

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 19 April 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair)

Councillor M Ali
Councillor R Auluck
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Gardiner (Substitute for Councillor P Male)
Councillor J Innes
Councillor J Lepoidevin (Substitute for Councillor G Ridley)
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Councillor G Duggins, Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership
Councillors J O'Boyle and D Welsh, St Michaels Ward Councillors (For Minute 56 below)

Employees (by Directorate):

Interim Chief Executive: K Nelson

Law and Governance: S Bennett, V Castree, T Robinson

Public Health and Wellbeing: A Duggal (Director), J Ross

Streetscene and Regulatory Services: J Adams, C Hickin, L Nagle, B Massey

Others present: Chief Superintendent P Henrick, Superintendent R Tyrer, A Patel, West Midlands Police

Apologies: Councillors P Male, C Miks and G Ridley

Public Business

52. Declarations of Interest

The Committee noted that Councillor J Lepoidevin's daughter and Councillor D Welsh's partner both worked for West Midlands Police.

53. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March, 2023, were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

54. **West Midlands Police - Update on Local Policing**

The Committee received a Briefing Note, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which provided an update on local policing in Coventry.

Chief Superintendent Peter Henrick and Superintendent Ronan Tyrer and Anant Patel, West Midlands Police (WMP), attended the meeting for consideration of this item.

The presentation outlined in detail:-

- The new Local Policing Model introduced by the Chief Constable of the West Midlands in March 2023 and the impact that this will have in Coventry, including early indicators of success in relation to responding to calls for service and violence
- A strategic oversight of the WMP
- The WMP Crime Plan 2021-2025
- Details of the Coventry Local Policing Area, including an organisational chart, operational teams and specialist capabilities
- Work being undertaken to make WMP an “Employer of Choice”
- An update of crime statistics in Coventry from a local policing perspective
- Priorities and pressure facing the Local Policing Unit (LPU) and WMP and how this affects Coventry
- Ambitions for Coventry Investigations 2023-24
- Coventry performance headlines
- Targeting Activity
- Areas highlighted for focus:-
 - City Centre
 - Ride Out
- Engagement with Community Groups

The Committee asked questions, made comments and sought assurances on a number of issues including:-

- The new policing model and synergy with the One Coventry Plan was noted and welcomed
- The recruitment process for WM Police, including the different levels of entry available to entrants
- Public perception of safety and action being taken to improve this
- Stability of the Coventry police workforce and how the new policing model will mean that WMP officers will be locality based, enabling them to build better understanding and connections with the city they are based in

- Existing excellent working relationships with community- based Police were noted and welcomed
- Work currently being undertaken nationally via the Police national database to vet and carry out checks on existing Police officers was noted and welcomed
- Clarification in relation to the data provided and availability of performance management data was noted
- Concerns regarding graffiti in the City was expressed by both Members and WMP and action being undertaken in this regard to apprehend the individual (s) was noted and welcomed
- Improvements to the 101 service in terms of response times were welcomed and supported
- A request for WMP support for the night-time economy in areas outside of the City Centre, particularly Whoberley, was made
- Work being undertaken in relation to identifying and closing down cannabis farms in the City was noted and welcomed
- Collaborative work being undertaken with the City Council in relation to domestic violence was supported by the Committee and it was noted that an evaluation of work in this regard would be shred in the near future
- Information was sought in relation to traffic management work being carried out in the City
- Thanks were expressed by the Committee in relation to community policing activity and speed watches undertaken
- A narrative regarding data was provided, particularly in relation to comparing Coventry with other cities. It was acknowledged that the data could be better articulated in the future
- Focus on the City Centre and Ride out was welcomed and supported
- It was noted that, due to its requirement for a specialist team, cyber crime was dealt with at a national level.

The Committee expressed support for the new policing model as outlined at the meeting and noted that an evaluation of the new model would be submitted to the Committee for consideration in due course. The Committee extended their sincere thanks to Chief Superintendent Peter Henrick and Superintendent Ronan Tyrer for their attendance at the meeting and for the detailed and informative presentation.

RESOLVED:-

- 1) That the update on Local Policing be noted and welcomed.**
- 2) That the evaluation of the new policing model be added to the Work Programme for 2023/24.**

55. Coventry Community Safety Plan

This item of business was deferred to a future meeting.

56. **Public Space Protection Orders**

The Committee considered a Briefing Note, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which detailed the use and enforcement of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) in the City. Councillors J O'Boyle and D Welsh, St Michael's Ward Councillor attended the meeting at the invitation of the Chair.

The Briefing Note indicated that PSPO's were created as part of the 2014 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act, and operate for spaces in the same way that injunctions work against people. When a PSPO is created it can define what behaviours or activities are permitted or prohibited within a defined area. There are currently 5 PSPO's operational in the City, addressing issues such as public alcohol consumption and off road bikes, as well as localised issues that are deemed to affect specific areas such as Edgwick Park or the City.

PSPO's can be enforced by Police and Council officers. These powers can be delegated to other agencies but that has not been done in Coventry. Under the legislation a simple breach of a PSPO leaves some liable to be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) that can cost £100 or £60 if paid within 14 days. In Coventry, "breach notices" are issued when someone doesn't comply with a PSPO. This means there is not an obvious confrontation at the point of issuance and allows the offence and the individual to be triaged to decide on the appropriate course of action. The appropriate action may be the issuing of a FPN, a referral to a support agency or a summons to court, it will depend on the circumstances.

Where it is the Council that enforces the PSPO's, it is carried out by Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEO's) These officers carry out a wide range of duties across the whole City including investigating fly tipping and other environmental issues, amongst other duties. The Council only have a finite number of NEO's and as such, where they are allocated and on what duties they are tasked to carry out, will have an impact on PSPO enforcement. Recently NEO's have been prioritising fly tipping in targeted areas.

The Briefing Note indicated that the idea that people's behaviour always needs to be "enforced" needs to be challenged. Technically enforcement only occurs when you have to rely upon legislation to get someone to comply with your instructions. If someone modifies their behaviour as requested, then it's usually not appropriate to enforce.

Police look to use what they refer to as "The 5 E's" when they interact with the public. These are:

- Engage,
- Educate
- Encourage
- Enforcement
- Evaluate

In light of the above, any review of enforcement statistics needs to be caveated so that people aren't unduly concerned if figures are lower than they might expect. This could reflect that officers are good at encouraging people to act in a suitable manner without needing to formally use the PSPO powers.

The St Michaels PSPO was introduced a number of years ago and allows officers to disperse a gathering of two or more people if conditions are met. Elected members recognised the civil liberty ramifications of such an order and requested data regarding its usage. This presented a number of operational challenges for Police officers as to how they would compile this information and how it would be recorded. At the time it wasn't possible to give precise information, only anecdotal. Police and Council officers have worked collaboratively to address this and recently the Police have added an extra function to the phone app that officers use to allow for recording, in real time of the times they enforce PSPO powers. For the reasons outlined above, all stats have to be caveated to say that officers may have not needed to use the powers to achieve desired outcomes, so smaller numbers of enforcement does not mean behaviours are not being addressed, but in future, when they do enforce it will be recorded and this information will be available.

The Committee asked questions, sought assurances and made comments on a number of issues including:-

- Ensuring there are enough resources in place to enforce, where required, PSPOs
- Data relating to where and why breaches of PSPO have been issued. It was noted that there was an evaluation report of PSPOs
- Staffing levels and deployment of staff
- Work being undertaken collaboratively by a number of agencies to address issues such as begging in the City Centre
- How money generated from the fines are used to in the service area for purposes such as deployment of CCTV cameras
- The types of CCTV cameras operating in the City and how they are best used
- The unique issues and challenges experienced in St Michael's Ward and the impact that criminal activity and anti social behaviour in the Ward has on residents, including the level of perceived "tolerated" behaviour in the area
- An increase in the number of bikes (including electric bikes) riding on pavements and pedestrian areas; the significant safety concerns associated with this; and the lack of national legislation in relation to e bikes.
- The Committee noted that the Cabinet Member for City Services is currently looking at action to be taken in relation to e bikes to address the concerns now raised, particularly in relation to the delivery of food
- Training required to be given to NEO's to enable them, to carry out their enforcement role successfully and safely
- An understanding of the regular collaborative work being taken by the Council and Police
- Work that can be taken under PSPOs in relation to arson and fires caused by disposal bbq's in parks
- Issues associated with off road bikes and work being undertaken by the Police in relation to this matter
- Engagement with communities and multi faith groups in relation to the operation of PSPO's

- How Magistrates deal with breaches of PSPO's

The Committee expressed their support for the introduction of recording data relating to PSPO's on the Police app.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

1) Requests that officers:-

- a) Investigate and consider strengthening PSPOs to include arson**
- b) Provide information on where and why PSPOs have been issued**
- c) Share the PSPO evaluation report with the Committee**

2) Recommends that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities writes to the Local Government Association regarding the introduction of appropriate legislation around e bikes

3) Express their support for the work currently being undertaken by the Cabinet Member for City Services in relation to e bikes

57. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Committee received and noted their Work Programme for 2022/23.

Further to Minute 55 above, it was also noted that "Coventry Community Safety Plan" would be included in the Work Programme for 2023/24.

58. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 1.15 pm)