

MINUTES

of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 1 February 2021 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor J. Galley (Chair)
Councillors S. Young (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L. Ashley, M.W. Bracken, I.D. Fuller, I.S. Grundy, R.J. Hyland, G.B.R. Knight, J.C.S. Lager, J.S. Lardge, C.M. Shaw, M. Sismey, M.S. Steel, N. Walsh, T.N. Willis and R.T. Whitehead

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

No Apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interests

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

4. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made.

5. Decisions Called-In

The Committee noted that no decisions taken by the Cabinet had been called-in.

6. Cabinet Portfolio Update – Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford

Cllr Moore provided the Committee with an update on their role as the Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford. Cllr Moore informed the Committee of their key roles and activities. The Committee heard that the portfolio covered a wide range of services offered by the Council. [The Presentation slides can be viewed here.](#)

The Committee was informed that building services had risen to the challenges of Covid and continued to improve services and facilities including at SWF Leisure Centre and the High Chelmer Multi Storey Car park. It was noted that Leisure & Heritage Services had been severely impacted by Covid, but that staff had been re-deployed to the Community Food

Hub and had been a vital resource for the project. The Committee heard that various works had been undertaken at the leisure centres, including a new lighting system at the Ice Rink. The Committee was informed that the team at Hylands Estate had been impacted by Covid too, but important works had been undertaken to the venue along with smaller services as permitted by the Covid regulations.

Cllr Moore informed the Committee of the vital role played by the Parks and Green Spaces team during the pandemic. It was noted that they had of course been a valuable resource during this time and the work to maintain and improve the sites by staff had been greatly appreciated. Cllr Moore also highlighted the crucial role of staff in Bereavement Services. It was noted that during a difficult time they had continued to support families using the service and had adapted to hold smaller services as permitted. The wide role covered by the Public Health and Protection team was also highlighted to the Committee. It was noted that they covered areas including Licensing, Environmental Health and CCTV, and had been very busy in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The Committee heard that the team had been involved in various aspects related to Covid and had continued to provide an excellent service to residents. Cllr Moore also informed the Committee of the vital and increased role played by the Community Safety team in 2020. It was noted that they had worked closely with Essex Police, in helping to protect residents and to keep Chelmsford as safe as possible during the pandemic.

Cllr Moore also informed the Committee of the key role played by the Street Care team, who are responsible for the cleansing of the whole district. It was noted that litter in areas such as parks had increased as more people used them and they had worked hard during the pandemic to keep the areas clear of litter and inviting for residents. The importance of keeping a full Waste and Recycling collection service during the pandemic was also noted by the Committee. They heard that since Covid, collections had continued as normal and this was a credit to the hard work of the staff in the team. Cllr Moore informed the Committee of the key role the City's markets played for residents and thanked the team for their hard work in keeping both the indoor and outdoor markets open during a difficult year. The continued hard work from the Love Your Chelmsford team was also highlighted and the Committee heard that a film on Sustainability and Recycling had received nearly 50,000 views.

In summary, Cllr Moore stated that the service had been hit by many challenges related to Covid during 2020. Teams across the service however, had responded brilliantly and they were thanked for their hard work.

RESOLVED that;

1. the update be noted;
2. the Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford be thanked for their attendance and;
3. the staff members across the directorate be thanked by the Committee.

(7.02pm to 7.30pm)

7. Annual Presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership

The Chair informed the Committee that the presentations for items seven and eight would both be heard, before questions on them together afterwards.

The Council's Public Protection Manager gave a presentation on behalf of the Safer Chelmsford Partnership, regarding its statutory duties, key priorities, key projects and funding in 2020/21.

The Committee was reminded of the Partnership's statutory duties, which were;

- Strategic Assessment and Partnership Plan
- Co-Ordination of Partnership activities
- Strategic Priorities plus Reducing Reoffending
- Prevent, Modern Day Slavery and Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Face the Public – combined with Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex Police.
- Survey Public opinion – fear of crime and perceptions
- Annual presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee was also reminded of the Partnership's strategic priorities for 2020/21. Due to the pandemic these had not been changed from 19/20 and they were:

- Tackling violent crime
- Driving down anti-social behaviour in public places
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable people
- Tackling rural and environmental crime

The Committee heard that due to the pandemic, there had been some specific impacts on the work of the partnership. These included increases in, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, scams, conspiracy theories and domestic extremism.

The key projects carried out in the last 12 months included;

- further establishment of the Community Safety Hub, since it had gone live in March 2019 and continued improved communications
- Partnership response to tackling Anti-Social behaviour associated with rough sleeping and supporting our most vulnerable
- Violence and Vulnerability – supporting young people being criminally and sexually exploited, corporate safeguarding, Operation Enlightenment, Spot it Stop it, Crucial Crew, Storylab and Building Lives Project
- Education, awareness and community engagement
- Night-time Economy Interventions – Street Pastors, Taxi Marshalls, SOS project and Drinkaware Crews, Best Bar None and Purple Flag
- CCTV Capital Programme and full digital transformation

The Committee also heard that work had continued on Communications and Community Engagement and this would be covered during Item 10. The Committee were also informed

of the importance of the Chelmsford SOS project, work to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and work in responding to violence and vulnerability.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted and;
2. the Committee's appreciation for the excellent work of the Safer Chelmsford Partnership and the detailed presentation from the Council's Public Protection Manager be noted.

(7.31pm to 8.02pm)

8. Annual Presentation by Essex Police

The Committee received a verbal update from Kelly Thurston, Detective Inspector from Essex Police. The Committee heard that the Chelmsford and Maldon Community Policing Team, included the Town Centre Team and was based in the Community Safety hub with Chelmsford City Council officers. It was noted that they worked to the local priorities of the Community Safety Partnership and that Local policing teams offered a 24/7 response.

The Committee were taken through the 2020/21 Force Plan for Essex police, which detailed how they worked along with their key priorities. It was noted that the seven policing priorities to protect Essex were;

- More local, visible and accessible policing
- Crack down on anti-social behaviour
- Breaking the cycle of domestic abuse
- Reverses the trend in serious violence
- Tackle gangs and organised crime
- Protecting children and vulnerable people
- Improve safety on our roads

The Committee heard details of the latest Recruitment campaign from Essex Police. It was noted that the 'we value difference' campaign had been a part of their successful Fit the Bill recruitment drive. It was noted that it focused on dispelling myths that you had to be a certain type of person to be a police officer. It was noted that Essex was diverse community and Essex police wanted that to be reflected in their policing. The Committee was informed that in the rolling 12 months to December 2020, crime was down by 9.4%, with similar trends across Essex. It was noted that Anti-Social behaviour was however up 22.2%, predominantly from Covid breaches. This was high but good in comparison to other areas of Essex. The Committee heard that areas of concern included, violence without injury, stalking and harassment and Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime. The Committee was informed of the impact of Covid on policing. This had caused a large impact, with a huge demand on patrolling areas to ensure compliance with Covid laws. It was noted that this had been met with an effective response to issues, including licensing, protests and supporting business to operate. It was also noted that Essex police had been supporting vaccination sites and the victims of domestic abuse.

The Committee was informed of various policing tactics from Essex Police, which included, Community Policing, being more accessible and ensuring the capability to support rural areas. It was noted by the Committee that, Essex police were committed to the joint working approach at the Community Safety Hub. Other operations included preventing violent crime and drugs, minimising vulnerability and looking at other local issues.

RESOLVED that;

1. the Committee's appreciation for the work of Essex Police be noted and;
2. the Committee's thanks for the attendance of the Detective Inspector be noted.

(8.03pm to 8.37pm)

9. Final report from Community Safety Communication Task and Finish Group

The Committee received a report, informing them of the outcome of the Community Safety Communication Task and Finish group. The group consisted of cross-party Councillors and officer input from the Public Protection and Communications teams. It was noted that an interim report had been considered in February 2020 and work had continued since then leading to, much improved communication on Community Safety.

It was noted that the group had been fundamental in many of these improvements, including the new Sharepoint site and Community Safety Partnership e-newsletter. Members were reminded that they had been sent a link to the new Sharepoint site and feedback was welcomed. It was noted that other objectives had been met, including examining how the Council and Essex Police could improve communication on Community safety initiatives and how feedback on residents reports and intelligence could be provided in a timely and meaningful way. It was noted that the progress made put in place, foundations to build upon further improving communication and that Neighbourhood watch had been identified as a critical stakeholder in this area. It was also noted that the providing of meaningful local level crime data from Essex Police was vital and the use of PowerBi should assist with this.

The Committee thanked the Councillors and officers involved for their detailed report and were happy to support the recommendations made by the group.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted;
2. Community Safety communication forms part of the annual community safety report;
3. provision of local level data is progressed requiring collaboration between Chelmsford City Council and Essex Police. The task and finish group continue to oversee this strand of work;
4. A process is developed to enable Members to be updated on the outcome of significant incidents and
5. the Community Safety Partnership continues to develop and has communication as a core objective to its work.

(8.38pm to 8.48pm)

10. Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan Update

The Committee received a report which updated them on the progress made in implementing the initial action plan as agreed by Cabinet, which was intended to support the delivery of the ambitions highlighted in the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration.

The Committee heard that the plan covered the whole spectrum of Council activities and detailed the progress made so far. The declaration was detailed at Appendix A, with the progress up to 31 December 2020 at Appendix B and the Carbon Baseline for Council operations at Appendix C. It was noted that 56 actions were detailed in Appendix B and that some of these were much longer term than others. The Committee heard that the Carbon Baseline for 2019/20 was calculated as being 5,730 tonnes of equivalent Co2 and that as a result the Council's own emissions were less than 1% of the total area emissions. The Committee heard that a lot of attention was given to reducing carbon emissions, but other important aspects of the plan focussed on ecological matters and these were also key themes. The report summarised that, good progression had been made and that further work would continue to progress this ahead of the 2030 target for net zero carbon emissions by the Council.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that;

- The 2030 target for the Council having net zero carbon emissions, would include offsetting from the planting of trees and other areas.
- The Council's initial focus would continue to be on matters within their remit, with a later focus on encouraging carbon reduction activities in the wider area of Chelmsford.
- It was currently difficult to accurately measure the impact of offsetting carbon and once this was clearer it would be added into the baseline calculations. It was also noted that offsetting would play a crucial role in the Council becoming net zero for carbon emissions.
- It was not currently easy to measure the specific impacts for all 56 actions mentioned in the report. It was noted that over time the document would become more detailed and sophisticated once degrees of consistency were established in the relevant areas.
- It was hoped that by May 2021 the calculation of the carbon emissions for the 2020/21 would be available indicating where carbon emissions had changed. However, this may not be a particularly useful comparison due to many pandemic related variables.

The Committee thanked officers for their hard work in developing a detailed and comprehensive report on the action plan. It was noted that this had been developed during a pandemic and that it was appreciated by the Committee. The Committee continued to support the initiative and it was noted that in the future, a quantitative A to B style approach on some of the targets would be useful.

RESOLVED that;

1. the progress achieved to date be noted and;
2. the Council be encouraged to continue to priorities the delivery of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan and consider allocating appropriate resources to support the plan as and when they become available.

(8.49pm to 9.10pm)

11. Work Programme

The Committee considered a report on its work programme which had been updated following the last meeting on 23 November 2020. The Committee was informed that the Chair and Vice Chair had agreed to cancel the April 2021 meeting due to the likely impact of purdah for the May Local Elections. It was agreed that the two scheduled items be moved to the June 2021 meeting. It was also agreed that if the elections were postponed that consideration be given to the April meeting being reinstated.

The Committee was informed that Management Team had been asked to put forward some ideas for future items and that the Committee would be consulted on these soon via email. A member of the Committee suggested a report on the South Essex Parking Partnership and it was agreed that the relevant director would look into this.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted;
2. the April 2021 meeting be cancelled and its items moved to the June 2021 meeting and;
3. the Committee be consulted via email on some additional items for the future work programme.

(9.11pm to 9.15pm)

12. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chair