

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee Acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee

24 September 2019

Serious, Violent and Organised Crime in Maidstone

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Martyn Jeynes, Community Protection Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone has been shocked by recent incidents and the tragic loss of life associated with our night-time economy. Whilst the criminal investigation is ongoing, this report highlights the excellent work being undertaken by the Safer Maidstone Partnership to deliver our Community Safety Priorities of protecting our communities against serious and organised crime, reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking) and keeping our young people safe. The comparative data provided by Kent Police and KCC's Early Help and Preventative Services evidence the fact that Maidstone is a place where people can feel safe and are safe. The report also highlights the work that is being undertaken to reduce the threat of violence further, by protecting young people and supporting the victims of domestic abuse and provides a context for consideration of the "Call for Action" submitted by Councillor Purle.

Purpose of Report

To reassure members and the wider community that the work being undertaken by the Safer Maidstone Partnership is leading to measurable improvements in crime reduction and is protecting our community.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That members note the report and endorse the work of the Safer Maidstone Partnership to provide reassurance to their constituents and the public at large that Maidstone remains a place where they can feel safe and be safe.
2. That a note of thanks and support from the Committee is sent to the Urban Blue staff, the Ambassadors (Business Improvement District) and the Gallery door staff in recognition of their efforts and bravery during and after the incident on 25 August 2019.
3. That a Domestic Abuse awareness event is held, open to all councillors, to help raise awareness of the services available to support victims, preventative and early intervention activities being delivered by the Safer Maidstone Partnership.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee Acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee	24 September 2019

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve Safe, Clean and Green priority.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Cross Cutting Objectives	Tackling crime and disorder, which are wider determinants of health, has the potential for improving healthy life expectancy and contributing to the cross cutting strategic plan objective of reducing health inequalities in the borough.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Risk Management	Covered in the body of the report.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendations are all within already approved budgetary headings.	Interim Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Staffing	At the appropriate time, a review of the recent incidents will be undertaken, which may require a further report to be provided to Committee, for example with respect to licensing policy	Head of Housing & Community Services
Legal	Accepting the recommendations will assist in fulfilling the Council's duties under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder, to prevent misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and to prevent re-offending .	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	N/A	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	[Public Health Officer]
Crime and Disorder	Contained within the body of the report.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Procurement	None identified	Head of Housing & Community Services

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Recent exceptional incidents in Maidstone

- 2.1 Maidstone, as a community, has been shocked and appalled by the violence brought into our community in recent weeks. Our thoughts remain with the family and friends of Andre Bent at this difficult time.
- 2.2 The incident on the 25 August 2019 remains part of an active criminal investigation, but early indications suggest that the main suspects were not from the Maidstone area. It is believed that all parties were visiting Maidstone to attend a live public appearance at the Gallery Nightclub. The Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) are working with local businesses and partners to understand the circumstances that led to the violence and Mr Bent's death. A post-incident review is being coordinated to determine whether there is any need to improve emergency response planning and procedures in the wake of the incident and to ensure, as far as possible, this remains an isolated incident.
- 2.3 Violent incidents of this nature are very uncommon in Maidstone. Though the formal accreditation for Purple Flag for Maidstone town centre's night time economy (NTE) was allowed to lapse in 2016, due to it being cost prohibitive for One Maidstone at the time, there has been commitment from the NTE to continue, as a partnership, to adhere to the standards that the accreditation sets. This includes:
 - Regular Night Time Economy Forum meetings held every six weeks for venues and partners. These meetings are jointly facilitated by One Maidstone and the Police and Chaired by the NTE Town Centre Sergeant.
 - Purple Flag's guidelines around ensuring safe egress from the town centre for revellers was the impetus for the introduction of the taxi marshals; this has since evolved to the BID Ambassadors who provide a roaming presence in the town centre on Saturday nights working as a pair from 11pm to 5am.
 - A partnership approach to managing the night time economy that includes volunteer services from the Urban Blue medics and the Street Pastors
 - MaidSafe, the business crime reduction partnership, which includes a member to member/Police/CCTV radio system and secure website to detail incidents and offenders. 33 Members are NTE businesses. MaidSafe actively engages with other key NTE partners through taxi companies and the railway stations.
 - MaidSafe operates an exclusion scheme with its partners, encouraging venues to deny entry to frequent offenders that meet the exclusion criteria e.g. violent offences
 - One Maidstone regularly monitors patterns in the makeup of the NTE with quarterly surveys of the town centre; this allows us to identify new businesses and engage with them early on, where possible bringing them into the MaidSafe partnership.
 - In July, One Maidstone started work on a map of the town centre to identify locations defibrillators and first aid equipment. They also committed to purchasing some emergency trauma packs, through a police initiative, that will be positioned strategically around the town. These will be in place as soon.

- 2.4 The Council's Licensing Committee has responsibility for matters related to licenced premises, including the one linked to the recent incident. The Licensing Sub-Committee, having heard representations from Kent Police and the premises licence holder, have taken the interim step of suspending the Gallery's premises licence, pending a full review. The review process allows Responsible Authorities and members of the public to submit their comments by the 18 September 2019. The submissions will be considered at the full review hearing on 30 September 2019.
- 2.5 On 23 August 2019 there was an altercation at the car wash, on Station Approach, Headcorn, that resulted in a man needing hospital treatment following an alleged serious assault. The criminal investigation is ongoing with charges being brought by the police to those involved.
- 2.6 There have been two other homicides in Maidstone since December 2018. A serious incident of domestic abuse resulted in Parwin Quriashi being murdered by her husband of four months on 25 December 2018, 5 days after he moved down from Hull so they could live together. In February 2019, Wesley Adyinka was allegedly murdered by 3 men from London, whose trial will take place at Maidstone Crown Court in due course.
- 2.7 These separate incidents are not linked and the only similar characteristic is that they involved individuals who are not from Maidstone. This makes planning to prevent spontaneous incidents such as these particularly challenging. Localised violence in Maidstone is falling and the SMP members are working hard to ensure that all violent crime is minimised both in public places and domestic homes.

SMP Priority: Protecting our communities against serious and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)

- 2.8 Maidstone's Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022 (CSP Plan) identified "Protecting our communities against serious and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)" as one of our five priority areas and in the wake of recent, isolated, incidents, the objective of this report is to provide reassurance that Maidstone remains a place where people can feel safe and are safe.
- 2.9 Since the adoption of the CSP Plan in April 2019, members of the Safer Maidstone Partnership have worked closely to actively reduce serious, violent and organised crime in our borough.
- 2.10 Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of comparative reported crime figures across the Kent Police Force area for the financial years to date 2018/19 and 2019/20. Whilst a description is provided for each "crime type", a detailed description can be found in Appendix 2. Please note that some lines of data are more detailed examinations of larger categories within the dataset.

2.11 The table below provides the figures for Maidstone for each of the crime areas detailed in Appendix 1 for the period April to August 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Crime category	This Year	Last Year	% change	No change
All Crime	5866	6244	-6.1%	-378
Victim based crime	4958	5132	-3.4%	-174
Violent Crime	2585	2812	-8.1%	-227
Violence Against a Person	2337	2529	-7.6%	-192
Most Serious Violent Crime	44	48	-8.3%	-4
Violence without injury	1172	1165	+0.6%	+7
Stalking and Harassment	573	690	-17.0%	-117
Sexual Offences	213	232	-8.2%	-19
Rape	70	83	-15.7%	-13
Robbery	35	51	-31.4%	-16
Possession of a weapon	59	52	+13.5%	+7
Public order	507	799	-36.5%	-292
Drug Offences	158	86	+83.7%	+72

2.12 The figures show that there have been significant reductions in incidents of most reported crime, with overall crime down by 6.1% and most serious violent crime down 8.3%. Public Order shows the most significant drop of 36.5%. The increases shown for possession of a weapon and drug offences are largely as a direct result of proactive policing where individuals have been identified through specific operations discussed later in this report.

2.13 Currently, Kent Police are unable to provide comprehensive ward level data due to data inaccuracies around beat (area) codes. However, ward data can be analysed for specific purposes where specific concerns are raised as will be demonstrated later in the report.

2.14 The Maidstone Serious Organised Crime Panel (SOCP), which is made up of partners from across the SMP, meets monthly enabling partners to work together to reduce the threat of individuals and groups that are known to or are suspected to be involved in serious and organised crime in Maidstone.

2.15 The work of the SOCP is built around the National Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. This puts in place a four-component framework:

- prosecuting and disrupting people engaged in serious and organised crime (Pursue);
- preventing people from engaging in this activity (Prevent)
- increasing protection against serious and organised crime (Protect)
- reducing the impact of this criminality where it takes place (Prepare)

2.16 A more detailed description of the 4Ps can be found in Appendix 3.

2.17 The work of the SOCP to target organised crime and violent crime and the linked work of the local Raptor Team (Drug offenders- including County lines) has produced significant results. This can be seen in the increases in weapon and drug offences recorded in Appendix 1.

2.18 Other actions include:

- Increased high visibility patrols at identified key locations (such as Brenchley Gardens) with a view to prevention and conducting stop searches in response to experience and intelligence. There has been a reduction in harmful activity and risk at this location; consequently the need for intervention has been reduced and resources redeployed to tackle issues elsewhere in the borough including Shepway and Ringlestone
- 623 completed stop searches in Maidstone since April to the end of August 2019.
- Section 60 "Stop Search" orders put in place on 3 occasions in Maidstone since April 2019.
- Deployment of a knife detector in and around the town centre, outside licenced premises, a local under 18 disco and outside local youth clubs.
- Linked in with local youth services to ensure young people are aware of the increased police activity around stop searches and to reassure young people that this is to keep them safe and to receive their feedback.
- Spoken to shop owners about the sale of knives which led to over 100 knives (household) being surrendered from second hand shops, thus taking them out of circulation.
- Gang and knife crime presentations given to over 150 local parents and to senior representatives from all local secondary schools to raise awareness of key issues and interventions and build engagement with the SMP.
- Arrest warrants exercised in Metropolitan Police areas to tackle gangs linked to selling drugs in Maidstone (County Lines)
- Drug seizures and arrests as a result of intelligence gathered by Community Protection officers during a routine inspection for vermin.
- 28 formal warnings and 3 Community Protection Notices issued in the last 12 months for anti-social behaviour.
- 8 unauthorised encampments removed in less than 3 days in the last 12 months.
- A reduction of alcohol related ASB and incidents of begging through the Public Space Protection Order in Maidstone town centre, including 2 prosecutions and the very effective impact of the Rough Sleeping/ Homeless Outreach team.
- Introduction of rural surgeries conducted by Community Protection officers and partners to engage with residents in rural parishes.

2.19 In addition, the newly appointed Police Licensing Officer has stepped up activity in the borough, undertaking 101 of the Kent Police's 245 licensing inspections in August and taking the following actions:

- Requested a review of the Gallery's licence following the incident highlighted above and separately, an off-licence for selling of alcohol to street drinkers and drunk persons.
- Eight official warnings linked to breaches of licence conditions.
- 13 official warnings concerning the licence holder's failing to produce their licence
- 10 penalty notices issued regarding licencing offences and selling to drunk persons
- Warning issued for sale to a minor

Tackling knife crime and protecting young people

2.20 There has been a widely reported national upsurge in knife crimes since 2013/14, however, the Youth Justice data (Appendix 4), provided by KCC's Early Help and Preventative Services, shows that this is not the case for Kent.

2.21 The data also shows that the preventative services offered by KCC Early Help teams is having a significant impact on reducing the number of young people entering the Criminal Justice System with a 54% reduction from 2015/16 to 2018/19.

2.22 Early Help provide a range of services, available at children's centres, schools and project groups, to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of children, young people and families in Kent. They offer support where:

- Someone is worried about their child's behaviour
- Someone is struggling to cope
- Someone is worried about their family finances
- Someone's child is struggling to cope with bereavement
- Someone's child is being bullied
- Someone's child refuses to go to school or college
- Where parents and children want to develop new friends and have new experiences
- Someone's having difficulties with family relationships.

2.23 As detailed in Appendix 4, the type of services provided by Early Help are recognised by a report published in April 2019 by the College of Policing as those with the greatest potential to deter young people from criminal activity.

- 2.24 The Early Help provision also includes outreach work, where multi-agency teams target have identified ASB hotspots and engagement with young people in those locations, provision of diversionary activities and above all giving young people a voice to express their concerns. Where necessary the Community Protection Team has issued formal warnings to parents and young people requiring them to change their behaviour. A more detailed report from the Community Youth Safety Group can be provided to members in the form of a briefing report later in the year.
- 2.25 The Community Youth Safety Group is currently working on a youth safety survey, which will help us understand how young people feel about safety, including knives, in the borough. The survey, which will be distributed through schools, will be undertaken in early 2020.
- 2.26 In addition to the work undertaken by the SOCP partners, specialist police teams and Early Help, the Community Protection Team administers the Police Crime Commissioner's Safer Communities Grant. In 2019/20 the grant was used to fund 5 projects as detailed in Appendix 5. Each of the projects was assessed as meeting at least one of our SMP Priorities and the PCC's "Violence Reduction Challenge". The total funding awarded was £27,209. We are currently undertaking our 6-month monitoring for the commissioned projects and hope to have some of the results available for the Committee meeting.

SMP Priority: Reducing the harm caused by Domestic Abuse- including stalking

- 2.27 The most prevalent form of violent crime in Maidstone is Domestic Abuse, which accounts for 48.2% of all violent crime. Domestic Abuse was identified through our strategic assessment as an SMP Priority in its own right.
- 2.28 Delivered through the Domestic Abuse Forum, several initiatives that will help break the silence on abusive relationships are gaining momentum with 5 months of events and activities planned from October which will:
- Protect victims by ensuring they have access to the services they need when they need it
 - Prevent future incidents of DA in the longer term by supporting young people who have experienced "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) with the aim of reducing the risk that their experience leads them to perpetuate the behaviour and by improving understanding and ensuring young people enjoy healthy relationships
- 2.29 Appendix 6 provides a briefing note on the work undertaken to date and the work planned over the project. A fuller presentation of key issues with respect to Domestic Abuse will be made at the committee meeting.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee promotes the Council's statutory role to take reasonable steps to reduce crime and disorder by endorsing the work of the SMP in delivering the Community Safety Plan to create a place where people feel safe and are safe.
- 3.2 The Committee could choose to go further than simply promoting the Council's Community Safety Plan and recognise those who prevented further injury or loss of life by acting swiftly and bravely on 25 August 2019. The Committee can also encourage other members to attend a briefing session on Domestic Abuse, empowering them to support their constituents, their friends and their families in breaking the silence on domestic abuse.
- 3.3 The Committee could decide to promote the delivery of the Community Safety Plan but go no further than this. This would not acknowledge the efforts of those who dealt with those involved or affected by the violence on 25 August and/or miss an opportunity to engage Members as widely as possible in briefings which will provide information of benefit to councillors and their constituents.
- 3.4 The Committee could choose to do nothing
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred options are 3.1 and 3.2.

Endorse the work of the SMP and be proactive in actions to engage others

- 4.2 The Community Safety Plan and the SMP Priorities were supported through the Committee and adopted by full council in April 2019. The work of the sub-groups has been designed to maximise the resources and produce synergistic results. Following the resource reductions caused by austerity the SMP Partnership are continuing to build efficient services that keep people safe and channel people away from criminality. As a Partnership, the SMP condemns the recent incidences of violence in Maidstone, but recognises they are isolated events and will endeavour to ensure they are not repeated.

Recognition for those involved in the incident on 25 August

- 4.3 The level of violence seen in the early hours of 25 August were unprecedented and will have a lasting impact on those who witnessed the incident first hand. Many of those are volunteers and staff who work to keep our NTE one of the busiest and the safest in Kent. Whilst investigations and reviews are ongoing it has been recognised by the Police that staff from Urban Blue, One Maidstone and the Gallery door staff prevented further loss of life by acting swiftly and bravely on 25 August.

Members Briefing on Domestic Abuse

- 4.4 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men are affected by Domestic Abuse in their lifetime in the UK. The abuse and violence that victims suffer happens in the one place that someone should feel their safest... their home. A tailored member's briefing session would empower them to support victims of domestic abuse, in their constituencies, in their friends and in their families, by breaking the silence on domestic abuse and ensuring victims know that support is available.
- 4.5 Options 3.3 and 3.4 are not recommended as failure to positively promote the Community Safety Plan would undermine the work of the SMP Partnership in delivering our Community Safety Plan, as adopted by full council in April 2019 and failure to engage would undermine the positive partnership working within the SMP.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 A letter of thanks could be prepared on behalf of the Committee by the Chair of this Committee for distribution to those who were working/volunteering in Maidstone and were engaged in the incident.
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Police Crime Data
 - Appendix 2: Offence Classification Index
 - Appendix 3: Serious and Organised Crime Strategy Framework Definitions
 - Appendix 4: KCC's Early Help and Preventative Services- Youth Justice data
 - Appendix 5: PCC Safer Communities Grant 2019/20- Commissioned Projects
 - Appendix 6: Domestic Abuse Project Briefing Note
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022