

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillors M Burton, Garten, Joy, D Mortimer (Chairman), Powell, Purle, Mrs Robertson, Rose and Webb

Also Present: Councillors Field and Mrs Gooch

171. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Purle.

172. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

173. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to take two urgent updates to Item 11. Verbal Update – Low Level and Nuisance Crime. The reason for urgency was that the documents provided additional clarity regarding the questions submitted by Councillors and the responsibilities of Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Police with regards to parking enforcement issues.

174. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that the following Councillors were present as Visiting Members:

- Councillor Field, who indicated that he wished to speak on Item 11. Verbal Update – Low Level and Nuisance Crime.
- Councillor Gooch, who indicated that she wished to speak on Item 12. Community Safety Plan 2019-22.

175. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

176. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

177. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

178. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

179. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

180. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

181. VERBAL UPDATE - LOW LEVEL AND NUISANCE CRIME

The Chairman stated that six questions had been submitted by Councillors. Responses were to be provided by Officers from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Kent Police.

The following question was submitted by Councillor Clark:

Parking is challenging in parts of the borough, especially near to schools. While many drivers park on pavements without affecting the ability for residents to pass, a small number cause a complete obstruction of the footway, leaving pedestrians little choice but to enter the road to pass. This is a real concern at Loose School where parents with buggies often enter the road. What can be done to better enforce against pavement obstruction in areas where MBC parking enforcement do not have powers (e.g. where there is no traffic order)?

Officers outlined the responsibilities of MBC and Kent Police with regards to parking enforcement. It was stated that:

- If incidents were outside the remit of MBC, collaborative work with Kent Police was undertaken to ensure that issues were resolved.
- Legislative powers regarding pavement obstructions were only applicable in cases where the obstruction resulted in safety concerns.
- It was possible to allocate Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) time to parking enforcement, however, this risked other priorities not being fully resourced.

The Committee commented that it was important to consider the impact of pavement obstruction on elderly and disabled residents.

The following question was asked by Councillor Webb:

In my Ward (Coxheath and Hunton Ward) there are a number of motorists parking on the pavement blocking the way for pedestrians as well as other motorists. What are the thoughts of the police to deal with this issue?

Inspector Mark Hedges, Kent Police, explained that the introduction of double yellow lines had proven successful elsewhere and could potentially be introduced in affected areas, such as outside of schools. Additionally, PCSOs had issued informative notices to drivers that had parked their cars inappropriately. Inspector Hedges stated that he would confirm via email whether Borough and Parish Councillors could participate in the distribution of notices.

The Committee commented that a Police presence at schools would assist with the promotion of safety awareness. It was stated that intense periods of enforcement, resulting in fines or drivers receiving points on their licence, would discourage motorists from blocking pavements.

Councillor Clark asked:

We are seeing increasing antisocial activity and criminal damage with motorcycles on footpaths and on and near a local recreation field. After 101 is called the motorcyclist can continue for several hours but often there are insufficient resources to visit the site involved. What steps are you taking to improve such matters?

Inspector Hedges replied that:

- The introduction of the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) problem solving model enabled PCSOs and Police Officers to identify effective ways to prevent such issues from occurring.
- Kent Police frequently liaised with Kent County Council (KCC) to assess the cost effectiveness of introducing barriers at sites where incidents had occurred.
- It was an offence for motorcyclists to drive on pavements. It was possible to seize motorcycles or prosecute offenders in these instances.
- It was important to ensure all incidents were recorded through 101 or the Community Safety Unit email address, which was to be shared with Councillors via email.

The Committee commented that Police Officers needed to be visible in the Borough in order to deter crime. This required additional resource from central government.

The Chairman asked the following question:

Current PCSO powers seem to be ineffective, while other areas in the UK have given greater powers to PCSOs. What is the scope for increasing the powers given to PCSOs in Maidstone?

Inspector Hedges stated that the primary role of a Kent Police PCSO was to provide a link to the community and to gather and share information. Kent Police was unique, as some PCSOs specialised in areas such as Domestic Abuse. If additional powers were given to PCSOs, there was a risk that the role of a PCSOs could change. A review of the different approaches for allocating PCSO powers was underway, to ensure that Kent Police used resources most effectively. Further to this, the Business Improvement District had recently introduced Street Ambassadors. The Street Ambassadors worked with Kent Police to deter individuals from committing crime.

The Chairman asked a further question:

When there is an incident in the town centre, there is a risk that rural and out of town areas are left without cover. What steps are being taken to ensure that there is sufficient police resource available in all areas of the borough?

Inspector Hedges stated that there had recently been a large recruitment campaign. 460 Officers had been recruited in the current year, while a further 390 were to be recruited next year. It did, however, take 11 months before Police Officers completed training and were present in the community.

Councillor Field asked the following question:

I have had many recent complaints from North Ward residents regarding what I would describe as low-level or nuisance crimes. Issues include:

- *Motorcycles being ridden on public footpaths*
- *Antisocial parking on pavements and junctions*
- *Ignoring the one-way system in place in Ringlestone*

I would like to know what the current enforcement strategy is with regards to such offences when they are reported.

Inspector Hedges stated that it was difficult to resolve issues on cycle lanes where there were no Traffic Restriction Orders (TROs). PCSOs had not been made aware of regular issues with the one-way system being abused. This demonstrated the importance of Members and residents reporting incidents through their local PCSO, 101 or the CSU email address.

The Committee commented that it would be beneficial to better understand the role of PCSOs, as this would ensure that Members were

well positioned to encourage community engagement and the subsequent reporting of incidents.

RESOLVED: That the updated be noted.

Note: Councillor Purle arrived at 6.34 p.m. during consideration of this item.

182. COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2019-22

Mr Martyn Jeynes, Community Protection Manager, stated that the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) had considered the Community Safety Plan (CSP) after the document had been published on the Communities, Housing and Environment (CHE) Committee agenda. The SMP had requested amendments to the document, which had not yet been reflected in the report. In order to incorporate the amendments of both the SMP and CHE, it was suggested that the Head of Housing and Community Services be delegated authority to finalise the CSP prior to the document being considered by Council. Mr Jeynes outlined that a survey with young people was planned to better understand recent trends in knife crime. This helped to identify specific actions to meet the priorities within the CSP.

Councillor Gooch spoke as a Visiting Member.

The Committee commented that:

- Consideration was to be given to the inclusion of alcohol and tobacco, alongside reference to the supply of cannabis, within "Keeping Children and Young People Safe" on page 27.
- While Maidstone did not have any established criminal gangs, there were instances of youths forming gangs.
- It was beneficial to include information regarding the integration of school exclusions data. This data informed strategic measures that were undertaken to tackle crime.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers stated that:

- The Committee were to be notified of the amendments that had been made under delegated authority before the document was considered at Council.
- To effectively conduct a survey with young people, work was being undertaken to ensure that the most appropriate ways to reach the target audience had been identified.
- Specific points relating to the supply of cigarettes and alcohol were included in the Action Plans that underpinned the CSP.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The Head of Housing and Community Services be granted delegated authority to finalise the Community Safety Plan 2019-22, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee.
2. Council be recommended to adopt the Community Safety Plan 2019-22.

Voting: Unanimous

183. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.16 p.m.