

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Thursday, 20 July 2023 at 6.30pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Jan Candy, Councillor Dan Clery, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Owen Grey, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Sally Noble, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Ed Thompson

Other Members present:

Councillor Deborah Dean, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Rosie Smithson

Officers present:

Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Julia Catterwell (Communities Officer), Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny and Member Development)), Alex Heys (Digital Marketing, Safeguarding and Community Projects Manager), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer (Governance)).

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Folley, with Councillor Smithson attending as substitute; and Councillor Lynch, with Councillor Dean attending as substitute.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no formal Declarations of Interest made.

In relation to item 4, Councillors Plummer and Candy stated they had attended as a Member of the Strategic Planning Committee on 3 July 2023 when the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations in relation to Democratic Accountability in the Planning process had been considered.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising Sheet

The Scrutiny Committee noted the Matters Arising Update Sheet in relation to queries raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

The Chair explained that, in addition to the queries, two recommendations were made and then considered by the Strategic Planning Committee on 3 July 2023. The first was the introduction of a “triple lock” style call-in process and a slightly modified version was agreed with the following changes:

- retitled “Planning Committee Member Call-in Process”;
- the introduction of a cut off date; and
- those requesting it, would need to demonstrate that “The proposal would be of significant public interest; would have a significant impact on the environment; or should otherwise be referred to Members due to its significance in some other respect”.

The Committee was reminded that, under the Council’s constitution, if a Scrutiny Committee’s recommendation was not agreed wholly or in part, it needed to be referred to Full Council. As the call-in process agreed by Strategic Planning Committee was only slightly different to the “triple lock” style recommended, the Scrutiny Committee was asked if it wished for the recommendation to be referred to Full Council or if it was satisfied that the essence of the recommendation had been agreed to. Councillors Plummer and Candy who had been at the Strategic Planning Committee stated they felt the amended process was more workable in practice. Councillor Gooch, who had been present at the original Scrutiny Committee, stated she felt the changes to what had been proposed were acceptable and in keeping with the recommendation, therefore, there was no need to refer it to Full Council.

The Committee noted that the introduction of a call-in procedure was a change to the Planning Procedural Rules in the Constitution so, in any case, it would need to be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee prior to Full Council.

With regard to the Scrutiny Committee’s second recommendation, the Chair explained that, whilst the Strategic Planning Committee decided not to make any changes to the casting vote on the Referral Panel and the time allowed for speakers, the fact that they had considered the matters meant they had fulfilled the Scrutiny Committee’s recommendation, therefore, they did not need to be referred to Full Council.

RESOLVED

That the Matters Arising Update Sheet be noted and that the recommendation relating to the call in process not be referred to Full Council.

5 Crime & Disorder Committee - Review of the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership

The Committee received report ES/1610 from the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health which gave a brief introduction to the role, responsibilities and

structure of the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as well as details of its relationship with the Safer Stronger Communities Board at Suffolk level. It also outlined key areas of activity and ambitions for the next twelve months, as set out in the East Suffolk CSP Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member stated that the CSP represented an excellent opportunity to work together to address key priorities and issues that were important to local communities and key partners. He explained that CSPs were formed under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, which gave local authorities and the Police new responsibilities to work in partnership with other organisations and the community to develop strategies to tackle crime and disorder at a local level. Significant work took place through the Suffolk Safer Stronger Board and the Community Safety Team at Suffolk County Council. The work of the CSP was co-ordinated through an Action Plan (Appendix C of the report) which was informed by a county-wide strategic assessment produced by Suffolk County Council and focussed on eight community safety priorities as follows:

- Hate Crime
- Preventing Radicalisation
- Modern Slavery
- Anti-social behaviour
- Criminal Exploitation (formerly known as County Lines)
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Volume crime
- Fraud

The Committee noted that Fraud and Volume Crime were new priorities – Fraud because it had been identified at Suffolk level as a growing threat to community safety and Volume Crime, including burglary and car crime, because of its visibility in local communities and impact on community confidence. As well as the eight priorities, three cross cutting themes were highlighted – Data, Reporting and Digital, all of which were about how partners worked together to identify and tackle crime and disorder.

The Cabinet Member stressed that the East Suffolk Action Plan in no way represented all of the work done by CSP partners around the priorities. The Action Plan sought to avoid duplication and therefore focused on areas for collaboration and tried to find activity which was not a part of business as usual. Examples of things that were not included because they were business as usual, but were clearly important, were included in paragraph 2.2 of the report. Paragraph 2.3 included examples of recent projects supported by the CSP including a door chain project in Lowestoft in response to a recent local homicide, a Crimestoppers campaign aimed at increasing reporting of domestic abuse and an 'Ask Angela' mystery shop. The Action Plan was a living document and was reviewed regularly to make sure it continued to represent the most effective work for partners to undertake.

The Committee noted that funding totalling almost £30,000 over three years had been made available to the CSP from Suffolk Public Sector Leaders via the Safer Stronger Communities Board. This funding had been stretched over four plus years but there was now very little remaining. An additional £16,500 had been identified specifically to tackle the criminal exploitation of young people. Funding that used to be made

available to CSPs had been diverted to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) when the role was introduced, and was now used to fund/commission larger scale projects.

The Cabinet Member explained that all CSPs were currently being reviewed by Government to see whether their structure and purpose might be changed in response to findings from Part Two of the review of Police and Crime Commissioners, which included recognition of the importance of CSPs but highlighted that CSPs were not being used as effectively as they could be. CSPs were not currently funded and it was hoped the review would bring some clarity about the future, including funding. Until then, the focus was on delivering the Action Plan agreed in November 2022, ongoing engagement of the Responsible Authorities and other key partners, and the development of a CSP Communications Plan. Priorities also included focussing on prevention and early intervention work to address the root causes of crime and disorder problems, hearing a broader range of voices including young people, those with disabilities and communities at risk of Hate Crime, and researching effective responses to shared issues by working more closely with other CSPs.

The Assistant Cabinet Member, Councillor Ewart, commented that the Community Safety Partnership brought together all the statutory bodies and facilitated their engagement with each other. She thanked everyone involved, adding this was an opportunity to restart and continue the Partnership but new funding was needed in order to be proactive.

The Chair invited questions from Members and it was clarified that:

- All eight priorities were important and had an impact in East Suffolk.
- The lack of budget was impacting on the continuation of current initiatives or preventing new ones from being launched, however, partnership working helped and Enabling Communities Budgets were being used to fund some projects later in the year.
- The Ask for Angela project, the scheme where people who feel at risk when in pubs, bars and clubs can ask staff for Angela and receive support, had been very positive in terms of the response when this system of reporting was tested anonymously by East Suffolk Council staff. Licensed premises will continue to be encouraged to display posters advertising the scheme.
- The lack of CSP funding had not impacted on Domestic Abuse work as it was funded by Suffolk County Council.
- East Suffolk added value to what other partners were doing eg raising awareness, training people, holding/attending conferences and events etc but people were not necessarily aware that some issues were quite big in East Suffolk.
- It was hoped to do more projects in conjunction with partners once the outcome of the review/funding was known eg Crucial Crew (CC) was about reaching primary school children about safety issues and was delivered in partnership with the Rotary Club and working with schools via Suffolk County Council. Crucial Crew Plus (CC+) targeted an older age group with similar but harder hitting community safety messages eg consent, drugs and alcohol.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner had funding available for projects that organisations could apply for.
- Campaigns did not just rely on social media and work with partners to get messages out to communities was ongoing eg the Communities Team had recently

been out jointly with the Police for ASB Awareness Week. The Council's Communications Team also used various different tools and monitored accounts to assess campaigns.

- Cyber Fraud had been added as a priority in October and some progress had been made. Officers were looking at who needed training and which groups might benefit from a visit from Trading Standards. Young people were now victims of fraud as well as older people through snapchat and online etc and it was being proposed to add fraud to the CC programme and use social media campaigns to focus on fraud.
- There was a specific Community Safety Action Plan for Sizewell C to mitigate the potential impacts of an influx of construction workers into the area.
- CCTV was part of the Safer Streets project and, in partnership with Suffolk County Council, Officers were trying to get additional funding for areas where people felt unsafe.
- Hate Crime was perpetrated by all sections of community not just by the young. The Council was keen to work with local protected characteristic groups and be more proactive on this.
- Community Safety was everyone's responsibility not just the Police and the Council's role was to push messages out and help support all the Responsible Authorities to work together because there was a collective responsibility.
- Concern was expressed that there was a need to match up what the Council was saying on paper with what we were doing because for a lot of people the buck stopped with the Police and Councillors as elected representatives.
- The Gunton Estate and Fritton had high levels of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and data would be shared with the Committee.
- Modern Day Slavery and Domestic Abuse Awareness Campaigns had been held recently but it was acknowledged that further promotion was needed on reporting concerns about anything in the Action Plan. Contact details for reporting either would be shared.
- The Safer Stronger Board received stats from the Police and Suffolk County Council on a quarterly basis and could identify if there was a big increase in specific crime but it was difficult to measure a demonstrable impact of specific activities, or the long term impact of activities on crime levels. Outputs were meaningful and it was hoped to see a reduction in crime over time but this was influenced by so many different things eg demographics. Encouraging reporting would also show as increased levels of crime.
- Perception of crime - if people feel safer then they probably were so the Partnership needed to find out how people felt.
- Engagement of Responsible Authorities had increased since the workshop but there was a need to encourage some of them to attend regularly.
- The Partnership was ambitious but needed funding (the Council could not directly apply for PCC funding either). Resources and commitment from councillors was needed to drive this forward.

Superintendent Matt Carney thanked the Committee for the invitation to speak and stressed that the situation was complex. He explained he was the Area Commander for policing an area of East Suffolk which was slightly different to the defined CSP area, and Andy Martin looked after the southern areas. He added he generally picked up CSP work which was an important part of the Police's work and linked in with what they were trying to do locally and helped focus their efforts on delivering in

partnership. He stressed that the CSP was an excellent opportunity to work together and the most effective CSPs were those that had broad, enthusiastic partners as it was not possible to deliver everything on their own. He clarified his role was to deliver tactically against CSP priorities as well as other tactical priorities, and deal with national challenges and objectives so at times there were competing demands. He stated that a lot of time was spent engaging communities around key areas such as Modern Day Slavery, Anti-Social Behaviour and Prevent. A number of specialists were employed such as Hate Crime Advisers that worked with communities and third sector organisations to signpost and bring focus to areas the Police identified. He stated that the Police's website gave details on how the public could report Hate Crime but stressed it was also about working with colleagues to assess risks and deal with issues, although a lot of work was not necessarily visible.

Superintendent Carney acknowledged that some Action Plan themes received more focus than others eg Hate Crime was prevalent in some areas but less in others; Prevent (Preventing Violent Extremism) was a big challenge for the Police but the focus in Suffolk was more on far right extremist groups eg in schools; Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse featured largely due to the demographic in the area eg Lowestoft had very challenging communities but the Police were working hard to try to break down family stereotypes and increase reporting. He pointed out that not every car wash was a hotbed of Modern Day Slavery and a lot of businesses did do checks. The Police also worked with organised criminality eg tobacco reselling in Lowestoft but did not necessarily shout about it because a lot of work took place behind the scenes and there could be arrests elsewhere although individuals were based in East Suffolk.

In relation to Anti-Social Behaviour, Superintendent Carney stressed it was not just about kids but the biggest challenge was high demand families who had complex needs across many agencies which was the benefit of partnership working. Where the Police did challenge ASB it often led into Violent Crime eg the Gunton Estate went from low level ASB to theft/burglary and it needed a whole partnership approach which had led to a 400% reduction in crime. He explained that he saw stats daily and was constantly looking at spikes in crime and the Police then reacted to the data and took action in those areas. In relation to Criminal Exploitation, he explained that the north of the District did not have any active County Lines but the south did as a bleed out from Ipswich. He added that there was an established drugs market in Lowestoft which was policed but there was not the same level of gang violence/robberies etc. There was a concern re young girls eg care providers moving high risk individuals into East Suffolk so the Police were working closely with the MACE Panel and partners to focus very heavily on the most high risk children to jointly address the issue but he stressed that, in many cases, the Police were not the lead agency on this. Fraud was a massive challenge for the Police especially online fraud and he suggested that the best way to tackle this was to make people suspicious but that bred fear.

In relation to the comments regarding visibility and policing, Superintendent Carney stated that he would tie it into confidence and that it was known through ONS data that East Suffolk communities were generally happy with policing and it remained one of the safest places in the county/country. He pointed out that the Police had a finite resource that needed to focus on key risk areas which meant they were not always visible or available to give updates although they tried to engage through media and

schools etc but were not able to reach everyone. The Police could not always address national or international issues as it was difficult for Police Officers to influence these but they had to respond to them. He concluded that the CSP was about partnership working and the Police were really willing to engage although he acknowledged that some partners had their own challenges eg health had three CSPs across their patch.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask Superintendent Carney questions and he clarified that:

- People with mental health problems would generally no longer be dealt with by the Police and held in a cell but they would now receive the right support by trained individuals through their Right Person, Right Care initiative.
- In his view, all the eight CSP priorities were important at different times so he did not feel there were too many. The Police's current priorities were high demand families, ASB, Drugs and Criminal Exploitation but in the last six months it had been Hate Crime. The Police focussed on those areas where there were the highest risks but that did not mean they could not be in a position to respond to the other priorities when they needed to eg Prevent, Hate Crime and Fraud. Other partners might have different priorities so all the RAs needed to be able to contribute.
- Suffolk Constabulary worked with other surrounding Police Forces where they could add value eg information sharing so it did not matter if different Forces had different priorities.
- ASB appeared to be on the decline but the Police did check if that was just a reduction in reporting or an actual reduction and it was actually both at the moment.
- One of the challenges was that a situation was not always dealt with by Police eg it could be Housing Associations and Local Authorities etc and should not involve the Police although where there was an escalation local policing teams brought in partners to address it but sometimes there were challenges to get evidence, it could take a long time and legislation meant there were a lot of hoops to jump through to achieve what they wanted.
- As well as regular Police Officers, there were four Tactical Officers that were specifically trained in policing rural communities, specials and rural mounted volunteers that helped gather intelligence. There was a large amount of rural crime and the Police wanted rural businesses to report crime eg losses in agricultural businesses was a big issue because they did not report it.
- The Police were not always visible but sometimes operated more covertly.
- Police would work differently from December with named Police Officers in each community.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

On the proposition of Councillor Gooch, seconded by Councillor Jepson, it was

RESOLVED

That the report of the Cabinet Member for Community Health be noted and Officers provide Committee Members with information on the Gunton Estate and Fritton Anti-Social Behaviour project and contact details for reporting Modern Day Slavery and Domestic Abuse.

6 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2023/24 (Scrutiny Functions)

The Committee received Report ES/1611 from the Leader of the Council. It was noted there were two primary appointee nominations for the two Outside Bodies (Scrutiny Functions) but no nominations had been received for the nominated substitute positions. The Chair suggested that the Councillor not nominated as the primary appointee be appointed as the nominated substitute.

On the proposition of Councillor Grey, seconded by Councillor Plummer, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Candy be appointed as the primary appointee on the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Panel with Councillor Patience as the nominated substitute.

On the proposition of Councillor Grey, seconded by Councillor Candy, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Thompson be appointed as the primary appointee on the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Craig be appointed as the nominated substitute.

7 Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2023/24

The Committee considered the review topics drawn from their 14 June 2023 workshop and it was stressed these would need to be fully scoped prior to each review being scheduled. In addition, the Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions would be scheduled. It was hoped the final Work Programme would be ready for the September meeting.

On the proposition of Councillor Grey, seconded by Councillor Jepson, it was

RESOLVED

That the following topics be agreed in principle for inclusion on the Work Programme with delegated authority granted to the Chair/Vice-Chair to agree the agenda for the September meeting:

- Review of Hackney Carriages
- Review of Housing Provision across East Suffolk
- Review of Planning Affordable Housing Requirements
- Review of Approach to Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in East Suffolk
- Review of the Council's Budget
- Review of East Suffolk Council's Environmental Strategy
- Review of Partnership Working to Tackle Environmental Issues
- Review of Rural Transport Services

The meeting concluded at 8.30pm.

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Chair