as theft of catalytic converters, skew statistics. The Superintendent explained while it is very specific, it still would be recorded as a theft from a motor vehicle.
- A question was asked on whether Thames Valley Police have the resources available to visit a property that has experienced a burglary to which Helen Kenny detailed that TVP have always attended burglaries to residential properties.
- A comment was made on how effective the new powers had been locally in tackling unauthorised encampments.
- A query was raised on why overall crime for Bracknell was lower than the TVP when the majority of the specific crime statistics in the presentation appeared

to be higher. Helen Kenny explained not all specific crime statistics were shown in the presentation as it deliberately focused on crimes that had increased.

- In response to a query on why it appears that low-level crime in Great Hollands isn't being resolved, Helen Kenny stated that the local police area has limited resources and they have to prioritise certain crimes based on threat, risk, and harm. The Superintendent stressed the importance for communities to report all incidents as the intelligence can shape longer-term prevention work. Alison O'Meara reinforced the importance of reporting all crimes as it can help with referrals to targeted ASB projects and referred to the infographic on how to report a crime for it details various ways to do so.
- A query was asked whether TVP responds to every reported crime which Helen Kenny stated the force aims to do but it can depend on what type of offence is being reported. For instance, if a very low-level crime such as criminal damage which had not been witnessed, is received where there are no viable lines of inquiry, it would be recorded and given a crime number but that victim will be told at the time of reporting that the crime will be filed and there will be no further investigation. If a crime requires an investigation, then the victim will always be updated. Victim support is a priority.
- In response to a query on whether data on a wider range of crime types and figures could be shared with the Commission, Helen Kenny agreed to consider doing so for the next update but explained that doing so would mean the presentation would be considerably longer and may come at the expense of other areas of focus.
- In response to a query on how the CSP resources mentioned are distributed, Alison O'Meara explained that they have only been recently completed but a comms campaign will shortly begin which will ensure the resources are distributed to the community both as a hard copy and electronically.
- A query was raised on whether online and offline fraud is a responsibility of the CSP which Alison O'Meara stated it is.
- When asked what the 8% increase in knife crime in Bracknell was in real figures, Helen Kenny explained it is an increase of 3 offences. Helen stated they will take on board the feedback regarding how the data is shared in terms of percentages/exact figures and agreed to share with the Commission the exact numbers on knife crime as a follow-up.
- In response to a request for clarification on outcomes, Helen Kenny elaborated that while outcomes can mean both out-of-court disposals and court disposals, it is when someone is charged i.e. positive disposals and not actual conviction rate.
- A comment was made on how useful the presentation was, particularly the partnership work in the town centre, and the two case studies.

30. **Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

The Chair of the Education, Skills and Growth Panel introduced the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities review report and the following points were made:

- A discussion took place among members of the Commission on some of the wording of the recommendations and it was agreed the report must not be delayed going to the Executive but could be amended to include the sentence 'good and timely communication is essential'.
- The Commission was reassured the Panel could review progress of the recommendations as part of the work program.

- It was noted by Councillors that the report supports the SEND action plan but from the viewpoint of Councillors which was developed by speaking to parents, schools and officers, and the recommendations reflect this.
- Councillors thanked Louise Connelly, Governance and Scrutiny Officer for her hard work supporting Councillors during this review.

The Commission endorsed the recommendations in the Special Educations Needs and Disabilities review report for submission to the Executive on 18 October 2022.

31. Work Programme Update

Each Panel Chair in attendance provided a verbal update on work programme progress.

Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Executive approved the recommendations in Environment and Communities Panel's report on Integrated Enforcement.

The Panel's next review is on Enforcement Strategy and the first meeting will be on the 26th October.

Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel

It was noted the first meeting of the Panel's review on Child Criminal Exploitation had taken place and had been very useful. Other meeting dates for the review were being finalised.

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Health and Care Panel will be reviewing the Blude Bade recommendations and the Chair had received an update from the director of People.

It was noted the Panel are currently finalising the scope for the review on Adult Safeguarding.

32. Governance and Scrutiny team update

The Commission noted that Kirsty Hunt, Governance and Scrutiny manager, was leaving and thanked her for her time working with them to develop the delivery of Overview and Scrutiny.

CHAIRMAN