

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 22 November 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)
Councillor R Thay (Deputy Chair)
Councillor M Ali
Councillor J Blundell (Substitute for Councillor G Ridley)
Councillor J Gardiner (Substitute for Councillor P Male)
Councillor M Mutton (Substitute for Councillor C Miks)
Councillor E Ruane
Councillor R Singh
Councillor CE Thomas

Other Members (Invited): Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities)

Employees (by Service Area):

Education and Skills J Essex, R Sugars
Children's Services R Eaves, S Graves, N Jeffreys
Law and Governance A Chowns, G Holmes, C Taylor
Public Health & Wellbeing C Ryder

Others Present: R Chapman, NHS
D Lyons, R Tyrer, West Midlands Police

Apologies: Councillor G Duggins
Councillor AS Khan
Councillor P Male
Councillor C Miks
Councillor G Ridley

Public Business

30. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

31. To agree the minutes of the previous meetings held on 25 October, 2023 and 6 November, 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2023 and 6th November 2023, were agreed and signed as a true record.

32. **Matters Arising**

Further to Minute 20 headed “UKBIC Ltd Annual Performance Report year ended 31 March 2023 and UKBIC 2023/24 Forecasts”, Members requested that the UKBIC information be shared.

Further to Minute 28 “Amendment of the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)”, the Chair confirmed correspondence had been sent by the Cabinet Member for Policing & Equalities to the Police Chief Constable. The response would be circulated to Members.

33. **Serious Violence Duty (SVD)**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee received a Briefing Note and presentation of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, informing Members of the Serious Violence Duty, which imposes a legal duty on the local authority to tackle serious violence using a partnership approach and to also advise the Committee on the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) a matched funded intervention project to work with people aged 14 or more who are at risk or who were experiencing violence.

In response to rising levels of knife crime and violence across the UK, the Government placed a new duty on specified authorities (of which the local authority is one) to take a partnership approach to tackling serious violence.

The Duty, which came into force in January 2023, arises from the **Police, Crime, Courts, and Sentencing Act 2022** and recognises that complex issues like violence require a multifaceted approach with a range of partners taking responsibility and action.

The specified authorities include Local Authorities, Police, Fire and Rescue, Integrated Care Boards, Justice (probation & Youth Justice). Other key stakeholders should be consulted and have a duty to cooperate with the specified authorities, this includes education partners and prisons.

In the West Midlands, the Police and Crime Commissioner were responsible for developing and publishing a response strategy informed by the data gathering and analysis work which had taken place across all 7 local authority areas.

Coventry partners had been working in close cooperation with the regional violence reduction partnership (VRP) to prepare for the Duty since 2022. Using the local plans, the Police & Crime Commissioner would submit a regional response to the Home Office by 31/01/2024, the deadline. The Regional response strategy must be reviewed annually thereafter to ensure that responses to violence take account of changing circumstances.

The VRP hosted a series of online events to raise awareness of the new Duty. The VRP also worked with Crest Advisory to assess the regions readiness; the region was assessed as “preparing.”

Crest Advisory had identified 4 key factors which impact violence and were common to all 7 local authority areas:

- Education
- Substance Misuse
- Demography
- Deprivation

Other factors of note which were common to the whole region were:

- Early identification of Adverse Childhood Experiences (trauma) was a priority.
- Violence was heavily concentrated in a small number of areas.
- The need for robust commissioning processes and better processes to measure impact of commissioned services.
- Three key headlines from communities: Feelings of safety (after dark); gaps in responding to vulnerability; and concerns about addressing the drivers of violence.
- The importance of the educational sector in addressing key risk factors effectively and the need to understand what works in education settings.

The VRP had prepared a draft 3-year violence reduction strategy which had identified 5 overarching themes:

- Prevention across the life course (the public health approach)
- Development of a sustainable, community and youth led approach to violence reduction.
- Building closer regional partnerships that supports innovation.
- Development of a West Midlands wide movement that aims for a violence free region.
- Upscale delivery of evidence-based programmes in schools.

Coventry had completed a strategic needs assessment in March 2023. Key findings and recommendations were identified and based on this a local draft action plan had been developed. This draft plan was shared with the VRP who used it to inform their 3-year draft strategy.

The key themes for consideration which emerged in the Coventry needs assessment were as follows:

- Identify those who would benefit from earlier intervention.
- Partners should make better use of data to assist in the identification of those in need of support (subject to general data protection safeguards).
- Coventry partners should review their response to “hidden harms” e.g., trauma in childhood which may lead to adverse outcomes over time, including higher risk of violence.
- Policing colleagues should continue to prepare for and mitigate seasonal variations or patterns in weapon related violence. A priority is to address knife possessions and firearms discharges in the city.
- Better use of data (following a public health approach) should inform commissioning making decisions across the partnership.

- The city should work closely with the emergency department at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire to support those who have sustained injuries due to violence.
- The partners should ensure that wherever possible they are acting early and addressing the root causes of violence, supporting those most at risk and monitoring the outcomes of the work through the Police and Crime Board.
- The partnership should communicate internally and externally how they are tackling serious violence and any positive.

The city had taken a proactive approach to tackling violence since 2019. There were several initiatives across the city to engage with young people to try and divert them away from violence or prevent them becoming exploited. One such initiative is the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV).

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)

The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) came about through a substantial investment from the Youth Endowment Fund which the partnership assisted the police in securing.

West Midlands Police had also made a substantial investment in the project in terms of staff. The team consisted of police staff who were now specifically working within the CIRV team. The project went live in April in both Coventry and Wolverhampton. The project was subject to rigorous academic evaluation (paid for by the Youth Endowment Fund) to determine whether the intervention was effective. From July to September there were over 260 referrals to CIRV. Not all referrals fit the criteria, and some, whilst fitting the criteria, may refuse to engage as the process was voluntary. Where someone referred was out of area or unsuitable for any other reason, they were referred to alternative sources of support. As the project was still in the early stages, it was too soon to discuss outcomes for those referred.

The CIRV process was complex but was primarily designed to engage anyone over 14 years and connect them to an exit pathway from gangs, violence and county lines. It also coordinated disruptive functions for those who were primarily adults who had been referred, who were criminally active yet fail or refuse to engage.

The process involved the following steps:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| Step 1 | Referral |
| Step 2 | Multi Agency Triage |
| Step 3 | CIRV Offer |
| Step 4 | Teachable/Reachable Moment |
| Step 5 | Relationship Building |
| Step 6 | Progress |
| Step 7 | Sequencing |
| Step 8 | Placement and Deselection |

Health Inequalities Impact

Tackling violence and the root causes of violence should be a priority for all services in Coventry. Based on Home Office data from 2018, each episode of violence with injury costs the public purse £14,050, with the actual cost likely to be higher in 2023/24 given inflation and other cost increases.

Violence undermines people's health by causing injury, disability and premature death. The mental health impact for individuals as well as the communities they live in cannot be underestimated. Trauma is linked to higher risk of violence and breaking this cycle is important. There is a strong link between areas of deprivation and higher rates of crime. Coventry as a city ranks highly on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and as across the city, higher than average levels of violence are seen.

Addressing the root causes of violence including: poverty, parental neglect, childhood adversity, living in a high crime neighbourhood, substance misuse and low levels of educational attainment/school engagement, should improve health outcomes across the population.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, Councillor P Akhtar, welcomed the Serious Violence Duty, thanking officers for their work. Whilst recognising the need for a public health approach, Councillor P Akhtar called for further and resource in order to eliminate serious violence altogether.

In considering the Briefing note and presentation, the Committee questioned and received responses from the Temporary Chief Superintendent of Coventry Police and officers in respect of the matters summarised below:

- The timescales for implementation of the programme and assurances that the Police & Crime Commissioner would meet the partnership response submission deadline of 31st January 2024.
- Links to help from domestic abuse teams were strong along with robust membership on the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.
- There had been 361 referrals into the CIRV programme to date, 51 of which were being worked with by Coventry partners.
- There were 109 individuals on the 'at risk' list – individuals who would not engage.
- Demand for youth provision in the city outweighed supply however, officers focused resource in the areas most needed and worked closely with community youth groups.
- The measures identified for the Serious Violence Duty was: "the number of homicides, the number of police recorded knife crimes and the number of presentations at A&E where an injury has been caused by a sharp object".
- A local focus had been to develop measures for the impact of preventative activities. Officers were working in partnership with the teams such as Horizon and Early Help to measure effectiveness.
- The Police and Crime Board were redeveloping measurables to ensure effectiveness.

- Engagement with schools to collect data was taking place. A Schools Violence Reduction Lead officer was working closely with the Programme Manager, Violence Reduction and the Police.
- Engagement with schools across the city was effective and specialists such as a Schools Violence Reduction Lead, Schools officers and early help hubs were all in place.
- School exclusion data was available however, further investigation was taking place into reasons for exclusion from schools across the city where a weapon was the used.
- The representation of girls in the youth justice system was 10 – 15%.
- A girls' journey to crime was usually different from a boys' and an intervention plan was currently being developed. Mentoring projects were particularly effective.
- Post release programmes in place. All individuals were assigned a mentor and a reassessment package for individuals up to the age of 30 years was available through the St Giles charity.
- Approximately £1M over the next 3 years had been secured to from the Youth Endowment Fund for investment in local services.
- CIRV was a vehicle to enable individuals to exit gangs as it provided a pragmatic response.
- Early intervention along with gang injunctions had fragmented gangs in the city. Also, West Midlands Police had invested in SOCEX; a preventative programme.
- Officer recruited into CIRV had undergone a 3-week comprehensive training programme including cultural awareness training.
- Hate crime linked to the SVD was not a theme that had arisen from the Needs Assessment.
- There was now a more localised policing structure in place.
- Since April last year there had been a 7% reduction in crime overall, a reduction of 6.5% in serious violence and a reduction of 42% in knife crime in the city.
- St Giles had been commissioned to involve local people in the rehabilitation journey of offenders in their communities.
- Violence prevention presentations were being delivered to faith groups in certain areas of the city and safeguarding guidance was available to faith groups.
- West Midlands Police were volunteering with and mentoring young offenders on a voluntary basis.
- Should one child in a family commits serious violence, a 'whole family approach' is taken through the CIRV programme.
- Coventry and Wolverhampton were chosen for the CIRV programme due strength of partnerships and both cities having a high level of serious violence.
- Opportunities for children not in education to progress into employment were available via careers advisors and a job finder.
- Sufficient resources were available to manage demand through the CIRV programme.

Members of the Committee requested the following information:

- A report on the Serious Violence Duty to be brought back to Committee in 6 months time.

- Re-developed measurables from the Police and Crime Board.
- School exclusion data to be reported back to Scrutiny Board 2.
- Ensuring schools were aware of the Home Office Guidance

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- 1. Note the information provided in the Briefing Note.**
- 2. Receive a further report on progress in 6 months time.**

34. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2023/24

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered their Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee notes the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24 with the inclusion of the following items:

- **A report on the Serious Violence Duty to be brought back to Committee in 6 months.**

35. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.00 pm)