

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

4 September 2017

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chair)
Councillors S Bolton, S Cavinder, M Mills and N Shah

Also present: Councillor Karen Collett (Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head
Community Safety Co-ordinator
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

7 Apologies for absence

There was a change of membership for this meeting; Councillor Shah replaced Councillor Smith.

Apologies were received from Councillor Dhindsa.

No apologies were received from Councillor Saffery.

8 Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures on interest.

9 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017 were submitted and signed.

10 The community safety partnership's response to hate crime

The Community Safety Coordinator delivered the presentation to the task group. He thanked the councillors for raising the topic as investigating the issue had allowed the authorities to better understand the local profile and some apparent anomalies. More work had been undertaken as a result and it was a complex picture. A large proportion of the incidents in Watford were self-identified,

where the victim had identified that they felt they were targeted, even if that had not been explicit.

It was important that people had the confidence to report any incidents where they felt there was a motivation which made it a hate crime. The police were not always able to evidence a crime; however the reporting mechanism helped to build an accurate profile down to individual cases which could highlight causes related to the person's vulnerability. In these instances, the authorities could look for other ways to support the individuals.

Importantly, there was no evidence of race hate tensions between communities. There was no particular local profile to identify a group specifically linked to hate crime. However, it was noted that those under the influence of alcohol had been known to use offensive language in this way and drive figures. This was dealt with by a separate programme.

The research had shown that reporting spikes were also linked to arrests and the use of insulting language to staff in security or the retail trade or to police officers attending such calls. Further work around the protection of staff rights and the aim to see prosecutions for these offences would be worked through the coming year.

Following a question, the Community Safety Coordinator agreed to try and find data on how the level of incidents in Watford compared with other similar towns. The feeling was that levels in Watford were quite low and there was not a background of tension within communities.

Responding to a question about the nature of the reported offences, it was confirmed that a large proportion of those were incidents that were punishable as offences.

RESOLVED –

- that the presentation be noted.
- that the action requested be undertaken.

11

Progress with the annual CSP plan

The Community Safety Coordinator delivered the presentation to the task group.

Cross-border offences

This area of the plan related to offences committed by groups or individuals looking to come to the town to commit offences. This had led to detailed police

responses to meet this threat with arrests, the seizure of drugs and the closure of properties connected with the drug trade. The operation continued with proactive policing to identify individuals who could be arrested and removed from the town

The task group discussed how the police gathered evidence in these cases. It was explained that a multi-operational thread with support from the public and new infrastructure had led to precise targeted action leading to a number of arrests.

A discussion followed on the operational responses to the emerging risk presented by these cross-border activities. The responses would continue to roll out across the town to meet any intelligence-led targets

Domestic abuse

The latest profile on domestic abuse was awaited from the county council. This would be circulated to councillors once it was available.

The Prevent agenda

There were no new reports or specific threats. Although reports were made, there was no profile which was a cause for concern locally. The level of referrals had remained steady and represented concerns of extremism across the spectrum. Watford's multicultural population showed no additional tensions following recent national incidents

Child safeguarding

Work continued in this area with local police working with county teams to identify vulnerabilities and place monitoring and intervention when needed

Homelessness and rough sleeping

The number of people registering themselves as rough sleeping was in decline despite the housing crisis. There was a core group of about 25 known rough sleepers who refused to engage with services or had been banned due to extreme antisocial behaviour. The operation was moving to the enforcement stage to reduce their impact on the town.

Turning to the recent incidences of travellers in Watford; the Police had confirmed that there had been no associated spike in crime. However, the perception of crime may have increased. There was now a different group of travellers who were at Watford Fields. There was a need for a conversation about the level of provision for travellers around the country. There was a peak of travellers coming into the region. It was important to allay the residents' fears.

RESOLVED –

- that the presentation be noted.
- that the action requested be undertaken.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.45 pm
and finished at 7.35 pm