MINUTES OF CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2013

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Stokes (Chairman), M Francis, Mrs Garcia (substitute for Councillor Mrs Parker), Mrs Kaur, Keeling, Mahoney (substitute for Councillor Dr Shera) and Helen Walton

Officers:

Sean Lawson (Head of Environmental Services), Keith Newell (Community Safety Partnership Manager), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny and Policy Officer) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer)

Also in attendance:

Inspector Karl Faulkner (Warwickshire Police Policing Priority Area Team Leader)
Councillor Derek Poole

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 March and 16 May 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Parker and Dr Shera and Chris Cade (Chairman of Rugby Neighbourhood Watch).

6. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions.

7. CALL-INS

There were no call-ins.

8. POLICING PRIORITY AREA TEAM

The committee welcomed Inspector Karl Faulkner to the meeting.

On 14 March 2013 the committee requested that Inspector Faulkner attend this meeting to report on the work of his team. He had also been asked to talk about Operation X and the use of social media.

The salient slides of the presentation that the committee received at its meeting in March were shown to support Inspector Faulkner’s report. The main points raised were as follows:
Following a change in structure there are seven key points of deprivation which help to determine PPA areas:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Barriers to housing services
- Crime
- Living environment deprivation

The team works in close partnership with a range of organisations and partners such as Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Acquisitive Crime Team and Operational Support Unit to bring real enforcement capabilities to areas and hit crime from all angles using a variety of means.

The team cover three PPAs across Warwickshire: Rugby PPA, Leamington PPA and Nuneaton PPA.

Of the three PPA areas Nuneaton is the largest and has the highest levels of crime.

Responsibilities include KPI crimes.

They target organised crime groups (OCGs) that do not quite score tier 1 on the OCG matrix. Above this level there is a specialised serious crime unit.

The use of social media supports performance measures.

Some examples of the positive effect on communities by the work of the team included:

- The recovery of firearms following a simple stop check (the guns were destined for use in a pre-planned armed robbery).
- The seizure of a quantity of cocaine worth £1million found after a bail check.
- The shutting down of a crack den.

The team targets crime patterns and trends. Incidents of burglary have been reduced by 89 per cent and vehicle crime by 40 per cent.

PPA teams work to disrupt the activities of prolific offenders.

The PPA team was funded from force corporate and revenue savings made in 2012. The rest of the borough benefits from their activity and the teams are often deployed to work in other areas.

In September Warwickshire Police are facing a period of change and it is not known whether the PPA teams will continue.

Operation X is a pro-active well rounded approach to reducing crime by the introduction of three additional teams including the PPA Team, the Acquisitive Crime Team and the Operational Support Unit. These teams were all funded from the savings made within force budgets in 2012.

Since the introduction of Operation X crime figures have fallen by 9 per cent.
The team uses social media to support its work but this can be dangerous if used incorrectly. The level of its effect on public confidence can be measured by the number of retweets.

There is a public 87 per cent satisfaction level, but it is not clear how much of this is down to social media.

Use of social media has a detrimental effect on criminals but it is not possible to measure this.

Members asked about the means used to keep the public informed and were informed that wrap around advertising was placed in local papers along with tweets and Facebook and this was supported by internal force communications teams.

RESOLVED THAT – Inspector Karl Faulkner be thanked for his attendance and informative presentation.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) concerning performance.

During discussion of the item the following points were made:

The Community Safety Partnership Manager informed the committee that there had been a significant reduction in domestic burglary.

A 16 per cent reduction in all recorded crime was the highest rate across the county.

In addition to the national trend of crime falling last year’s figures over 6 years recorded crime had fallen by 46 per cent.

For the period April 2012 – April 2013 Rugby Community Safety Partnership was the only CSP that, for the second time in the last three years, had met all its targets.

Concerns were raised regarding the effects of the welfare reforms on large families. Crime and domestic burglary levels are expected to rise and the early signs of this were already visible.

Incidents of shoplifting have risen sharply. This is not a particular policing priority area but young parents are increasingly responsible. The items being taken are basic foodstuffs and baby items rather than high value goods which could indicate this is happening out of a real need.

The store where the majority of incidents have been reported is being given advice on how to protect their stock and manage the situation.

The committee commented on the need to look into the root cause and ensure the matter is raised with the right agencies so some form of family intervention will take place.

There is a Universal Credit and Welfare Reform Task Group currently reviewing the impact of the changes to which the matter may be referred and also an officer working group working behind the scenes. The council offers debt management advice and there are a number of support mechanisms and avenues to which cases can be referred.
This is a new trend and analysts will continue to monitor the situation. The committee agreed to review the situation again at its next meeting on 28 November. In the meantime the issue should be reported to the relevant agencies.

The committee agreed that the crime statistics demonstrated the success of the CSP.

RESOLVED THAT – the apparent shoplifting trend be reviewed again at the next meeting of the committee.

10. PRIORITIES AND BUDGET 2013/14

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 8) concerning an update on the position regarding CSP funding and programmes.

During discussion of the item the following points were made:

Council funding of £25,000 would be split between the top two priorities; violent crime (£17,000) and domestic burglary (£8,000).

The original award granted by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was £18,030 which was the same as the previous year. However, the CSP had been awarded a further £14,000 for the PCC’s innovation fund for an ANPR camera and £5,000 Eastern European project activity money.

The ANPR camera had been installed quickly.

The daily intelligence gathered by the camera is impressive. Three big crime operations are at an advanced stage due to this intelligence. There have been several cases involving the serious crime squad and many specific police operations. This is in addition to the high levels of minor vehicle offences which may be of interest to the police. Knock-on effects are also being seen in solving burglary cases.

The camera is linked to the DVLA and insurance databases.

A saving of £3,000 has been realised by the installation work being combined with other county council work and approval was granted for this underspend to be kept. This money went towards the purchase and installation of a further ANPR camera in Binley Woods which will assist in protection against cross-border crime.

A further bid submitted to the PCC for £15,000 has been approved to fund a sports and recreation project based around access to sport in the challenging parts of Rugby. There is already funding in place for 2013 but this additional money will allow the scheme to continue to run in 2014 and 2015. The aim is to continue the Olympic legacy, but it must not be spent on football.

£7,000 of the violent crime budget will allow the Stonham project to provide support as now but add an additional evening freedom programme which is badly needed.

Part of the £8,000 budget for domestic burglary will go towards promoting neighbourhood watch schemes. At present only 160 houses are included in such schemes.
Funding given to Futures Unlocked last year was based on the reduction in reoffending achieved by the project and this year’s funding is also payment-by-results based.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

11. PROJECTS: DOMESTIC ABUSE – MEDIUM RISK PROJECT; EASTERN EUROPEAN LINK WORKER

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 9) concerning progress of the medium risk domestic abuse project.

The Community Safety Manager updated the committee on the following points:

80 clients have been referred to the project and 19 per cent of these were Polish victims.

Intervention work can take the form of a coffee morning or phone call through to more intense support work.

Multi-case needs are referred to Stonham Home Group.

57½ per cent of victims state they now feel safer as a result of the project.

Two drop-in sessions are being introduced to cater for low level cases.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has a strategy for early, medium and high risk funding.

In March the committee had asked that Stonham be invited to its next meeting. The Scrutiny Officer reported that the manager from the Stonham Home Group had been unable to attend this meeting but had expressed a willingness to attend a future meeting. However, members commented that her time was valuable and if the Community Safety Manager was able to update the committee on progress her attendance, while welcome, was not necessary at the next meeting. She might be invited some time further in the future.

12. EASTERN EUROPEEAN LINK WORKER

The Head of Environmental Services reported that, since the appointment of Aleksandra Kolenda at the beginning of July it has become clear there was a need to understand the difference in culture and lifestyle of the local Eastern European community members. Through her, officers are learning how to engage properly rather than simply attempting to impose existing norms.

So far she has met with and established connections with a number of agencies and external bodies. She has produced an innovative wide-ranging draft action plan, planned a number of future events, and has produced signs and leaflets in Polish for Newbold Quarry to warn of the dangers of swimming there.

The fire service is planning to link into her work in relation to issues with domestic fire alarms.

The Head of Environmental Services expressed his appreciation of the police’s participation in candidate interviews for the post.
The committee requested that Aleksandra Kolenda be invited to attend the next meeting on 28 November.

RESOLVED THAT – the Eastern European Link Worker be invited to attend the next meeting.

13. PAG REPORT – SAFE AND CLEAN

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 10) concerning progress of the Safe and Clean PAG.

During discussion the following points were raised:

Members asked about the additional police resources required in relation to the installation of ANPR cameras and were informed that the intelligence gathered meant police resources would be deployed where there was a guarantee of successful outcomes. For example, they highlighted the best times and locations for stopping vehicles to carry out insurance checks.

It had also become common practice for police to sit under the cameras while they were on down time and other forces may come into the area for this purpose.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

14. ALCOHOL MISUSE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report (Part 1 – agenda item 11) which examined the scope for a scrutiny review of alcohol-related issues.

The report stated there were distinct areas of scrutiny that could be reviewed as follows:

Street drinking – this topic covers a number of related strands including alcohol exclusion zones.

Underage drinking and night-time economy - most of the issues are already being dealt with reasonably effectively by existing measures The Chairman placed on record his thanks and appreciation to Bargain Booze for the way they had dealt with an incident he had witnessed, where a customer had been suspected of intending to buy alcohol for an underage person.

Health services – there is some evidence of local concern but health problems relating to alcohol tend to be long-term and it would not be possible to assess the impact of the Alcohol Implementation Plan for some time.

Customer and Partnerships Committee continues to oversee health issues and has carried out some work on the effects of health service reforms. The committee has met with Warwickshire Healthwatch and a representative from the Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group is also due to attend its next meeting.

During discussion the following points were raised:

A member of the committee circulated a letter from a local resident about nuisance caused by groups of people drinking in St Andrews churchyard. The anti-social behaviour taking place in St Andrew’s churchyard was of concern to
members. Alcohol was being seized, but it was possible they were simply buying more and hiding it.

There were plans for the Eastern European Link Worker and the local police to work together to engage with the groups who use the churchyard.

The licensing service has robust policies in place and WCC carry out checks on the selling of alcohol. It was agreed underage drinking and night-time economy were not areas that should be reviewed by this committee.

Members raised concerns relating to the effectiveness of signage for alcohol exclusion zones. The Head of Environmental Services advised that these zones no longer existed and had been replaced by a designated public places drinking order. Drinking in public is not an offence on its own but the order relates to drinking in conjunction with an act of public disorder. The exclusion zone signs have been left in place because there is no budget for their removal.

The Head of Environmental Services referred to the powers proposed in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill which would provide local authorities with a number of tactics to deal with a variety of issues. Amongst other things, this legislation would give local authorities the right to outlaw certain activities in designated “public spaces protection areas” which would replace public spaces drinking orders.

There will be a fixed-penalty fine of £100 for breach of a public space protection order. This could be a valuable tool to tackle anti-social behaviour associated with drinking in public places.

Changes in legislation were not expected until October 2014 but work could commence to build an evidence base and review the effects of the work carried out by the Eastern European Link Worker.

The committee asked the Head of Environmental Services and the Scrutiny Officer to prepare a draft one-page strategy for review at the next meeting.

The committee concluded that the overview and scrutiny of health issues associated with alcohol misuse was more appropriately within the remit of CUSP. Involvement of the Crime and Disorder Committee would further complicate the still-evolving arrangements for health scrutiny.

RESOLVED THAT – a draft one-page strategy for dealing with alcohol misuse in the light of changes in public order legislation be submitted to the next meeting.

15. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

Following apologies for absence from the meeting from the chairman of Rugby Neighbourhood Watch there was no report.

16. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee agreed the following agenda items for the meeting on 28 November 2013:

Community Safety Partnership Performance – Head of Environmental Services (to include any trends relating to shoplifting)

Priority Action Group (PAG) report on Safer Futures – Chair of PAG
Progress on the work of the Eastern European Link Worker (to be invited to attend the meeting)

Potential item – Impact of Reduced Capacity Review Action Plan (necessity for this item to be discussed at the Chairman's pre meeting)

Neighbourhood Watch – Chairman of Rugby Neighbourhood Watch

Any items of interest arising from the CSP Board meeting

Review of public disorder relating to alcohol misuse – one-page strategy

CHAIRMAN