

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 July 2020 at 7.00 pm**

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- Present:** Councillors John Kent (Chair), Elizabeth Rigby (Vice-Chair), Mike Fletcher and Angela Lawrence
- Apologies:** Councillor Garry Hague
- In attendance:** Julie Rogers, Julie Rogers, Director of Environment, Highways and Counter Fraud  
Ian Wake, Director of Public Health  
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager  
Gavin Dennett, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager  
Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection  
Jason Read, Team Leader (Operations & Performance) Youth Offending Service  
Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure  
DI James Freeman, Essex Police  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **57. Minutes**

The minutes of the Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 6 February 2020 were approved as a correct record.

### **58. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **59. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

### **60. The Work of Trading Standards**

Gavin Dennett, Strategic Lead Public Protection, provided Members with an oversight of the work the Trading Standards Team undertook on behalf of the Council. This included:

- Trading Standards Team focusing on the protection of residents in regards to consumer protection and provide protection and support for Thurrock's business community.
- Product safety and counterfeit goods.
- The Trading Standards Team consisted of 11 officers, three of which were newly appointed trainee officers.
- Within the Trading Standards Team there was a Ports Team working on product safety within the ports in Thurrock.
- Delivered Tobacco Control Work that focused on the illegal tobacco trade.
- The Trading Standards Team worked in accordance with the Council's Corporate Priorities as well as the National Trading Standards Office for Product Safety and Standards, DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency.
- The Trading Standards Team was the busiest in the country in terms of demand placed on Thurrock having three container ports in the borough.
- Two additional officers were recruited following the indication that the EU Exit could increase the part of the team's workload relating to imports and exports by 189%.
- Undertook routine Inspections and Investigations.
- Providing advice to Thurrock residents and businesses.

Some of the successes of the Team had been:

- Achieved a Proceeds of Crime Award against a counterfeit handbag selling ring of a total of £271,171.47.
- A prolific illicit tobacco seller had been fined £10,000 after seizing 17,000 cigarettes from over a six month period.
- Prevented 50,952 unsafe items and 557,561 non-compliant items from entering into the UK.
- That 1155 food premises were advised on their responsibilities.
- That 53 scam victims visited and advised on their rights on how to avoid falling prey to scammers.
- That 76 retailers of age restricted items visited and advised of their duties.
- The Trading Standards Team delivered on a part worn tyre project.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and open the item up for Member questions.

Councillor Lawrence questioned with all the amount of work being undertaken and the Trading Standards Team being so small did the team feel that they were under a lot pressure. Gavin Dennett stated staff numbers had increased with additional staff employed in readiness for the EU Exit and was monitored nationally by the Office for Product Safety and Standards. If a need to increase staff had been identified, additional resources would be bid for. That Thurrock had been able to attract and retain staff and Gavin Dennett

confirmed he was happy with the position of the number of staff v. number of residents.

The Chair stated that number should be the number of staff v. workload and asked for reassurance that the Trading Standards Team were set and ready to cover the potential increase of the EU Exit that would increase the team's workload by 189%. Gavin Dennett stated these were estimates from the National Trading Standards but based on the worse case position of the EU Exit. That additional staff had been recruited to address that and had that capacity to use if required. Making use of intelligence and algorithms used and extra training facilities had been made available in conjunction with DP World. That those staff working at ports would work in conjunction with colleagues from other agencies. Gavin Dennett stated that Trading Standards Team were well resourced and well respected with grants increased in recognition of the valuable work being carried out.

The Chair referred to the Proceeds of Crime Award against counterfeit handbags and questioned where the other half of the money went once the other half had been given to the Crown. Gavin Dennett said that this money would go to the Council.

The Chair thanked Gavin Dennett and the Trading Standards Team for their outstanding work.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.**

### **61. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 2019/20: Serious Youth Violence and Vulnerability**

Ian Wake, Director of Public Health, stated that it was a statutory duty of the Director of Public Health to prepare an independent report on the health and wellbeing of the local population each year and stated that the 2019/20 report considered the issue of Violence and Vulnerability in young people and how a public health approach could be used to improve outcomes for our residents.

Members were provided with an overview of the report by means of a PowerPoint presentation. This included:

- Public Health Approach to Tackling Violence
- Trends in Violence
- Trends in Youth Violence and Weapons Offences and by Districts
- Youth Violence by small geographical areas
- Predictors of future violence at ward level
- Risk Factors – Gang Involvement
- Casual Factors – Deprivation and the Crime Paradox
- How the council should respond
- Key Gaps in Service Provision

- Other Key Findings
- Conclusions and Recommendations

The presentation can be found from the following link:

<https://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/b17855/Annual%20Report%20of%20the%20Director%20of%20Public%20Health%20201920%20Serious%20Youth%20Violence%20and%20Vulnerability%2002.pdf?T=9>

The Chair thanked Ian Wake for the incredibly detailed report and the PowerPoint presentation had been helpful to identify the issue keys of that report.

Councillor Fletcher echoed the Chair's comments and questioned on the data front, how much dependence had there been on Xantura to produce the data tools. Ian Wake stated that Xantura provided the architecture to which the data was fed into and the Public Health team had worked very closely with them to analyse the data and produce the risk base model. This identified the opportunity to bring some of the skills from the organisation to work with Xantura. Ian Wake stated that Police data needed to be included and those conversations had started with Essex Police.

Councillor Fletcher questioned whether there were any barriers between agencies working together to get full cooperation. Ian Wake stated that partnership working in Thurrock worked well. The challenge would be for the enforcement and crime work stream that sat under the Community Safety Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing work stream that sat under the Health and Wellbeing Board to be joined up. A Violence and Vulnerability Board had been created that had representatives from all professionals to bring this work together.

Councillor Fletcher referred to the number of exclusions in primary schools and questioned why Thurrock primary schools were so quick to take this action and what impact would this have on those children. Ian Wake stated that on secondary school exclusions, Thurrock did incredibly well in particularly temporary exclusions with Thurrock being one of the best in the country but with primary schools less well. Ian Wake stated that the report contained a recommendation to explore this further and agreed to take that recommendation forward.

Councillor Lawrence thanked Ian Wake for the report and requested that help and support should be more readily publicised particularly at school events such as at parents evening which would be a good opportunity to speak with children, parents and teachers. Ian Wake stated that plans were put in place to engage with school forums, present at the Health and Wellbeing Board, present at more council committees, and conferences but due to COVID this had to stop but it was hoped these would be picked up shortly.

The Chair stated as the report had 33 individual recommendations under those four headings of the report there were gaps and would be crucial that

those were implemented. That one of the gaps identified was a lack of tie-up with Planning and Regeneration and it would be interesting to have a planners prospective on how that might happen. The Chair suggested that as there had not been time for a conference for members to consult on the report he suggested that as part of recommendation 1.2 a hard of the report be sent to all Members to give them the opportunity to read and that post COVID a conference or a series of event be held for elected Members. That also a conference or event be arranged with wider partners to come up with a robust plan to implement the 33 recommendations. The Chair stated that it was important these 33 recommendations are implemented and regularly reviewed so that they can be tracked for the differences that are being made.

Julie Rogers stated that there was a specialist Police team who the Thurrock Council planners worked with on a regular basis and any new housing development would be sent to that Police team and advised how the crime could be designed out in that particular scheme. This was now the new process going forward on new developments and more information could be provided at the proposed conference or through a members briefing. The Chair thanked Julie Rogers for the comments but stated an example of the report looked at the number of licensing premises in one area where problems were known. This detail should be included in the merging local plan as some elements had moved beyond the traditional approach.

Councillor Fletcher stated the local development plan should take a large input of the report, conversations between the different agencies involved with the plan to develop communities where there was a low risk of crime rather than just focussing on how to prevent crime once there prevalence in there.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the content and recommendations contained within the report.**
- 2. That the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered how the findings and recommendations contained within the report could best be implemented and used to influence broader council strategy in this area.**

## **62. Gang Related Violence Update Report**

Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Partnership Manager, presented the report that outlined how Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership through their partners, Thurrock Council, Essex Police and Youth Offending Service were addressing the national issue of Gang Related Violence and how this was being dealt with locally in Thurrock. That the report presented many positives but acknowledged there was still much more work to be done to address and remained a concern for Members, communities as well as all partners. Michelle Cunningham thanked Jason Read and DI James Freeman for their contributions to the report.

Michelle Cunningham stated the report clarified some of the national definitions of the terminology and the work undertaken with children's social care in relation to contextualised safeguarding to identify and respond to some of the external factors where some young people may be vulnerable to exploitation. The first recommendation is in relation to the National Picture and in particular the new duty being placed on public bodies to tackle serious violence with a public health approach and welcomed Ian Wake for his report to help join up with partners and work across prevention and enforcement. That the Crime and Disorder Act would be amended to reflect that serious violence was an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships and Members were reassured that this was already a priority in Thurrock and had been for some time. This was also a priority within the Youth Offending Service annual youth justice plan. That the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner in Essex had prioritised reversing the trends in serious violence by tackling gangs by protecting children and vulnerable people. By doing this he had set up a violence and vulnerability unit who had developed a framework. This would provide consistency across those agencies working across Essex and the coordination of work and have the opportunity to develop best practices. Also access to additional funding opportunities had been made available to Essex through the Home Office. In Thurrock the nominals were managed through monthly partnership meetings to which Jason Read chaired and the report identified that 66 nominals had been managed this year. The report highlighted the 12 month review of the work undertaken by Operation Raptor on gang related violence in localised areas with the use of injunctions against C17. The report highlighted that four county lines had been stopped and taken out with the opportunity to offend in Thurrock reduced. There had been a slight increase in violent crime which could be down to enforcement and the confidence in communities to report incidents. That violent crime in relation to gangs was very much targeted and the wider community would not be at risk from this. The risk management meetings within social care had helped to identify the areas where young people were at risk of exploitation. The additional funding provided to focus on gangs had enabled a senior practitioner to be recruited within the Youth Offending Service. That the intervention work had focused on those most at risk. The Youth Services had developed a mentoring programme and were doing more out-reach work. That due to the current circumstances a number of plans had been put on hold including to meet with Members, school leaders and governors, youth workers and community members in six areas. The purpose of these workshops and the Every Contact Counts sessions was to raise awareness of gangs and the risk of exploitation and were developed following the CVS conference. These will be rescheduled as soon as possible and findings would be shared.

DI James Freeman echoed the comments below with specific mention of the Operation Raptor in Grays, the success of the injunctions against C17, the effective use of alternative orders and acknowledged the violence increase in Grays.

Cllr Fletcher commented on long term risk of drug use and dependency and reporting and perception actions not taken.

Councillor Lawrence stated that intervention at a young age was vital. Councillor Lawrence questioned what was being done to monitor and stop the use of gas canisters in the borough. This was becoming an increasing concern and questioned who should be contacted to report this. Michelle Cunningham agreed that gas canisters was one of the biggest complaints being made and that a leaflet/publication was being prepared to provide regulations and guidelines. Incidents should be reported to environment teams who were targeting those areas and engaging with those young persons.

Councillor Rigby questioned whether gatherings of young persons were monitored and whether officers were engaging with them. Michelle Cunningham stated she was aware of the issues and had picked this up with the Licensing Team. Michelle Cunningham asked Councillor Rigby that if she had any particular concerns on an area to let her know outside the meeting.

The Chair questioned whether there was a concern that for young people buying these gas canisters were they being offered any other types of drugs. Jason Read stated they was a significant difference between the gas canisters and the illegal drug market and could not see young people being drawn into hard drug use.

Councillor Lawrence questioned how Members and residents should be reporting this. Michelle Cunningham stated either through 101, Members Enquires or through Michelle Cunningham who will inform the appropriate teams such as the Police, Enforcement and the Cleaner Greener Team.

Councillor Kent stated as these gas canisters were recyclable he hoped that the Cleaner Greener Teams were putting them in the recycling bin. Julie Rogers stated that some were recycled and some were capped for evidence.

The Chair questioned the use of the word “epidemic” in recommendation 1.1(b). Michelle Cunningham stated that in writing the report had referred to the development of the Public Health Duty to tackle serious youth violence. In this Javed Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Barnardos referred to “Youth violence as an epidemic”. So that this would link to public health, communities and the national widespread occurrence that was serious youth violence and made the point that statutory agencies alone would not tackle this.

## **RESOLVED**

### **That the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- a) Noted the challenges that the National issue of Gang Related Violence brings to Thurrock and support the partnership approach to combat the related increase in violent crime.**
- b) Encouraged the engagement of our local communities to work with us to find a resolution to this epidemic.**

c) Recognised the need to work in partnership with the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Board.

**63. Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme to which the Chair agreed that a brief report on the establishment of the Climate Emergency Task Force be added to the 1 October 2020 committee.

**The meeting finished at 8.41 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

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Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**