



Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held in Virtual on Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 2.00 pm

Members Present: Mrs C Apel (Chairman), Mrs T Bangert (Vice-Chairman), Mr G Barrett, Mr T Johnson, Mrs S Lishman, Mr A Moss, Mr D Palmer, Mr C Page, Mr H Potter, Mrs C Purnell and Mrs S Sharp

Members not present: Mrs N Graves

In attendance by invitation:

Officers present:

66 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no apologies for absence received.

67 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes from the meeting held on 23 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

68 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

69 **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr Sharp declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7 as a member of West Sussex County Council.

70 **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions received.

71 **Member Questions to Sussex Police Chief Inspector Nick Bowman**

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector (CI) Nick Bowman of Sussex Police.

CI Bowman explained that he took over as District Commander a few months ago and his area of responsibility is for the Chichester District and Arun District as far as Littlehampton. In addition to this role, he is the lead Officer in charge of Police

Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for the whole of Sussex and takes a lead role in the response to Domestic Abuse in West Sussex.

The Chairman invited Members who had to pre-submitted written questions to ask those first.

Cllr Barrett:

Over the past few years the Police Precept has increased by over 30% to go towards providing a visible police presence, PCSO's, in and around the villages.

Referring to the attached documents the Witterings were allocated 55 hours of PCSO support a week. At a Parish meeting about a year ago the assigned PCSO was asked why he was not being seen in the area. The response was that he spent most of his time dealing with household issues which kept him tied up for many hours, some through mental problems which he is not trained to deal with. So, the local residents are still awaiting to see the local PCSO patrolling on foot in the area as was the case around ten years ago. Also, there appears to be a lack of communication between the Community Warden and the assigned PCSO's. Can you please address these matters of concern?

Response:

CI Bowman acknowledged he was aware that Parish Councillors did not seem satisfied with the visibility of the PCSO responsible for the Witterings. He also acknowledged the additional pressure in the area during the summer months. CI Bowman assured that the police would endeavour to work more closely with the Community Warden and explained that as a force they are working on improving their community engagement, which should reach further than social media.

Cllr Bangert:

Although Southbourne is a low crime area, recently we have had issues with a gang of youths (under 16) riding on one e-scooter, intimidating car drivers (and putting themselves in danger) and throwing stolen eggs at cars. I reported this to the police and met with Pam Bushby to determine the most appropriate response. Two things came from this – firstly, the operators on the switchboard in Lewes took some time to believe that Southbourne was in West Sussex rather than Hampshire. I have been told of a number of similar incidents happening. Surely as a prerequisite of the job, knowledge of the area is vital. In extreme cases this could lead to loss of life. Secondly, people reporting crime on social media, and not to the police. I would say that this is a serious problem in our area and no doubt in many others.

Response:

CI Bowman acknowledged that some difficulties arise as '999' and '101' calls are handled in Lewes, East Sussex, and staff swap desks shift by shift meaning that day to day a particular responder can be answering calls from different areas across West and East Sussex; it would be difficult to expect all call takers, which total around 300, to have specific knowledge of all areas. He reassured Members that with a quick search however, they should be able to ascertain whether a particular call required the response of Sussex or Hampshire Police.

Cllr Bangert highlighted however, that Southbourne postcodes show as Emsworth, Hampshire.

CI Bowman accepted that occasional confusion may occur but reinforced his confidence that in 99% of cases responders were accurate. He further explained that Sussex and Hampshire Police forces will often support one another in border areas. CI Bowman agreed to follow up with Cllr Bangert after the meeting to discuss further examples she has.

Regarding Cllr Bangert's second point, he explained the police do experience difficulties arising from the use of social media to report crime, reinforcing that the police do need to hear directly from the victims or witnesses of a crime.

Cllr Potter:

I would like a response to the increase in the number of incidents of breaking into parked vehicles at rural car parks. Many victims are heeding the warning NOT to leave anything of value in a vehicle but are so often saddled with a bill for replacing broken glass.

An earlier request to Sussex Police when highlighting the 'Rural Crime Team' resulted in the advice that this team is not responsible for breaking into parked cars but that this was a matter for PCSO's who most people regard as ineffective.

I would suggest that irregular patrols of these burglary 'hotspots' by a clearly marked Police vehicle would be a huge deterrent.

Cllr Potter asked a supplementary question relating to an road traffic accident in his local area, questioning why the public hadn't heard a response from the police relating to the accident.

Response:

Taking the questions in reverse, CI Bowman explained that a member of the public can log their postcode on the Sussex Police website and view details of crimes occurring in their local area. Referencing the specific accident he asserted that the Police will only put out information that will aid the police in an investigation and would not share information purely to satisfy the interest of local people.

Cllr Lishman:

In Chichester East, we have a very mixed demographic of residents. As it is one of the most deprived areas of Chichester, residents often feel forgotten. We have anti-social behaviour, vandalism, garages being used for drug taking, and very little sign of a regular police presence, especially to reassure the older people.

I totally understand the constraints on personnel and budgets, but how are the police making it "fair" to all areas of the city?

What are the police doing to foster relationships within the more deprived communities of Chichester, so that they are trusted and not regarded with suspicion?

Response:

CI Bowman highlighted that in every area there are usually diverse and different communities and connecting with every group in society to the level expected and required is an impossible task for the Police. He explained that the police try to respond to incidents that cause the most harm. Any call is assessed through threat, harm and risk and the number and type of officers sent to respond is assessed accordingly. All areas of our community attract a police need of varying levels and he acknowledged that calls to the police are increased in the more densely populated areas. He explained that in crime 'hotspots' an attempt is made to establish a visible police presence but noted that this doesn't necessarily correspond to a reduction in crime. CI Bowman assured Members that he would continue to develop patrol plans and activity linked to threat, harm and risk. He noted, however, that communication with the public is an area that needs improvement.

Cllr Sharp

Raised questions relating to the recent and widespread spate of graffiti;, The new highway code and its focus on vulnerable road users;, Noisy vehicles, RAVEN (Residents against vehicle excessive noise) and what residents and Police can do to help one another in combating noise;, Community speed watch and the fear of abuse from motorists.

Response

CI Bowman acknowledged the recent increase in graffiti in the City and commended CDC for the speed at which they have it removed. He expressed his concerns at the sometimes racist nature of the graffiti and assured Members that it was something he and the Police intend to keep on top of, and whilst it cannot necessarily be solved, the Police will continue to use CCTV where possible to monitor the situation. He explained it is not taken lightly as it often represents the beginning of a poor community feel.

CI Bowman explained that there is insufficient data to quantify the potential benefits of the new highway code legislation, but that its impact would be monitored. He explained that the question of noisy vehicles is a difficult one to answer. If people live close to the A27, for example, unfortunately they will hear traffic noise which is often exacerbated by events such as the Goodwood festival of speed. He acknowledged the good work carried out by RAVEN but explained that with finite resources and a large brief to cover the Police cannot spend disproportionate time responding to excessive vehicle noise. He reassured Members however, that during events such as those held at Goodwood additional speed checks are put in place and the Police monitor behaviour linked to the events.

CI Bowman also expressed his support for Community Speedwatch groups which he feels are valuable, whilst it is difficult to respond to verbal abuse from motorists,

he explained the best way forward was to note registration numbers and report such incidents.

Mrs Bushby added that an initial meeting of the new Road Safety Action Group for Chichester and Arun has been scheduled which will consider the changes to the Highway Code and Community Speedwatch and noted that members of CI Bowman's team are part of this.

Cllr Purnell

Referenced street briefings between the public and PCSOs, where residents had the opportunity to raise issues. Cllr Purnell saw this as a good method of keeping communication open and asked whether these could be restarted and, if so, involve local councillors.

Reponse

CI Bowman explained that he did not know directly why street briefings had stopped and expressed doubt in how popular they were. However, he said he would investigate the issue further and consider stepping these up.

Mrs Bushby added that the success of street briefings had varied area to area, noting that some residents were nervous about potential repercussions if seen engaging with the authorities; but agreed with CI Bowman that they could be considered as an option moving forward.

Cllr Page

Can the Police use speed traps on Sunday mornings to catch motorcyclists flouting the law?

A subsidiary question was asked, on behalf of a constituent, relating to the apparent high volume of stationary vehicles at Chichester Police Station.

Response

CI Bowman recognised the irritation caused to residents by noisy road vehicles. He noted however, that acceleration doesn't mean they are breaking the law. The Police do not have the resources to install regular speed traps but does look to target specific days. He further stated that the crash data doesn't point to this as a key area to direct resources.

Regarding the number of cars at the Police Station, CI Bowman explained that as the main station in the area, several different departments work from here. He noted that more police to fill the cars would be ideal, but that a stationary car does not correlate to police sat at the station.

Cllr Oakley

Mrs Bushby asked, on behalf of Cllr Oakley, whether it was still the intention to have two PCSOs for each electoral division in the District.

Response

CI Bowman said that he did not have the specific details needed to answer but explained that Sussex Police are constantly recruiting PCSOs and Officers especially linked to the National Government's 20,000 Officer uplift programme. He asserted that recruitment is at the top of his to do list.

Cllr Apel

How much can we depend on the Police helping with unauthorised encampments the District often sees in the summer months?

Noting the loss of the City Angels group through COVID and asked whether this has had an impact on the night life in the City.

Response

CI Bowman acknowledged the disruption that unauthorised encampments can cause local people and the perception that nothing is done by the Police. He explained that the Police do have powers under section 61 and 62 to direct people to a transient site, though these sites can only accommodate a certain number. The recent encampment in the Northgate carpark was too large for the Police to require movement to the transient site. He acknowledged that there can be a small delay in clearing sites, explaining that in order to enforce this the Police must have evidence of antisocial behaviour and/or criminal damage; acknowledging that a large number of complaints have been received relating to associated anti-social behaviour in the City. He further explained that this is a national problem, and the legislation is changing regarding Police powers over unauthorised encampments.

Regarding the city nightlife, CI Bowman noted that the night-time economy had returned to 'pre-COVID' levels and explained that on the whole Chichester has a good feel in the evenings. Incidents of serious assault and violence are few and far between and occur less frequently than in other comparable towns and cities.

The Chairman extended her sincere thanks to CI Bowman for his time and wished him well in his role.

CI Bowman extended his thanks and expressed his desire to keep an open dialogue with Councillors.

Members held a brief discussion after CI Bowman had left the meeting to reflect on his contributions.

72 Statement from the Leader of the Council - Cllr Eileen Lintill

The Chairman invited the Leader, Eileen Lintill, to update the Committee on the Levelling Up Fund and the Future Services Framework.

Levelling Up Fund

Cllr Lintill briefly outlined the background to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), explaining that it is £4.8 billion fund from National Government to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life in the UK. It is distributed through a competitive bidding process and all local authorities are assigned a priority category. Before phase 2 of the Fund was rolled out, Chichester was moved from category 3 to category 2 and therefore Full Council agreed to submit a bid. She noted the short time scale for this bid and explained that authority was given to her as Leader, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Executive and the Director for Growth and Place. The options have been reviewed in weekly meetings before a final sign off later this week to meet the 6th July deadline, after which Members will receive an email with details of the bid.

Cllr Lintill also referenced the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which sits alongside the LUF. It differs to the LUF in that it is a finite amount of money; CDC has been awarded £1 million spread over three years. Officers have been working on an investment plan which must be submitted. The Shared Prosperity Fund requires the Council to work with partners, from whom the Council have received a number of bids exceeding the allotted amount of money. Once Officers have concluded assessments, Cllrs Lintill and Moss will agree what is to be included in the plan. As the LUF will benefit Chichester City only, it has been agreed that monies from the Shared Prosperity Fund will be weighted towards projects outside of the City or those which benefit the District as a whole.

Future Services Framework

Cllr Lintill explained that the Future Services Framework (FSF) is a model developed to allow CDC flexibility if faced with uncertain financial circumstances.

Phase One included looking for as many efficiencies as possible to reduce costs without affecting frontline services. On conclusion the total saving is likely to be lower at 75% of the original projected £2.5 million.

Phase 2 looked at savings options, including rent levels at Westwood House and the costs of CCTV amongst others.

Phase 3 aimed to prioritise Council services that are discretionary and not legally required. The priority of services was agreed at Full Council.

Cllr Lintill expressed that whilst CDC hope to be able to provide all services, this important preliminary work had been completed highlighting which services could be cut should it be necessary. The process also highlighted that CDC currently provide well over the statutorily required services.

The Chairman expressed concern for the potential impact on communities if services were cut; Cllr Lintill offered assurance that in the short term they would not and explained that the financial model is reviewed regularly by SLT and Cabinet who would always endeavour to preserve services.

Cllr Moss added that the work undertaken was vital for the future of the Council. He cautioned that with the growing cost of living crisis and the lower use of carparks

impacting income streams that CDC would inevitably come under significant financial pressure and must be nimble to safeguard vital services.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Lintill for attending the meeting and providing an update to the Committee.

73 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022 Annual Report and 2022-2023 Work Programme**

The Chairman expressed her thanks to Officers for compiling the report which highlights the volume of work carried out by the Committee in the last year.

In a vote the recommendation was unanimously carried as follows:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers its 2021-2022 Annual Report and 2022-2023 Work Programme and recommends them to Council for noting.

74 **Novium T&F Group**

The Chairman invited Cllr Roy Briscoe to give a verbal update on the Novium Task and Finish Group.

Cllr Briscoe provided a brief background to the creation of the Task and Finish Group, which was established to review the Novium business plan.

He highlighted the following work undertaken by the group:

- Opening hours were reviewed to balance visitor numbers and staffing costs at weekends
- Charged exhibitions have been introduced to generate income
- Energy saving methods have been implemented
- External banners have been placed in Tower Street advertising the museum and helping to guide tourists
- Social media marketing has been successfully expanded.

He explained that at the latest meeting in April Members felt the outcomes had been achieved and the work within the remit of the Task and Finish Group was completed, with matters moving forward being directed through either the Economic or Housing and Communities Panels.

Cllr Briscoe concluded highlighting that the Novium delivers many social and economic benefits to the District and noting that visitor numbers have increased significantly from 12,000 p/a in 2012 to 51,000 in 2019/20 which likely would have exceeded 60,000 were it not for the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Cllr Bangert led Members in congratulating the Novium team and CDC Officers on their success.

The Chairman added her congratulations and thanked Cllr Briscoe for his presentation.

75 **Late Items**

There were no late items.

76 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The meeting ended at 3.57 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date: