

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC
PANEL - OLDER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

1.30pm 10 JULY 2009

COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Marsh (Chairman), Kennedy and Watkins,

Co-optee: John Eyles (Older People's Council)

PART ONE

18. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

18a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Smart had given his apologies. Substitutes are not allowed on Scrutiny panels

18b Declarations of Interests

There were none.

18c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

18d Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

19. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

19.1 The Chair stated that the draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July were not yet published. Anyone who wanted to receive a copy could leave their contact details on the attendance sheet left in the public gallery.

19.2 Sergeant Castleton gave additional information following the previous meeting; the Police Equality Working Group had identified a pattern of racial harassment for older people; for people up to 60 years old, there were more men than women reporting racial harassment; after 60 years old there were more women than men reporting racial harassment.

20. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

20.1 The Panel noted that the Annual Report 2008 – 2009 of the Older People's Council had been circulated with the agenda.

20.2 Councillor Marsh had attended the Community Safety Forum (CSF) meeting on Monday 6 July as Chair of the Coombe Road LAT. There she found out that there had been a commitment to hold a Scrutiny Panel meeting in Portslade and Hangleton areas and she had been unaware of this. Councillor Marsh quoted in full the extract from the 9 March CSF minutes:

44.1 The Head of Community Safety presented a report on the Scrutiny of Community Safety and Older People and stated that this was the first issue that had been referred from the Community Safety Forum onto an Overview & Scrutiny Committee agenda.

She stated that meetings to discuss the issues were taking place on 24 April at the Valley Social Centre, 22 May at Hove Town Hall and 3 July at Brighton Town Hall. As many agencies and community organisations as possible were being invited to submit information.

44.2 A member of the Forum asked whether the focus on tackling crime should be shifted to a focus on the prevention of crime, which was more in line with Sussex Police policies. The member felt a proactive approach was needed to ensure community safety. The Head of Community Safety stated that all issues around this subject would be discussed and a report would be produced with recommendations for action that could be taken forward by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

44.3 Councillor Barnett asked that a further meeting be arranged in either Portslade or Hangleton to allow people from those areas to attend more easily. The Head of Community Safety agreed and stated that meetings would be arranged in both of these areas.

44.4 A member of the Forum welcomed the work being done, but highlighted that safety for disabled people needed to be addressed as well. The Head of Community Safety stated that this piece of work had a specific focus on older people, but noted that work had begun on addressing the issue of community safety for those with disabilities and those who experienced hate crimes, which was recognised as a highly important piece of work and would be taken forward later on in the year.

44.5 A member of the Forum welcomed this information and asked that GEMS was included as well when taking forward the work on community safety for those with disabilities and those who experienced hate crimes. The member asked whether baseline levels of crime would be established before work began on this report. The Head of Community Safety confirmed that baselines would be established and where possible targets would be set and recommendations produced.

44.6 Councillor Watkins stated that the scrutiny panel set up to examine Community Safety of Older people was time and financially limited and noted that this was a large subject to scrutinise. He asked for assurances from the Chairman that full support would be given to the recommendations and outcomes. The Chairman agreed and stated that she fully supported the scrutiny of this issue.

44.7 A member of the Forum raised the issue of material being accessible for older people and the Head of Community Safety stated that all literature about the subject would take into consideration its target audience and be accessible for all.

20.3 Councillor Marsh said that safety for disabled people and hate crimes were important pieces of work that the Scrutiny Panel had not had an opportunity to investigate although relevant organisations had been invited to contribute information to the scrutiny review.

20.4 Asked about monitoring the safety of minority groups Sergeant Peter Castleton said that number of crimes against all older people were low and reduced significantly as people got older, irrespective of other identities such as ethnicity or sexuality. This would be partly because many older people tended not to put themselves in situations where they might become vulnerable and partly for other reasons; for example there were now more older BME workers in frontline services. People were not vulnerable because they were older, per se.

20.5 Councillor Marsh asked that Councillor Dee Simson Chair of Community Safety Forum and Cabinet Member for be kept informed of progress with the scrutiny review.

21. 50+ PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT (POSTPONED FROM 3 JULY)

21.1 The Head of Housing Management outlined her role as the Council's Adult Social Care and Housing link to the scrutiny review and outlined the Community development work at the Bristol Estate, situated north of the Royal Sussex County Hospital, that had been described at the Panel's first scoping meeting. This work to tackle anti social behaviour issues on the estate, had been funded jointly by Housing Management and the Police.

21.2 Research into the initial outcomes of the work showed that feelings of safety increased and general satisfaction with the Estate had been improved. For the first time, people now wanted to move to the Estate rather than avoid it. Further research was now under way with a 100% survey being carried out.

21.3 The Panel asked for the data to be added to the evidence received, especially information on links between age and feelings of safety on the Bristol Estate.

21.4 The Head of Housing Management also introduced the annual report of the 50+ Community Programme. This team of workers and volunteers from a range of services and

voluntary organisations delivered services to support people aged 50 and over in the Queens Park Ward, Craven Vale and Hangleton and Knoll areas. It is led and funded by Brighton & Hove City Council jointly with the Primary Care Trust in line with the Local Area Agreement and most projects had exceeded the annual targets

21.5 The Panel had heard evidence on 24 April from the Neighbourhood Care Scheme NCS – a citywide scheme which helped people stay active alert and involved and actively put people in touch with each other. NCS also helped strengthen links and develop trust between older and younger generations and helped maintain older peoples' independence and resilience. The Head of Housing Management said NCS was a prime example of a scheme that required relatively low resourcing compared with high benefits for both volunteers and older people.

21.6 There was reassuring evidence from evaluation of people's feelings, that 50+ Community Programme activities are having a positive effect, so resourcing is continuing for this year. However funding from one year to the next may not allow for the best value from community development projects because these take time to establish. The Panel may wish to encourage the mainstreaming in partnership, of successful community projects to enable future stability of resourcing.

21.7 The Panel were aware of the 3- year discretionary grant funding process and the considerable skills that organisations needed in order to attract additional funds. Members felt that there was scope to work more closely in partnership, to improve the sustainability of community development projects that help maintain older people's feelings of safety, resilience and independence

21.8 Asked about the effect of the Council's housing allocations policy on the ability to keep families within close contact the Head of Housing Management said that with choice-based lettings, people can say where they would like to go, but as the city has limited social housing it could take a long time for people to get their preference. Officers could help older people without social networks to move, to release family sized homes and there were good news stories of how older people's lives had been changed in this way.

21.9 A Member of the public asked about the success of choice-based lettings for older people and heard that this was being reviewed.

21.10 Members of the public asked about coverage of the community projects in the Programme and heard that the Bristol Estate project was in a neighbourhood renewal area but had not been included in the New Deal for Communities Neighbourhood Regeneration Programme. Therefore together with the police separate prevention work had been arranged for the estate. Hangleton and Knoll and Queens Park/Craven Vale were selected because of the Local Area Agreement priorities based on the highest proportion of older people and levels of deprivation, which were key areas of interaction with Primary Care Trust.

22. FEEDBACK RE EVIDENCE FROM OLDER PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

22.1 As requested by the scrutiny panel, the Head of Community Safety reported back from the 24 April meeting which had heard evidence from officers from the Older People Mental Health team. The officers worked with older people with alzheimers or dementia who live in

their own homes, privately rented or social housing and who, in rare cases, could be victims of crime because of mental ill health.

22.2 Despite cases being rare, the Panel did have a high level of concern because incidents could be serious and because of the possible vulnerability to abuse by carers who may be family members, or others. A potential victim would not necessarily be protected from a potential perpetrator and so may be preyed upon by a burglar or drug dealer befriending them and identifying their home as a place to use as a drug den; a relatively new crime known as cuckooing.

22.3 Statutory services did protect the needs of this small but very vulnerable group however only limited joint working between Adult Social Care and Community Safety Team had been done to put in place extra prevention and protection actions and strategies.

22.4 The Head of Community Safety reported she was one of the senior managers serving on the Safeguarding Adults Board which works with Police Representatives, and senior Health and Adult Social Care Managers. An action plan being drafted in consultation with police colleagues in the coming weeks would soon be reported to the Community Safety Forum.

22.5 Council lawyers were now using new powers, in joint operations with police, housing, landlords and the community safety team to deal with closure of premises in this type of case, especially where the resident was the victim. The victim who was unable to protect him/herself could then go to appropriate accommodation and the offenders suitably dealt with.

22.6 Sergeant Castleton stressed that only rarely were significant powers used and then only as a last resort.

22.7 A Member of the public representing a residents association said she had been concerned about cuckooing it had taken too long to secure premises; she heard that the new protocols and working arrangements would speed up the process.

22.8 The Panel were pleased at the important work being done with care and consideration to safeguard older vulnerable people on their own premises, and that serious offenders faced the full force of the law. Members felt that this work could be shared with other local authorities.

22.9 A representative of a Tenants and Residents Association made a number of points;

- can a speaker visit his area, to reassure senior citizens about community safety and fear of crime
- nobody would know if someone with a mental illness had been allocated sheltered housing accommodation
- was community safety funding available for his area

22.10 Sergeant Castleton said mental health varied widely from minor issues to serious conditions requiring people to be 'sectioned' under the Mental Health Act; detained for treatment against their will. The Head of Housing Management replied that there was a new requirement in the Single Assessment Process for a community care assessment including mental health needs, before someone moves into sheltered accommodation. This information was shared with Sheltered Housing.

22.11 As regards fear of crime, Sergeant Castleton told the meeting that until recently this had tended to be overlooked. However actual crime levels had fallen to such an extent that this and perceptions of crime, anti-social behaviour and crime prevention measures for example design of the built environment had become more important areas of work.

22.12 The Head of Community Safety said that additional Local Action Teams could be set up. There were currently 38 and the number was growing. It was challenging for only 4-5 officers to attend all LAT evening meetings but information and support was available and LAT representatives could be co-opted onto the Community Safety Forum.

22.13 The Chair encouraged people to be involved in their LAT, where community safety issues could be raised.

22.14 Representatives of the Women's Institute and the Pensioner's Forum said that older people's fears about safety can extend to dying alone in their own homes. The Head of Housing Management said that one of values of the 50+ Community Programme was to reach large numbers of older people. The Neighbourhood Care scheme did try to identify and then support older people who may feel isolated. A Council officer was available to arrange and attend a funeral service where there was no-one else to do this.

22.15 The Head of Community Safety said this question was only on the border of community safety. The Panel could simply recommend a process whereby someone can refer an older person for an assessment of their needs. This process already worked well but perhaps greater publicity would be helpful.

22.16 A Member of the public felt that face to face contact with the public was especially important for older people. The Head of Housing Management said issues could largely be resolved by phone to make best use of resources. Not everyone needed a full care assessment and face to face help was available for more far-reaching matters.

23. POLICING STRATEGY

23.1 Police Sergeant Peter Castleton handed out copies of the Local Policing Plan for Sussex 2009 – 2012 and explained to the Panel how it impacted on older people. The approach to Neighbourhood policing was:

- Being visible and accessible (enhanced teams in neighbourhoods, the public influencing our priorities and building confidence)
- Working with communities (Managing demand, enhancing supervision and delivering effective interventions) and
- Providing a quality response (building strong relationships, achieving best outcomes through partnerships and communicating effectively)

23.2 He said there was not a police officer at every corner. However the police were more accessible and visible than ever before and made professional judgements about the best policing programme. The Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) provided a high quality response.

23.3 PCSOs worked closely with communities and Local Action Teams and with older people because they often had more time. PCSOs could signal crimes such as damage to benches and this impacts on people's feelings of safety and actual safety because criminals tended to operate in areas perceived to be lawless.

23.4 Inspector Delacour said people's confidence depended on the ability of the service to deal with matters but acknowledged that an older person may regard a 'quality response' differently compared with a younger person.

23.5 He referred to bogus callers who tended to prey on older more vulnerable people with minimum defence. They remained a day or two in an area and then moved on.

23.6 Neighbourhood Watch tended to be populated by people at home during the day, often older people being good neighbours. The service was moving away from phone- to internet-based.

23.7 Turning to a potential gap between generations he said young people need to understand better the impact they can have on others. Conversely many older people without contact with children and younger people needed to understand the younger generation better.

23.8 He said he would like to encourage older people into schools to explain how they feel about groups of children in the streets. The Panel may wish to make a recommendation on this.

23.9 Free upgrade to locks could be provided for older people without the means to do the work themselves. Advice could be given to individuals about personal safety and how to conduct themselves when out at night. Older people were least likely to become victims but they could take extra precautions, for instance with their personal belongings, he said.

23.10 As part of Sussex Police Consultation strategy, an Independent Advisory Group advises the police on the impact of critical incidents and the Police were seeking an independent person from the older community to serve on this. The Panel felt that the Older People's Council were well placed to nominate an independent older person.

23.11 Inspector Delacour said the Police were looking at other ways to contact people without access to the internet. The monthly newsletter 'The Patrol' was placed in accessible places such as doctors' surgeries.

23.12 The conduct of most young people was fine and this message needed to be promoted. For instance at Hangleton Local Action Team, Members of the Youth Council as well as older people were given a presentation. This involvement of Younger people was specially welcomed by the Panel.

23.12 Members also preferred the paper newsletter for older readers as otherwise people without use of the internet missed out on latest developments. There was concern about the move of Neighbourhood Watch to internet-based and a suggestion that older people be provided with a computer.

23.13 Mr Eyles OPC Co-optee to the scrutiny panel remarked that communications was vital. Neighbourhood Watch was one source of information. However not all publications covered the whole of the City.

23.14 Inspector Delacour said there would be a communications and media centre at police headquarters in Lewes. While there were overarching community safety messages to be communicated over the whole Division, detailed information needed to be addressed to specific areas at a very local neighbourhood level.

23.15 A Chair of a Residents Association stated that even though young people may not intend harm, even playing loud music or driving fast around the block can have much more serious consequences for older people than for younger people. There needed to be much wider recognition that older and vulnerable people were likely to have different needs and reduced tolerance levels. Earlier intervention was necessary in those cases, he said.

23.16 Another person in the public gallery said older people who have issues or concerns wanted to be better recognised and respected by public sector services. He felt that PCSOs and Neighbourhood officers should be issued with standardised business cards linked with incident numbers recorded at a call centre.

23.17 Inspector Delacour said a message could be left for a PCSO at the call centre in Lewes if have the name and number are known. There was a facility on the Operational Information System which recognised a person by name from the phone number; however this was accessible only by a named senior police officer. Referrals from Adult Social Care system would be useful for example where a person was unable to speak and was feasible for some vulnerabilities. A person's phone number could be added to the OIS at the request of ASC or a relative but not all information on the ASC database could be transferred to the OIS. Officers would investigate possible options.

23.18 A questioner from the Women's Institute asking about police coverage of Preston Park and Patcham which were not generally regarded as deprived areas, heard that problems could occur anywhere. Preston Park LAT held regular meetings with PCSOs. A local councillor or local police officer could be invited to a WI meeting.

23.19 Inspector Delacour said each Neighbourhood policing area – West, East and Central had a Police Sergeant/Inspector and 20 PCSOs who integrated into the community and gathered neighbourhood information. In addition there was 24-hour police coverage for the city plus CID and other police-force-based teams.

23.20 More than 95% of police work did not involve the use of a warrant card

23.21 The Panel had received comments that older people wanted to see 'more bobbies on the beat.' However having heard evidence today, the Panel wished to collectively enforce the message that 95% of policing is about other work. There was praise for their local PCSOs from several members of the public.

23.22 A representative of the Pensioners Forum asked about providing locks for older people and it was confirmed that there was a fund to provide deadlocks where there was a need, based on a person's vulnerability.

23.23 Asked when it was appropriate to dial 999 or the general police line Inspector Delacour acknowledged that it was sometimes impossible to distinguish between high spirits and real emergencies. Officers would go where they thought there would be a problem. False alarms were preferable to ignoring serious incidents.

23.24 There was a comment from the public gallery that reinforced the view that there were many rowdy behaviour incidents and while these may not be unlawful they can make older people feel uncomfortable or unsafe and impact on their quality of life. Everyone would become an older person and the ageing process can affect sight, hearing, mobility and perceptions.

23.25 The Chair thanked the police officers and all the speakers who had contributed to this meeting.

24. AREAS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS

24.1 The Panel sketched out its main headline areas of recommendations and agreed to hold an informal meeting not in public, on 11 August. This would be to consider a first draft report with the intention of reporting back to the parent Committee, the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 September.

24.2 A member of the public asked for information on smoke alarms.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of