

ITEM 12 Community Safety – Interim Panel Review

Report of the Community Safety Review Lead Scrutiny Member

Recommended:

- 1. That the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Warden scheme be reviewed.**
- 2. That the shift pattern and hours of work (of the Neighbourhood Wardens) be reviewed in order to ensure their effectiveness alongside other community policing activity.**
- 3. That the Neighbourhood Wardens continue to log their activity, as per the OSCOM panel pilot, on an ongoing basis.**
- 4. That work is undertaken to identify what further training and skills development may be necessary for Neighbourhood Wardens to effectively carry out their duties, and that a training plan be proposed (and reviewed at least annually) for all Wardens.**
- 5. To review CCTV management in light of Protection of Freedoms Act and in line with the 2015 self assessment for the Office of Surveillance Commissioners (OSC), and to further brief OSCOM accordingly.**
- 6. That OSCOM add an annual report (on Community Safety generally) to their 6 year work programme.**

SUMMARY:

As part of its annual programme and in light of proposed changes to Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) core responsibilities, and the withdrawal of HCC's Accredited Community Support Officers (ACSO's), OSCOM requested the opportunity to review the responsibilities of Test Valley Borough Council for Community Safety – and in particular, the role of the Community Wardens.

OSCOM were keen to understand the impact of such changes, as well as any potential repercussions to strategic tasking, following the introduction of a Police and Crime Commissioner, boundary review, the restructuring of the Test Valley Partnership (to include the Community Safety Partnership) and (at the time) the development of a new Corporate Plan.

The 2014 OSCOM panel agreed to examine;

- The organisation of the Community Safety Team
- The Role of the Neighbourhood Wardens
- Public Concerns
- Records of Incidents and reports relating to the Teams function
- Skills and Training needs

This was in response to concerns about perceived resource reductions and the impact this may have to community safety in Test Valley.

The Panel met a number of times over the last 18 months and this report seeks to set out the outcomes the Panel wish to present to OSCOM for consideration.

1 Context - Wardens

- 1.1 The Warden function was established prior to the inception of other initiatives such as ACSO's and PCSO's – and whilst the ACSO's have subsequently been withdrawn by HCC, there remains a significant number of active PCSO's within the Test Valley area, superseding many warden duties.
- 1.2 This OSCOM panel was therefore established to review the role of the Neighbourhood Wardens to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose' amid the various changes to Neighbourhood Policing in recent years, and a more coordinated approach to community engagement and support across the Council generally.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Wardens scheme was launched in Test Valley in July 2002. Initially it was half funded as part of a Government pilot, with Testway and Swaythling Housing Associations, Romsey, and Nursling and Rownhams PC's, and TVBC funding the other half. In 2005/6 these funding arrangements ceased, and TVBC became full and sole funders.
- 1.4 At inception, the focus of the scheme was crime prevention, environmental improvement, and community engagement and development – with teams north and south of the borough covering specific wards of Andover and Romsey (in 2004 this was made borough-wide).
- 1.5 The Wardens were granted limited enforcement powers in 2006 to deal with anti-social behaviour and have been 'accredited' by Hampshire Constabulary since 2007. These delegated powers included; the power to require a persons name and address, to require the surrender of alcohol and tobacco, to stop cycles and issue FPN's in respect of truancy, begging, drinking etc. In line with this realigned image, their uniform was changed to reflect a more formal 'police style' than the previous softer community safety image.

2 Background

- 2.1 Subsequent to the introduction of Wardens, additional initiatives have been established by other partner organisations. These include the introduction of PCSO's (by Police) and ACSO's (by HCC) in 2006, with ACSO's having similar powers to Wardens and PCSO's a fuller range.
- 2.2 As a result of the introduction of more specialised units and the withdrawal of Government funding for Wardens (in favour of PSCO's) a more sophisticated approach to working in partnership was developed (initially by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and more recently, the CSP and now an amalgamated TV Partnership). As a result, there has been a return to a 'community engagement' approach to TVBC's Community Safety responsibilities – an approach supported by these multiagency partnerships.

- 2.3 The focus for Local Authorities has moved towards an increased culture of community engagement as a way of working with other agencies and local communities to address crime. For TVBC, this approach was formalised as part of the Corporate restructuring in 2011 and the formation of a new 'Community Engagement Team' in 2012 which brought together the Community Safety function (including Wardens) within a wider Community Engagement Team. The role of this team has been to extend the way we work with Ward Members as community leaders and localised communities, to better support the achievement of their aims and to capacity build within local communities to enable them to do more for themselves.
- 2.4 More recently (2014) and in response to Hampshire Police restructure, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Inspector have presented plans (to OSCOM in July 2014) to reorganise police structures across the county. These plans included an overt commitment to retain PCSO posts and reduce rates of abstraction from their beat areas – and in Test Valley, PCSO numbers have actually increased.
- 2.5 It has also been emphasised that local authority uniformed patrols could be perceived to duplicate patrol and enforcement aspects of the PCSO roles – preferring instead that community engagement, intelligence gathering / sharing, targeted operations support, and preventative / diversionary initiatives were where local authority support would be most beneficial and clearer to the public in terms of accountability and partnership working.
- 2.6 Recognising these steady changes, the Wardens remit has also evolved, and now incorporate an increased focus on forming links and trying to build positive relationships with local partners, communities and community groups as opposed to duplicating enforcement responsibilities (for which the Police remains the primary agency and responder).
- 2.7 In light of all of the above, the OSCOM panel discussed a wide range of issues which are summarised in Annex 1 – along with an officer response where appropriate.

3 Panel Review and Scoping

- 3.1 The first panel meeting (26 March 2014) came shortly after the announcement from HCC that the ACSO's would be withdrawn from 2015. There was also uncertainty at this time regarding the future role of Police PCSO's.
- 3.2 As a consequence and not surprisingly, a number of questions emerged from the Panel that strayed into wider aspects of community / neighbourhood policing, potentially far wider than the Councils remit, and that which could be covered by solely reviewing the role of the Wardens.
- 3.3 Following the first meeting on 26 March 2014, further meetings were held on 26 June 2014 and 16 Jan, 2 March, 18 March, 6 August, 27 August, 18 November and 18 December 2015. At the November meeting, Inspector Markham (Police) was invited to address Members and answer questions in connection with TVBC responsibilities, and how these related to mainstream Policing. The Head of Community and Leisure and/or the Community Engagement Manager were present at all (7) meetings they were invited to.

- 3.4 Annex 1 outlines the key issues discussed and addressed by the panel – and where appropriate, identifies the officer response and panel comments separately.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There is a statutory responsibility for Local Authorities to be a partner to the Community Safety Partnership (in Test Valley's case, this is an integral part of the Test Valley Partnership). As part of this, TVBC support and chair the Community Safety Management Group (CSMG) – this includes the preparation of a strategic assessment and action plan for the life of the plan.
- 4.2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 encompasses the two functions of crime prevention and community safety and has introduced a framework for partnership working at a local level. It places a statutory duty on the police and local authorities to work together with key partners and agencies to formulate and implement local crime reduction strategies.
- 4.3 As such, partners are required to;
- (a) Identify key local crime and disorder priorities.
 - (b) Formulate strategies to assist in tackling these key priorities and reduce crime at a local level.
 - (c) Monitor and evaluate those strategies

5 Police view on TVBC's Community Safety function / responsibilities

- 5.1 As part of this review, consultation has been undertaken with the Police, as to their perceptions of the way TVBC's responsibilities currently align with the Police. This included discussion about possible areas for improvement (from the Police perspective). Specific matters were discussed in confidence at the OSCOM meeting in November.
- 5.2 In summary, the Police place great value on coordinated, multiagency support, in particular with regards to public reassurance, targeted operations, community engagement and preventative initiatives, CSMG / tasking, PACT's, PAT and projects such as ICE, Supporting Families Project, Early Help Hub and joint operations. The Police felt that duplication of skills and functions that could be discharged by the Police and/or PCSO's was of limited value, and instead were of the view that preventative and proactive community engagement activity was of far greater impact to contributing to reducing crime and ASB than patrolling.
- 5.3 At its most basic level, Police were of the view that they must be identifiable as 'first responders' – and that residents and the public in general needed a clear message as to whom they should contact. It was stated that members of the public often confuse wardens, PCSO's and Police as one-and-the-same. (Whilst it was not discussed at the November meeting, Police have previously suggested that TVBC Warden's uniform ought be changed – so it is clearly different to the Police and PCSO's, to avoid this confusion).

6 Current Situation

- 6.1 The Wardens role was formally updated in 2012 in consultation with Police and other TVP partners, as an integral part of a broader and local neighbourhood policing offer and to enhance our community engagement and support capacity.
- 6.2 This required more clearly defined agency accountability – with the Police seeking to lead on all ‘policing’ matters, supplemented by other agencies support for targeted operations, preventative and diversionary initiatives, intelligence gathering and community engagement and support.
- 6.3 For TVBC this includes our leading the Community Safety Management Group (CSMG) for agreed priority action areas and hot-spot tasking, supporting Police And Communities Together meetings (PACT’s) and multi-agency project work such as Supporting Families and the Early Help Hub
- 6.4 Public perceptions of crime and fear of crime cannot be underestimated, and more regular patrols are regularly cited as means of providing a visible deterrent to crime and ASB, and public reassurance.
- 6.5 The reality however is that the Police and other agencies cannot afford to have patrolling officers simply walking the streets, and have instead developed more highly sophisticated means of monitoring / gathering intelligence and crime prevention in ways which are significantly more effective and responsive. Perhaps most importantly, modern policing methods, along with other social and cultural factors, have also lead to year on year reductions in incidents and overall crime levels.
- 6.6 The Wardens could be deployed solely for patrolling, but this would require their extraction from all other ‘community engagement’ activity – which is contrary to one of our primary outcomes of the Corporate Plan and would reduce potential capacity for all other aspects of community engagement and support.
- 6.7 From a neighbourhood policing perspective, walking the streets and reporting incidents is of limited value when compared to integrated and coordinated multi-agency activity in terms of its impact to reducing crime / fear of crime and being intelligence led in responding to areas of greatest need.

7 Other issues raised by panel

- 7.1 The panel noted that Internal Audit were in the process of undertaking an ad-hoc review (started in August 2015). The report will review arrangements from both a statutory and discretionary perspective, and in response to risk associated with discharging corporate and strategic priorities. (The final report is still to be completed but any actions or updates will be made available to OSCOM as necessary).

- 7.2 Concern was expressed as to the consistency of Job Descriptions across the business (not just in context of JD’s covered by this review) – this matter has been referred to HR.
- 7.3 Use of apprenticeships - to be reviewed as / when vacancies emerge
- 7.4 Shift patterns / hours of work – proposed these ought be reviewed in terms of their flexibility (to ensure shift patterns are in accord with times of need).
- 7.5 Use of CCTV (including vans) – 2012 surveillance policy was shared and reviewed with Panel Members. Policy will be kept under review and outcomes from the latest (December 2015) self assessment shared with OSCOM).
- 7.6 Information sharing for PACTs – agreed that lead officer will continue to provide ward members with minutes / actions and useful intel prior to meetings.

8 The Next Steps

- 8.1 Recommendations from this Panel review will form the basis of an annual report to OSCOM (date tba).

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1	File Ref:	
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Report to:	OSCOM	Date:	20 January 2016