

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SUB COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

17 January 2018

Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt

Vice Chairperson: Councillor L.Jones

Councillors: C.J.Jones, D.M.Peters, S.Rahaman,
A.J.Richards, R.L.Taylor, O.S.Davies and
R.W.Wood

**Officers In
Attendance** J. Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.W.Davies and A.Wingrave

1. **RESOLVED TO ACT AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE IN LINE WITH SECTION 19 OF THE POLICE AND
JUSTICE ACT 2006**

Members resolved to act as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

2. **MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PUBLIC
PROTECTION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE 19 OCTOBER 2017**

Members noted the minutes from the previous meeting.

3. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

Members noted the scrutiny forward programme for 2017/18.

4. **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - UPDATE BY INSPECTOR DECLAN
CAHILL**

Inspector Declan Cahill provided the Committee with an update on the progress made by South Wales Police and partners in relation to the Operation Grey Denver Action Plan. Inspector Cahill reported on

the work being undertaken by the Homelessness and Anti-Social Behaviour Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). Inspector Cahill informed Members that MARAC was a partnership based group chaired jointly by the Authority and South Wales Police which met by-monthly and referred perpetrators of anti-social behaviour to the relevant support services where appropriate. Inspector Cahill stated that the previous meeting was held in December and it was reported that living accommodation had been provided for six out of eight repeat offenders who were previously homeless. Inspector Cahill informed Members that using the powers of arrest was always a last resort as the Police often dealt with vulnerable individuals who required assistance from various support services. Inspector Cahill added that the meetings were a long term commitment by all partners.

Inspector Cahill informed Members that Inspector Roy Portlock had devised a new patrol strategy with the objective of preventing crime, preserving life and buildings, and keeping the peace. Inspector Cahill stated that street patrols were in place in Neath town centre for up to two hours each day. Inspector Cahill explained that the Police had the power to issue Section 35 notices to individuals behaving in an anti-social manner which required them to leave a designated area for 24 hours. Inspector Cahill added that a breach of these conditions resulted in arrest.

Inspector Cahill updated Members on the progress made following the Committee's recommendation at the previous meeting to prioritise the development of a clear and accessible method of incident reporting and information sharing that met the needs of the public and businesses, as captured on the Operation Grey Denver Action Plan. Inspector Cahill reported that a mobile phone application had now been developed by the Authority and South Wales Police for local businesses to pass information to the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) on duty in Neath. Inspector Cahill stated that this was an information sharing application which was not intended for public use, and not designed to replace the reporting of incidents via 101.

Inspector Cahill provided an update on the 101 crime reporting service. Inspector Cahill offered Members the opportunity to visit the call centre where the 101 calls were received in order to observe the process. Inspector Cahill reported that between April and October last year the call centre received around 500 emergency calls a day and around 2,000 comments were made on South Wales Police's Facebook page each day. Inspector Cahill informed Members that

since November the Police had allocated resources to monitor social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter for any reports and information on criminal activity. Inspector Cahill stated that these dedicated resources were monitoring social media sites 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Inspector Cahill re-iterated that the 101 service should always be contacted in the first instance when reporting crime.

Inspector Cahill updated Members on the progress made following the Committee's recommendation at the previous meeting to prioritise the development of an effective means of providing timely updates to inform the public and businesses of progress regarding town centre issues, as captured on the Operation Grey Denver Action Plan. Inspector Cahill informed Members that the Police had been working with the Authority on a brand which celebrated the successes achieved so far in dealing with anti-social behaviour in Neath town centre which would then be shared with the public via various media channels. Inspector Cahill stated that Police Officers and Special Constables were now required to put messages on Twitter when they were on street patrol in the town centre in order to make the public aware of their presence. Inspector Cahill added that this requirement had been in place since October.

The Chair circulated a letter at the meeting to Committee Members from a local trader who raised concerns over the negative effect that begging, homelessness and street agents were having on footfall in the town centre. Inspector Cahill explained that the street patrol strategy developed by Inspector Roy Portlock would ensure that there was regular surveillance in the town centre from Police Officers, Special Constables and PCSOs who would deal with any issues as they occurred. Inspector Cahill added that the street patrol strategy was a long term commitment. Cabinet Members referred to the comment made in the letter regarding the number of street agents present in the town centre and stated that they would contact the Planning Department to explore options to reduce numbers.

Members acknowledged the progress made by all partners to date in dealing with anti-social behaviour issues in Neath town centre and stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum. Members commented that they had noticed a significant improvement particularly on Windsor Road. Members stated that a police presence through the street patrols had made a difference. Members explained that there were still some ongoing issues. Members reported that there were five separate groups regularly seen in the

town centre consuming alcohol and retailers felt that this was affecting their trade.

Members questioned whether the homeless persons referred to in Inspector Cahill's update were from the county borough. Inspector Cahill stated that they were from the area. Members referred to the repeat offenders mentioned in Inspector Cahill's update and queried the nature of the offences. Inspector Cahill stated that the most common offences were shop lifting, begging and the disturbance of the peace.

Members queried how many Section 35 notices had been issued of late. Inspector Cahill stated that he did not have the information to hand, but mentioned that PCSOs did not have the authority to issue the notices. Inspector Cahill added that the Police were currently reviewing the powers available to PCSOs in specific areas.

Members enquired whether PCSOs were issued with items such as pepper spray and handcuffs due to the potential risks that they faced in their working environment. Inspector Cahill stated that PCSOs were not armed and there was no intention to change this arrangement at present. Inspector Cahill stated that the role of a PCSO was different to the role of a Police Officer as the purpose of a PCSO was to engage with members of the community and obtain information rather than enforce the law. Inspector Cahill added that PCSOs were issued with body cameras and were able to record any incidents.

Members queried how many Special Constables were allocated to the county borough. Inspector Cahill stated that he did not have the figures to hand, but estimated that there were currently around eight. Inspector Cahill informed Members that the Police were due to recruit additional Special Constables in the near future. Inspector Cahill stated that Special Constables were linked to specific areas such as Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea, but the Police were able to transfer them if there was an increase in demand.

Members stated that there had been instances of anti-social behaviour in the Pontardawe area where park benches and bins had been set on fire. Members stated that local Members and town councillors were encouraging residents to report incidents to the 101 crime reporting service by placing messages in Pontardawe Voice. Members stated that perpetrators in Pontardawe were aware that PCSOs did not have the powers to arrest and were not deterred by them. Members acknowledged that the PCSOs had done a lot of engagement work with youths in the community of Pontardawe.

Inspector Cahill confirmed that PCSOs did not have the powers to arrest, but Special Constables did have these powers.

Members commented that Pontardawe and Aberavon had experienced a significant rise in crime and queried whether the police were aware of these trends also. Inspector Cahill stated that he was not the responsible officer for the Pontardawe area and did not have the statistics to hand, but re-iterated that it was important for the public to report any incidents so that the Police could review and re-allocate their resources according to demand.

Cabinet Members queried whether there were any electoral divisions or wards that Committee Members wanted Cabinet Members to visit with them to establish whether there were similar issues in other areas within the county borough. Cabinet Members stated that they had already made evening visits with local Members and the Police to Neath town centre, Aberavon, Port Talbot town centre and Briton Ferry.

Following scrutiny the Committee noted the anti-social behaviour update by Inspector Cahill.

CHAIRPERSON

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