

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14 June 2016

Report Title: Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of
Community Safety

Report By: Simon Hubbard
Director of Operational Services

Purpose of Report

To report the work of the review team and recommendations arising from its review of community safety.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the committee support the review team's recommendations**
- 2. That the committee thank those involved in this review**

Reasons for Recommendations

To consider the outcomes and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Community Safety which was undertaken as part of the 2015/16 work programme.

Introduction

1. At the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in June 2015, members agreed to undertake a review of community safety as part of their 2015/16 work programme.
2. Community safety is an essential part of creating a cohesive and stable community in the town. It is also integral to the council's broader regeneration ambitions for Hastings and St Leonards. Indeed, a number of the regeneration activities to date would not have been possible without earlier interventions to reduce the level of crime.
3. The purpose of the review has been to examine the council's role in terms of existing and future community safety provision. A copy of the Project Initiation Document is attached at Appendix A.
4. The review has been undertaken in a challenging financial climate for the council and partners and in this climate a key part of this review has been to review what community safety activities and targets are realistic.

5. The review team members were:

Councillor Martin Clarke

Councillor Alan Roberts

Councillor Phil Scott

Councillor Mike Turner

Councillor Emily Westley (Chair)

6. Officer support was provided by:

Simon Hubbard, Director of Operational Services

Mike Hepworth, Assistant Director of Environment and Place

Mark Horan, Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager

Mike Fagan, Community Safety Manager

John Whittington, Community Safety Manager

Michael Courts, Corporate and Democratic Services Officer

Community Safety in Hastings

7. In order to understand the current landscape in respect of community safety, members first considered performance over recent years.

8. Public perception of crime and community safety in Hastings has been heavily influenced by a number of high-profile crimes and incidents in the late 1990's / early 2000's. At that time the crime rate per 1000 of the population in Hastings was amongst the highest nationally.
9. The police force in Sussex was also perceived as being under resourced to deal with the community safety issues facing the town at that time.
10. Since then and as a result of significant investment by the council, police and partner agencies in the voluntary sector, the total number of reported crimes in Hastings has been on a downward trend.
11. In April 2014, the Home Office introduced new standards for the recording of crime, which resulted in a short term increase in the levels of crime recorded. However, latest figures suggest that this is plateauing.

Interventions by the Council

12. The council has proactively engaged with partners on a number of issues to support community safety.
13. Hastings Borough Council was one of the first authorities to utilise devolved powers from the DVLA to remove untaxed and abandoned vehicles which had often been used as 'pool cars' for criminals and become targets for anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
14. In January 2014 the council has launched the Reduce the Strength Campaign, which aims to limit the sale of high strength beer, lager and cider in order to tackle street drinking and associated disorder. The initiative is progressing well and to date includes 44 licensed premises across the seafront wards. This has resulted in a big reduction in street drinking but more clearly needs to be done.
15. The council has also invested in upgrades to its CCTV system, which will enable it to sustain local monitoring. Effective CCTV monitoring has also proved effective in reducing public place crime and providing public reassurance.
16. Upgrading the CCTV system is an important way in which the council can help to ensure public safety as the town continues to host a full programme of events throughout the year.
17. A full list of interventions by the council to support community safety is attached at (Appendix B)
18. More recently the Hastings & Rother CCG have allocated funds to the Council as part of their 'Reducing Health Inequalities' project. Some of this money has been directed towards new interventions to provide additional support to victims of domestic violence presenting at the Conquest Hospital and at GP practices. Additional mental health and GP support is also being funded to respond to the complex needs of members of the street community thereby reducing the impact they have on the wider community.

Safer Hastings Partnership

19. The Safer Hastings Partnership (SHP) continues to support closer working between agencies with community safety responsibilities. The partnership has identified its priorities based on the specific issues facing the town; they include combating alcohol and violent crime, domestic violence, substance misuse, hate crime and environmental crime. The partnership is also supporting efforts to improve road safety and reduce reoffending, as well as participating in the 'Prevent' strategy
20. It is important that the SHP reflects broader changes to the community safety landscape, particularly in respect of local policing. The Hastings and Rother crime reduction partnerships will be undertaking a six month pilot merger, to reflect the structure of the new policing district. Wealden, Eastbourne and Lewes crime reduction partnerships have also agreed to participate in similar pilot. These pilots could result in the numbers of Crime Reduction Partnerships reducing in the county from five to two.
21. During the pilot, the crime reduction partnership will need to ensure that resources are focused on the areas of greatest need.
22. The review team were in favour of the pilot between Hastings and Rother crime reduction partnerships. However, it is clear that any move to form a single tier crime reduction partnership covering the whole of East Sussex would not be supported.
23. The SHP is currently considering the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders in key locations around the borough. The orders could be a significant tool in dealing with instances of begging, street drinking and other offences in public areas, such as dog fouling. However, there are significant resource implications associated with enforcing Public Space Protection Orders, which is challenging in the context of reduced budgets for the council, police and other partners.
24. Over the next year, the SHP will also need to consider the outcomes of a recent Home Office review of gang culture in seaside towns.

Policing

25. The review welcomed Chief Inspector Paul Phelps, who provided an update on the Sussex Local Policing Model.
26. Sussex Police are required to achieve savings of fifty seven million pounds over the next four years. Further savings of seven million pounds are likely to be required as a result of the government's spending review.
27. Sussex Police have used good practice from other policing authorities to develop a new model for policing which will assess each case based on potential, threat, harm and risk and protect the most vulnerable groups in society.
28. A new Resolution Centre has also been set up to deal with non-emergency enquiries.

29. The role of Police Community Support Officer's (PCSO's) will change as part of the new structure, incorporating new skills and responsibilities. There will continue to be a named PCSO for each ward in the town, but the ratio of these posts will be focused on the most vulnerable areas.
30. Neighbourhood policing will also need to take account of new methods of community engagement, particularly the growth of social media.
31. A Police Hub has recently been opened in Central St Leonards and initial findings indicate that this is helping to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour and street drinking in the area. However, there is currently no commitment to maintain the hub into the long term due to the local policing model changing and the ongoing financial reductions facing Sussex Police, which may jeopardise this progress. The council has also previously subsidised the policing hub by meeting the cost of business rates on the premises.
32. The budget reductions are due to be introduced incrementally so there will be an opportunity to monitor their impact.
33. In the past reductions by one agency to community safety provision may have been mitigated by other partners. However, given the level of reductions across a range of agencies, this will not now be possible.
34. It will also be important to monitor the impact of the new policing structure on public perceptions of community safety. Sussex Police acknowledged that its partners will play a key role in maintaining the image of Hastings as a safe place to live, work and study.

Changes to Adult Social Care

35. Throughout the review, members have been mindful of the significant changes to Adult Social Care services provided by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), as a result of reductions to their budget.
36. The review team were updated on the council's response to the East Sussex County Council budget consultation. In particular, members expressed concern at reductions to mental health services and assisted living facilities, which would impact on the most vulnerable groups in the community.
37. Although the planned reductions did not proceed to the extent originally anticipated, both the council and the police have raised concerns about reductions to the budget for the Seaview project. The full impact on community safety of changes to service provision by Seaview may not be clear for some time, and it is therefore important that the joint Hastings and Rother crime reduction partnership continues to monitor this matter closely.
38. The work of the Seaview project directly impacts community safety, by supporting vulnerable people with complex needs. A number of other related projects by other agencies, including the Clinical Commissioning Group, are also delivered through Seaview and there are concerns that this might be put at risk by the budget reductions.

Outlook

39. The activities by the council, police and their partners over recent years have impacted the rate of crime in Hastings, improved community safety and supported public confidence.
40. However, the social conditions in some parts of the town remain similar to that of the late 1990's / early 2000's. Therefore, if partners withdraw resources from supporting community safety, there is no reason to suppose that the same trends experienced at that time may not gradually begin to emerge again.
41. It is therefore important that the council continues to monitor community safety issues closely.

Recommendation 1

A copy of the final report of the review be circulated to key partners including; the Leader of East Sussex County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner, Member of Parliament and the Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendation 2

To write to the Police and Crime Commissioner in support of the Police Hub in Central St Leonards

Recommendation 3

To support the work of the Safer Hastings Partnership (a list of council interventions is appended to this report)

Recommendation 4

To support the merger of Hastings and Rother crime reduction partnerships to reflect the structure of the policing district. During the pilot the crime reduction partnership will need to ensure that resources are focused on the areas of greatest need. However, the review team were not in favour of a combined crime reduction covering the whole of East Sussex

Recommendation 5

To highlight the important work carried out by Seaview in supporting vulnerable people in the town. The joint Hastings and Rother crime reduction partnership will monitor the impact on community safety of any changes to service provision by Seaview, as a result of reductions to their budget.

Recommendation 6

That Hastings Borough Council continues to allocate funding towards community safety interventions.

Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Appendix A - Project Initiation Document
Appendix B - Update on Council Interventions

Officer to Contact

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