

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) TASK GROUP

24 July 2018

Present: Councillor K Crout (Chair)
Councillors J Dhindsa, K Hastrick, R Martins and G Saffery

Officers: Community Safety Coordinator
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (AG)

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mauthoor and Mills.

2 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 were submitted and signed.

4 **Overview of the annual CSP plan and an update on progress**

The Community Safety Coordinator explained how the 2018/19 CSP plan had evolved from learning experienced last year. There would be five priority areas, a reduction in number from 2017/18. For example, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and domestic abuse hate crime would no longer be separate priorities; rather they would be grouped together under a 'managed risks' heading along with other associated issues. He expanded on the revised priorities as follows.

Managed risks

The common driver for issues contained in the priority was the night time economy in the town centre and to a lesser extent matters pertaining to the day time economy. He outlined how the extensive footfall in the town centre (with many millions of visits) impacted on crime and how ASB had reduced. He discussed a piece of work commissioned by the Hertfordshire Constabulary that would provide useful data around hate crime when reporting later in the year. It appeared that some instances of this crime occurred following detentions for shoplifting when suspects made derogatory remarks to security staff. There was no evidence of underlying tensions within communities or of any linkage to the 'prevent' agenda.

Youth crime, gangs and cross boarder offenders

The Community Safety Coordinator explained how offences in the category were impacted by gangs from the Capital; including drugs supply (and the quality thereof) and expanding networks. However, crimes were low in Hertfordshire compared to other home counties. He discussed the resulting impact on members of the homeless and rough sleepers in the town - who would beg to help feed their Class A drug habits. He also discussed how young people were educated in schools on the dangers of carrying knives.

Homelessness, rough sleeping and begging

There had been an upturn in the number of rough sleepers in the town. This was due, in part, to the hot weather where some of those on the street also had accommodation to go to. It was anticipated that numbers would reduce by the winter. The Community Safety Coordinator discussed the somewhat counter-productive measures carried out by some apparently well-meaning individuals in the town that could be seen as making homelessness a comfortable lifestyle. In response to a question from members, the Community Safety Coordinator outlined the engagement that had taken place with the individuals seeking to moderate their activities. He also discussed the more useful work conducted by such charities as the New Hope Trust.

Theft from motor vehicle and burglary

The Community Safety Coordinator advised the task group of the best and trusted models that existed to tackle these types of offences. He discussed the methodology of some offenders and how these individuals did not tend to be residents of the town. It was anticipated that the number of crimes would reduce over the year by adoption of the various tactics.

Child exploitation

There were no extensive problems in the town as had been experienced in other parts of the UK. Watford had more of a peer to peer type profile and with a relationship to gangs. There were no significant concerns - and weekly meetings were held with the Hertfordshire Constabulary so as to regularly monitor issues.

The Community Safety Coordinator concluded by drawing to the attention of the task group the work plan and broad range of interventions that would be utilised to progress the various priorities.

In response to questions from members, the Community Safety Coordinator:

- Explained that an emerging number of domestic violence crimes related to a sibling on sibling type of offending as opposed to what may be regarded as the more traditional offences against partners. However, a significant proportion of victims of domestic violence did not wish to take

proceedings. He outlined the activities of a local domestic violence forum (of which he was a member) that provided a specialist service to support victims of abuse.

- Outlined the work of Operation Tropic; a police initiative to combat people trafficking issues (there were no concerns at this time with regard to Watford).

Members discussed the attendance of the Hertfordshire Constabulary at meetings and how the task group focused on the work of the community safety partnership as a whole. They also discussed a number of local ward issues that the Community Safety Coordinator would progress outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that -

1. the update be noted

5 **Work programme**

The Chair introduced the draft work programme for the municipal year. Members debated the content of the programme and the potential additional themes for scrutiny at the November and March meetings. The work programme was agreed; with the inclusion of street homelessness as an agenda item in November and youth related crime in March. The partnership agencies and organisations to be invited to the meetings to discuss these topics were also agreed.

In conclusion, the task group requested that a members briefing be arranged to advise on the procedures the Council adopted to help house the homeless.

Action – Member Development and Civic Officer

RESOLVED that –

1. the work programme was agreed
2. the action requested be undertaken

Chair
Community Safety Partnership Task Group

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.
and finished at 7.30 p.m.