

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 10 March 2021
This meeting was held remotely

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor C Miks
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor AS Khan Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

Other Representative: Commander Mike O'Hara, West Midlands Police
Charlotte Powell, West Midlands Police
Simon Hensley, West Midlands Police

Employees:

V Castree, Law and Governance
C Hickin, Head of Environmental Services
G Holmes, Law and Governance

Public Business

53. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

54. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February, 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

55. Coventry Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment

The Committee were provided with information about the Strategic Assessment and the priorities of the Police and Crime Board. Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Commander Mike O'Hara, Simon Hensley and Charlotte Powell, West Midlands Police.

Councillor AS Khan introduced the item, informing the Committee that the Strategic Assessment was used to identify trends and anticipate future issues to address, setting priorities for the Police and Crime Board to discuss.

Commander O'Hara of West Midlands Police provided the context of COVID-19 and stated that the medium- and long-term effects of the virus, and associated lockdowns, would become clearer over time.

Members asked a number of questions and received the following responses:

- The consequences of increased alcohol use, through lockdown and beyond, including the public health, third sector and public sector partner responses should be considered at a future meeting
- The increase in serious crime was a complex issue which is why long term strategies, such as the 10-year violence reduction strategy, had been implemented. Increased efforts in enforcement activity could have contributed to an increase in recorded crime rates, but there were also a number of other factors to consider.
- Officers would consider ways to get a more representative response to the Crime Survey.
- The police did a substantial amount of partnership work to support children and young people. This included work with schools, including school-based police panels, and work with Early Help and Family Hubs. This used a trauma informed approach and recognised the importance of early intervention. School Heads, teachers and staff were able to access training on a wide variety of vulnerabilities facing children and young people including criminal exploitation as both victims and perpetrators.
- There was a dedicated police officer for restorative justice. There was good reporting available on restorative justice which would be included in future strategic assessments.
- Drug activity was taken very seriously as it was one of the key drivers for exploitation, violence and acquisitive crime.
- The police have a strong and robust position towards serious crime. This included working with the regional cannabis disposal team on the issue of cannabis farms and addressing the links with organised crime, health and safety as well as vulnerable people operating the farms.
- Police resourcing was the strongest it had been for the past three years, helped by the national policing uplift.
- There were 97 dedicated neighbourhood constables and 55 PCSO's across the city, as well as other city-wide teams and response officers, investigators, covert and operational officers. There were between 170-200 officers directly under the management of the Coventry Commander.
- Flytipping had increased during lockdown, following a decline in 2019, but was now seeing a decrease again in each quarter.
- Conviction rates were difficult to record as sometimes a conviction could be a significant time after the offence took place. Recordings of detections were an administrative process. A conviction was when a case has gone to court and the offender found guilty.
- Sexual violence statistics included those offences reported through voluntary organisations such as CRASAC, if the victim wanted to report it. Conviction rates for rape and sexual violence were low nationally and this was a concern. It was important that victims come forward and report offences.
- There was a dedicated police officer embedded in the City of Culture team and cybersecurity was considered, as well as organised crime, as a risk. They were working nationally and testing systems to ensure they were mitigated

- The strategic assessment enabled the Police and Crime Board to take a strategic approach and determine priorities such as domestic violence and the 10-year strategy. It meant they could look forward rather than just reacting.
- The health and wellbeing of officers was a priority and there were several initiatives to support this including forums to raise concerns as well as trauma informed approaches for staff. Open lines of communication were key.
- Begging had been a challenge and the police had been working with the Council to address the issue. Cases were dealt with at an individual level looking at background, accommodation and drug and alcohol issues. There had been an impact on homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Increase in harassment was mainly due to changes in categorisation of the data which altered in 2018. It included sending messages which had increased during lockdown.

Cllr AS Khan thanked the officers and the police for the work that had gone into the Strategic Assessment. This thanks was echoed by the Chair and the rest of the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The following items be added to the work programme for 2021/22:

- i. **Alcohol related issues including work with public health and third sector partners as well as the police**
- ii. **Youth Violence**
- iii. **Domestic violence and abuse.**

56. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2020/2021 and Outstanding Issues

The Committee considered their Work Programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2020/21 be noted and the meeting on 21st April be given to an item on Climate Change. Domestic Violence and Abuse would be deferred to 2021/22.

57. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.25 am)