

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

22 MARCH 2016

Present: Councillor S Williams (Chair)

Councillors S Bolton and R Martins

Also present: Inspector Nick Lillitou (Hertfordshire Constabulary)

Officers: Head of Community and Customer Services
Community Safety Co-ordinator
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mills and Mehta.

Councillor Bashir was absent without apologies.

16 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2016 were submitted and signed.

18 OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO THE CSP PLAN 2015/18

The Task Group received presentations from Inspector Lillitou and the Community Safety Coordinator.

Inspector Lillitou provided the Task Group with an update on crime figures in the Borough. He advised that crime levels in Watford had increased by 10.7% which was a smaller increase than across the force when taken as a whole. He further noted that the detection rate was higher than across the force when taken as a whole and unlike much of the rest of Hertfordshire, Watford had seen a reduction in burglaries.

There had been an increase in the levels of criminal damage and Inspector Lillitou drew a link with antisocial behaviour (ASB). The Police would be running

Operation Catapan with officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team dedicated to patrolling criminal damage and ASB hotspots.

Levels of domestic abuse had risen by 40% and Inspector Lillitou advised that as more victim support was now available the Police were seeing higher levels of reporting. There was a dedicated team at Hatfield dealing with these cases and an officer from Watford acted as the liaison.

There had been a spate of thefts from motor vehicles particularly involving electronic devices and number plates. Additional patrols were being undertaken and prolific offenders targeted.

Violence against the person had seen an increase of 35% and Inspector Lillitou underlined that this was not entirely due to the night time economy. He highlighted issues that were being faced at the hospital with some patients which had an impact on the figures.

There had also been a noticeable rise in incidents in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). He reassured the Task Group that the vast majority of the 1834 recorded incidents were the lowest forms of assault. As well as the night time economy, Inspector Lillitou outlined other factors such as the growing population.

Inspector Lillitou advised that for the forthcoming year they would continue to report crime levels to One Watford. However violence against the person would no longer be reported to that group. The focus of the Safer Neighbourhood Team would be the CSP Protection Plan and in particular engaging with the different communities within the Borough.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Bolton asked about the recent event encouraging people to have their number plates re-fixed to prevent theft. The Community Safety Coordinator responded that it had been very successful with 101 residents attending.

Councillor Martins expressed his concern about the rises in the crime figures. He asked whether the Community Safety Partnership was looking at causes. He noted the changing demographics of the town and the potential for new tensions. He questioned whether there was a case for a task group to look at this relationship.

Inspector Lillitou underlined that Hertfordshire was a wealthy area and was therefore a target for burglary by organised crime. The Police were also aware of the antisocial behaviour and criminal damage hotspots and were focused on tackling these.

Councillor Martins asked about the reporting of violence against the person and Inspector Lillitou advised that it would still be monitored but not reported to One Watford. The Community Safety Coordinator suggested that an update be brought to a future meeting.

ACTION - Community Safety Coordinator

Inspector Lillitou underlined the importance of providing context to the crime figures. He noted, for example, that the Police could do little to prevent incidents involving dementia patients at the hospital. He reported that Scan Net had been a significant deterrent for crimes in the night time economy.

The Chair referred to the incidents in HMOs and questioned what the root of this spike was. The Head of Community and Customer Services reported that he had been tasked to do some work around these issues. It was agreed that he would report back to the next Task Group meeting in the new municipal year on the outcome of this piece of work. Once the councillors had received this report, they could consider whether a further Task Group would be beneficial.

ACTION – Head of Community and Customer Services

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

19

UPDATE ON PROPOSED CSP PRIORITIES FOR 2016/17

The Community Safety Coordinator introduced the item. He advised that there had been a near five percent reduction in antisocial behaviour in Watford this year. Across the rest of the county there had been a rise of four percent. The number of incidents of antisocial behaviour had halved since 2008 and Watford was no longer considered the number one antisocial behaviour hotspot in the county. The Community Safety Coordinator attributed the improvement to the positive impact of the Safety Net system as well as the partnership working of the Community Protection Group.

The Community Safety Coordinator highlighted four drivers of antisocial behaviour. These were:

- repeat victims
- mental health
- extremism and exploitation
- exclusion and rough sleeping

Watford was now considered an area of best practice. He highlighted that whereas antisocial behaviour reports used to be youth-related it was now more neighbourhood disputes often with a mental health link. He outlined how the mental health services were involved in the process.

The Community Safety Coordinator advised that the focus for 2016/17 would be 'knowing our communities'. Little antisocial behaviour was reported for the emerging communities within the town and he questioned whether this was due to a lack of confidence in the system or lack of knowledge about how to report

problems. He would be working with Inspector Lillitou and warned councillors that the result of this focus may be a spike in antisocial behaviour reports.

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

20

ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS UPDATE

The Task Group received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer updating Members on outstanding actions from previous meetings.

In relation to the action FR1, the Community Safety Coordinator reported that there was a dispute with the landlord in this case.

Following a question from the Chair related to antisocial parking, Inspector Lillitou recommended that he speak to the Parking Shop.

It was agreed that all the actions could be signed off.

RESOLVED –

that the update report be noted and all of the actions be signed off.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.45 pm
and finished at 8.30 pm