

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

15 March 2022

7.30 - 9.30 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Eugenie Harvey
Councillor Matthew Siggers

Also Present

Councillor Simon Carter
Chief Inspector Paul Austin – Essex Police
Sergeant Matt Hughes – Essex Police

Officers

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support
Michael Pitt, Assistance Director Environment
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

53. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Churchill and Shona Johnson.

54. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 as a site rep for Harlow Allotment Association.

55. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

56. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

57. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

58. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

59. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

60. **POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ANNUAL REVIEW - QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH THE POLICE**

Chief Inspector Paul Austin and Sergeant Matt Hughes from Essex Police gave a presentation on policing in the town, in response to questions submitted in advance by the Committee. It was noted that a number of questions had been submitted by the public and these would be answered outside of the meeting. A copy of these questions and answers is appended to the minutes.

The Committee then asked the Police questions in relation to the presentation and discussed potential further work that could take place.

The Committee said that they would recommend to Cabinet that improvements to CCTV in the Town Centre would be looked at, as well as asking the Police to provide contact information for Police Officers assigned to each Ward.

The Committee also agreed that it would look at what could be done about the rise in hate crime.

RESOLVED that:

A It was recommended to Cabinet that:

- i) Cabinet requests that work is undertaken to identify what changes to CCTV provision could be made in the Town Centre and any budget implications arising from these, with a report to be brought back to Cabinet at a later date; and
- ii) The Police be asked to provide contact information for Police Officers assigned to each Ward.

B The Committee would consider the inclusion of an item on hate crime on its work plan.

61. **ALLOTMENTS - UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received an update report on the review of allotments.

RESOLVED that it was agreed that further meetings of the Councillor Task and Finish Group be arranged and a further report be received by the Committee in the following municipal year.

62. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2021/22.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

63. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

64. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

1. Would it be useful to compare Essex and Nottinghamshire Police regarding rape and sexual offence cases? The Essex force has 2.96 officers per 1000 people and in Nottinghamshire it is 2.95.

The PFCC for Nottinghamshire produced a report on 2 November 2021. It says on page 7:

"Between 01/04/2021 and 17/10/2021 the force has achieved 63 Positive Outcomes for Rape (10% recorded crime) and 222 Positive Outcomes for Sexual Offences (11.6% recorded crime)."

How can Essex Police justify zero solved rape cases as was reported by YourHarlow in its article 'Essex Police defend "abysmal" record on solving crimes in Harlow' published 27 January 2022?

Please see the Nottinghamshire report at:

<https://www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk/About-Us/03-Nottinghamshire-Police-Public-Protection-and-Safeguarding-Report.pdf>

A:- Yes as explained at the meeting. Rape Over 16 is a complex category owing to the types of offending. The District has a number of solved offences for Rape but this is in the under 16 categories. The district currently has a number of Rape in the over 16 categories ongoing. The vast majority are historic offences regarding persons in a relationship or ex-relationship.

2. Will the police in Harlow consider adopting a strategy in full or part known as Project Zeal to reduce shoplifting and its associated violent crime, as implemented by Nottinghamshire Police and outlined in a College of Policing article dated 14 December 2021? its URL being:

<https://www.college.police.uk/article/working-retail-and-security-reduce-shoplifting>

Note: Project Zeal was launched to strengthen the relationship between retail, security and policing by sharing information, using technology to identify prolific offenders and tailoring policing solutions to tackle crime.

A: - The district already has good links with Business via our Business Crime unit. The local Town Centre team uses this link and information around perpetrators. The Business Crime Team is looking at a number of solutions to strengthen existing relationships many of which are mentioned in Op Zeal.

3. According to stats on the police website (<https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/essex-police/harlow-east/?tab=Statistics>), for the last year, around 40% of crimes were concluded as "not able to prosecute suspect" and around another 20% of crimes were concluded as "unable to identify suspect". If I've understood this correctly, 60% of criminals get off with their crime, this doesn't include the ones where the Courts find someone not guilty. Why does this look so poor? As potential victims of crime is there more that can be done to prevent it in the first place and/or help ensure a successful prosecution?

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

A:- Not able to prosecute suspects falls into a number of categories these could be for a variety of reasons such as:-

- Insufficient Evidence*
- Unsupportive Victims*
- Suspect is deceased or too unwell for proceedings.*

The biggest ask we have is for victims to support proceedings, we see a large number of cases that are not supported by victims, which in turn makes it extremely difficult for police to prosecute. There are a number of services that offer support to victims and witnesses who provide evidence to police.

4. With the rise in Violence/Racial-Religious/Domestic Abuse cases rising [together with cases being solved down] is it not time to put neighbourhood policing more visually available on a regular daily basis? Not just when police hold surgeries?

A:- We hold regular surgeries, our neighbourhood teams are engaged in tackling crime in neighbourhoods every day. In relation to visibility there are plans for increased visibility over the summer, including increased foot patrols and use of cycle patrols.

5. In my opinion drug taking at underpasses needs tackling. Underpasses are always near a kids park or kids playing field and the smell and sight is detrimental to the area and not something anyone wants their young kids exposed to. Electric Scooters need stopping more, they are silent and deadly and I fear it will not be long before a death occurs in Harlow because of electric scooters. Can you please do more to make the walking paths and cycling paths of this town more welcoming to all and more safe by looking at these issues, thank you.

A:- We already have plans with our partners at Harlow Council to increase the provision of CCTV around Underpasses. In relation to our open spaces and underpasses we have specific operations that target feelings of safety in the local areas. Over the summer we will be increasing the visibility of police officers, so people feel safety. E-Scooters are a national issue, we continue to see E-Scooters seized on a regular basis by our officers, in addition to running a prevention campaign in schools and on our media to educate people around the dangers of these machines.

6. What happened to the much advertised (at the time) Police tactic of having "on the beat" police on bicycles of a few years ago? It was very popular with the public and most people in general. I don't remember the scheme being officially abandoned, it seems to have just fizzled out. Mind you, this was back in the days when we had a properly resourced Police Service, so maybe I have just answered my own question

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

A:- As part of our increased visibility from our neighbourhood policing team we are re-introducing cycle patrols.

7. Why is there not a visible police presence around the town
Terminus street & clockhouse areas seems to be going into the dark ages
Friday & Saturday nights the level of anti social behaviour in town centre is bad
yet no police about
Surely now with rising levels of crime, 24 hour police station needs to reopen
especially in a town of 85000 and growing
Every estate should have a manned police office, the stow, staple & bushfair
could really do with it
Police should work with mobile security companies to secure industrial estates &
car parks.
Can the police push for banning orders / exclusion orders from town for persistent
offenders? I'd like to see more police on foot walking the streets and like old days
on push bikes
With rising level of electric scooters, it would be good to see police on them too to
combat the dangerous scooter riders that blight the streets all police should be
armed with minimum of a taser, and perhaps an armed team be visible on the
streets. Criminals have become used to lack of police presence, police &
judiciary action. And know too well there's not enough police about.

A:- The use of electric scooters on the highway is prohibited unless there are exemptions, therefore this wouldn't be a mode of transport we will be adopting. We currently have a number of people subject to criminal behaviour orders. There will not be a growth in our police estate, we are investing in mobile technology for officers to be on the street.

8. Currently the law in this country forbids the use of electric scooters everywhere with the exception of use on private land. Why is it then, that I am, on a daily confronted by irresponsible users of these machines on public roads, footpaths and cycle tracks? Many users are in the age bracket of 10-16. Can the local force get these stupid machines removed and scrapped?
It just may help if signage is put in place to reinforce this.

A:- We already have plans with our partners at Harlow Council to increase the provision of CCTV around Underpasses. In relation to our open spaces and underpasses we have specific operations that target feelings of safety in the local areas. Over the summer we will be increasing the visibility of police officers, so people feel safety. E-Scooters are a national issue, we continue to see E-Scooters seized on a regular basis by our officers, in addition to running a prevention campaign in schools and on our media to educate people around the dangers of these machines.

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

9. I would like to ask. Why does it take so long to get cctv evidence? because after 4 weeks it gets deleted and then the evidence had gone and then you can't prosecute due to no evidence?

A:- Retention of CCTV is an issue for the individual or premise that has the CCTV. Our officers know the limitations that some systems have on retention of CCTV and so are mindful of this when they conduct enquiries. Unfortunately on occasions CCTV has not been retained.

10. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation commissioned 'A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders' and reported their findings on 17 November 2021 (see URL at end of this question). Please explain what progress has been made locally or at county level to implement the report's seven recommendations relevant to the police that are listed below?

Local criminal justice services (police, CPS, courts, probation, prisons) and health commissioners/providers should:

10. develop and deliver a programme of mental health awareness-raising for staff working within criminal justice services. This should include skills to better explain to individuals why they are being asked questions about their mental health so that there can be more meaningful engagement;

11. jointly review arrangements to identify, assess and support people with a mental illness as they progress through the Criminal Justice System to achieve better mental health outcomes and agree plans for improvement.

The police service should:

14. ensure that all dedicated investigative staff receive training on vulnerability which includes inputs on responding to the needs of vulnerable suspects (as well as victims). This should be incorporated within detective training courses;

15. dip sample (outcome code) OC10 and OC12 cases to assess the standard and consistency of decision making and use this to determine any training or briefing requirements and the need for any ongoing oversight;

16. review the availability, prevalence, and sophistication of mental health flagging, to enhance this where possible, and to consider what meaningful and usable data can be produced from this;

17. assure themselves that risks, and vulnerabilities are properly identified during risk assessment processes, particularly for voluntary attendees. They must ensure that risks are appropriately managed, including referrals to Healthcare Partners, Liaison and Diversion and the use of appropriate adults;

18. Police leadership should review MG (manual of guidance) forms to include prompts or dedicated sections for suspect vulnerability to be included.

Link to report:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/a-joint-thematic-inspection-of-the-criminal-justice-journey-for-individuals-with-mental-health-needs-and-disorders/>

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

A: - Author requires more detailed time to come back to question posed. Please ask them to email me on paul.austin@essex.police.uk for full response.

Site Specific Neighbourhood Issues

11. What is being done about the incredible spike in vehicle thefts from Newhall alone (12 in 12 months) 2 taken within 10 minutes of one another. It keeps happening yet there is no increase in patrols and only more incidents over here.

A:- From a local perspective we are doing a number of things to try and tackle this issue:

- 1. I have officers regularly out in plain clothes doing targeted patrols of areas affected by this crime type*
- 2. I have officers out on high visibility patrols to do deter and prevent crime.*
- 3. Essex Police have a Stolen Vehicle Investigation Unit (SVIU) as mentioned above, who work relentlessly to try and locate stolen vehicles, particularly high value vehicles. They do a lot of work with other forces and cross border operations.*
- 4. We have regular operations involving Essex Police, Herts Police and The Metropolitan Police where we work together doing cross border patrols trying to locate criminals that use our road networks to commit crime. We have recently held one of these operations where in one night 14 people were arrested and 4 stolen vehicles were located and recovered.*
- 5. We are in liaisons with National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NaVCIS) regarding trap vehicles, so it is something that we are already considering and looking to try and implement.*

12. Is anything being done about the increasing number of cars parking on and blocking pavements in residential areas, particularly Church Langley.

A:- Yes Patrols occur and we liase with our parking enforcement partners. However, without a specific location I cannot provide any further detail.

13. I am a transgender women in Harlow Essex I don't feel safe at all I get hassle when using the toilets and in some shops.

A:- Hate Crime is a key issues in Harlow. We encourage persons to return any Hate Incidents to us. In addition to ASB or harassment. We are committed to working with partners to make people feel safer within Harlow but especially within the Town Centre

14. Speed checks needed down Elizabeth Way/Herons Wood. Far too many speeding vehicles and HGVs

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

A:- Noted. If there are specific times required. Please email the Harlow CPT Inbox.

15. Is there any reason why Potter Street from Prentice Place to Miller and Carter cannot have speed cameras or speed humps as I have lived on this road for 20 years and the traffic does not take any notice of speed limits. Most traffic uses this as a rat run to avoid traffic going up to m11 roundabout many years ago there were often speed traps by the white horse pub but these seem to have gone by the way

A:- Fixed Speed cameras are a matter for the Safer Roads Partnership in Essex, they target the area's with the highest amount of collisions resulting in killed or seriously injured. However I will pass your comment along to my team and we can arrange some additional speed checks with the local Community Policing Team.

16. I am from Mark Hall Academy along First Avenue and one of our parents emailed in to say she would not send her daughters to school today 14th January as they witnessed and walked passed a fight that included a knife in the the First Avenue Underpass. This underpass is the only way to and from school. Would it be possible to ensure there is a community officer patrolling the underpass during the morning and afternoon about 3.10pm when students leave to get home, please.

A:- We realise that our underpasses are vulnerable places for residents and the perception of safety is not good. Therefore we are committed with Harlow Council to improve safety within these by making them better spaces, this includes upgrading and adding new CCTV

17. Why is it still after 6 years of telling the police that drug dealing is still occurring by the postbox at Arkwrights/Pittmans field? Its so blatant but seems to be overlooked! Can there not be a deterrent used?

A:- Can the author contact me direct so I can directly answer on paul.austin@essex.police.uk

18. Is anything being done about the increase in electric scooters being used on the pavements, Particularly in Church Langley area.

A:- We already have plans with our partners at Harlow Council to increase the provision of CCTV around Underpasses. In relation to our open spaces and underpasses we have specific operations that target feelings of safety in the local areas. Over the summer we will be increasing the visibility of police officers, so people feel safety. E-Scooters are a national issue, we continue to see E-

Questions Submitted by the Public to the Police

Scooters seized on a regular basis by our officers, in addition to running a prevention campaign in schools and on our media to educate people around the dangers of these machines.

- 19.** What is the Police policy in dealing with, Shoplifters, Bicycle riding and Electric Scooter Riding in the town centre? All of these are against the law but they seem to be ignored.

A:- These are all priority area's for my Town Centre Team. Shoplifting is dealt with by TCT. We have excellent relationships with businesses, Harvey Centre and the Watergardens. There is a current PSPO in relation the cycling in the Town Centre and we are currently reviewing it with Harlow Council.

- 20.** When you will allow more officers to patrol Harlow Town centre? Because unfortunately as a woman I feel unsafe to walk in that area after 4 pm because of the drunks and people on drugs which every time tries to intimidate you.

A:- Harlow Town Centre is a priority area for us. Our Town Centre team works hard with partners. We are trialling more initiatives to improve visibility however I would encourage the author to let us know where she feels unsafe by emailing the Harlow CPT Inbox