

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.14 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Peter Dennis (Chairman), David Cornish (Vice-Chairman), Shirley Boyt, Laura Blumenthal, Gregor Murray, Alistair Neal, Chris Bowring, Abdul Loyes and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Executive Members Present

Councillors: Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways) and Ian Shenton (Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure)

Officers Present

Narinder Brar (Community Safety Manager), Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Andy Glencross (Assistant Director - Highways), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking & Road Safety Team Manager) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

Others Present

Adrian Betteridge (Wokingham Active Travel)

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Pauline Jorgensen, Norman Jorgensen, and Chris Johnson.

Councillors Abdul Loyes, Chris Bowring and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey attended the meeting as substitutes.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was queried why the bus strategy was not on the agenda for this meeting, as had been requested. Andy Glencross, Assistant Director for Highways and Transport, stated that the bus service improvement plan and the enhanced partnership were scheduled to come to Overview and Scrutiny in September prior to being signed off by the Executive. It was requested that any changes to the forward plan be specifically raised with the Chair to ensure that the Committee was aware of any changes, especially when items were of great importance to residents. It was agreed that officers would go away and confirm that the September meeting was still the most suitable time for items related to buses to be considered.

Andy Glencross stated that he would ascertain how much revenue support was available for bus services.

It was requested that any papers related to buses be sent to this Committee prior to being considered at Executive Briefing.

It was noted that an urgent Individual Executive Member Decision was scheduled on 13 July to modify the contract term for Wokingham Town bus services.

It was queried why members were not specifically named within the minutes. Callum Wernham, Democratic and Electoral Services specialist, clarified that it had been agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to not name members within the minutes of any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

16. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

17. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 19 to 34, which gave an update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

The report outlined the strategic priorities of the partnership, including listening to the needs and concerns of local residents, and intervening early and preventing issues from escalating. The Wokingham Domestic Abuse policy had been adopted, which was in line with the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Despite an overall increase of 10.9 percent of total reported crime, Wokingham Borough still had one of the lowest levels of recorded crime in Thames Valley and the Southeast, whilst 2020-2021 had seen some of the lowest reported levels of crime both locally and nationally due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Narinder Brar, Community Safety Manager, attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- Was funding for the 'Here4You' team still in place? Officer response – The 'Here4You' service was the young people's specific service which sat within the youth offending service. The service had supported around 91 new young people this year alone, and was fully funded and looking to enhance its offering. The service was promoted directly via the youth offending team, at schools, via social media and via referrals from other health related services. Information was also made available to parents.
- Was liaison underway with housing associations to help combat antisocial behaviour within social housing? Officer response – There was a very good and well-established relationship with housing associations, however the main issue was the turnover of staff and understanding who was in charge of each property. The service being delivered had improved, hence the light-touch of this issue within the report.
- Was the increase in hate crime a result of people feeling more confident to report these incidents? Officer response – People were being encouraged to report hate crime via police colleagues and voluntary sector colleagues and third-party recording mechanisms. It was crucially important to get a community feel on these issues, and there was a way to go to get more third-party reporting at buildings including community hubs and the Council offices. In general, there had been a 5-to-6-year

Borough wide trend of increasing hate crime including racial, religious, and disability related crime.

- Were there any measures with regards to the success of the prevent program, or was this confidential? Officer response – This was quite confidential, as the Home Office was very careful with the information that was recorded and circulated in terms of the numbers of people coming into the prevent program. Case updates were provided to the prevent board, which outlined the types of risk being faced and the types of risks being de-escalated. The programme had expanded and influences including right wing terrorism, cyber-crime, and influences through gaming were now being investigated and dealt with.
- What training was being provided with regards to the prevent program? Officer response – There was a clear recognition that the word ‘prevent’ caused mixed feelings, especially within the Muslim communities. There was outreach towards local communities, and officers were always open to hearing how this could be increased and done in a more sensitive way. The programme had come a long way, and the year before last referrals from right wing individuals on a national level outstripped any other type of referral. The program was there to help individuals who may just be upset or confused about a range of different issues, and not just in relation to any specific radicalisation. There was a tiered training plan, which ranged from basic training all the way to specialised training for social workers. More granular information on the training program could be shared with the Committee.
- What was the sense of achievement of the specific aims of the service, what was the baseline of reported rape and domestic abuse which would allow members to see whether the increase was due to more people feeling confident to report these crimes, and what were the long-term trends beyond the pandemic years? Officer response – Future reports would contain longer term trends, whilst it was noted that the pandemic years were unusually low crime rate years. In terms of strategic aims, the service was now in a very good place with strong leadership, and had developed the community safety plan, partnership and a strong team which was different from the place where it had historically operated quite poorly on a strategic and operational footing. Violence against women and girls was a key local and national issue that was being addressed, whilst Wokingham now had a 10-person strong antisocial behaviour team which allowed for work to be carried out on the ground. The Borough’s out-of-hours response for antisocial behaviour was previously quite poor, and it was expected to see an increase in reports as the public gained the confidence that came with a new service. Longer term trends and information would be pulled together when the violence against women and girls action plan was developed, and it needed to be assessed as to whether the number of rape and domestic abuse cases were genuinely low or whether this was due to low confidence of victims. Nationally, rape cases were in a very bad place with an average of 600 days between a report being made and a disposal being undertaken.
- Could local, such as South East England, and national trends be added for future reports in addition to data from the years prior to the pandemic? Officer response – Data would be provided via 1, 3 and 5 year trends in future to give all of the data meaning.
- Could a table or graph be provided in future reports to show how Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) compared to other local authorities and to show how many of these

crimes were being solved? Officer response – Detection rates would be provided in future where this data was available.

- Whilst it was dreadful that anyone suffered from domestic abuse, it was good to see people having more confidence to report these issues and we should be setting ourselves targets to see how we could achieve 100 percent reporting.
- Why was fraud excluded from this list? Officer response – This was dealt with by action fraud, which was a separate entity for dealing with such cases. These were often very complex national and international cases which required specialist officers to investigate each case.
- It was commented that excluding fraud from WBC's Community Safety Partnership would be doing residents a disservice. Officer comment – As a partnership, funding had been made available to Trading Standards colleagues and there was some very close working underway to work through a list of vulnerable people within the Borough. A separate agenda item could be scheduled specifically on this issue, including specific data regarding how many instances of fraud and cyber-crime were occurring and the cost implications.
- What was being done to help LGBT children in homes, who were being abused because of their sexual orientation or identity? Officer response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- How was treatment of victims by the police being measured? Officer response – There were a number of different ways that quality control of police officers was being undertaken and monitored, including body cameras and positive actions that police officers must carry out. If a victim was unhappy with the response given, they could ask for a more senior officer to assess the case and body footage, and a formal complaint route was available if required. The partnership wanted to hear any instances of poor experiences with the police.
- How was the issue of inappropriate behaviour within the workplace being dealt with by the police? Officer response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- Was the partnership putting out advice to residents regarding keyless car thefts, and was this a growing issue? Officer response – As an affluent Borough, car ownership was high and investment in technology was high, which was attractive to criminals. Messaging was going out in conjunction with Thames Valley police in terms of the targeting of keyless car thefts.
- Were family gold thefts a priority for the police, and could anything be done to reassure residents? Officer response – This was a priority, however this was particularly difficult to deal with as it was linked to organised crime activity who had information about exactly which houses had gold and where it might be hidden. Insurance companies tended to replace the gold, and when the family took the gold back to the house the cycle often restarted once again and the victims were often repeat targeted, whilst very little proof was required to sell gold. The best thing people could do would be to store gold at a safe location such as a safety deposit box.
- Which category did bike and e-bike theft sit within? Officer response – This could be recorded in a combination of places dependant on where they were being stolen from.

Bike theft was less of a concern within the Borough recently as a lot of messaging had been distributed to the public over time.

- Could a value be placed on investigating and dealing with issues in terms of officer time and community value, in addition to prosecution rates being provided? Officer response – This would be provided by a written answer.
- A number of questions were provided to the Police in advance of the meeting, which can be found below.
- I have a question about the police's 101 number for non-emergency cases. What value does it add, what are the answer times, what resolutions come out of it? I ask because when asking residents to report issues via 101 there is a tendency to say it does not work. And thus, it is not used leading to other issues. To quote one case I tried to contact one Saturday evening and essentially just gave up. Police response - 999 calls to police are for emergencies where life is at risk, or a crime is in progress. 101 calls to police are to report crimes and incidents to Police where life is not at immediate risk, but a police response is required. Examples are far too numerous to detail but include a crime that has already occurred where a suspect is no longer on scene, a missing person where there is no immediate risk to life, a concern or fear for someone's welfare, an ongoing antisocial behaviour issue that requires police intervention. Our force target is to answer 101 calls within 3 minutes. In the year 21-22, 66% of 101 calls were answered within the 3-minute target and there is significant work going on to improve this. When a 101 call is answered, the call taker will go through a series of questions to determine the level of threat, harm, opportunity and risk and to determine how the call will be directed according. This will largely depend on the type of crime or incident that is being reported. For example, someone reporting a domestic violence offence will be prioritised over someone reporting that their neighbours parking is annoying them, but both are reported through 101. The nature of the call and often the crime type will of course dictate not only the response grading that should be applied but the best department to deal with the crime or the incident being reported (E.g., Uniformed response units, CID, specialist domestic abuse teams, local PCSO from dedicated neighbourhood team, traffic officers, safeguarding teams etc.). I have never known 101 not work. At times of high call volume there may be delays in getting an answer. Members of the public can visit the force website and submit an online report if they do not wish to hold on 101. Crimes, Incidents, road traffic collisions (non-injury), updates to ongoing incidents amongst many other things can be reported via the online tool. The online submissions are dealt with in a timely manner and can reach the correct department just as quickly as a 101 call can do.
- How will the police deal with e-scooters once the legislation changes to allow them? Police response - At present E- Scooters that are not part of a local government initiative are dealt with through road traffic legislation. E-scooters that are causing Anti-social behaviour can also be dealt with through Section 59 of the Police reform Act 2002. This provides Police the power to seize any vehicle being driven in an Anti-social manner. Our Neighbourhood Team recently ran two E-Scooter police operations to target areas where there were high usage of E-Scooters causing significant ASB. Even when legislation changes, police will still use Section 59 to target improper use.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Narinder Brar be thanked for attending the meeting;

- 2) More granular information with respect to prevent training be provided to the Committee;
- 3) Future reports contain longer term trends, and detection rates where available;
- 4) A separate agenda item be scheduled specifically on the issue of fraud, including specific data regarding how many instances of fraud and cyber-crime were occurring and the cost implications;
- 5) A written answer be provided as to what was being done to help LGBT children in homes, who were being abused because of their sexual orientation or identity;
- 6) A written answer be provided as to how the issue of inappropriate behaviour within the workplace was being dealt with by the police;
- 7) A written answer be provided as to whether a value be placed on investigating and dealing with issues in terms of officer time and community value, in addition to prosecution rates being provided;
- 8) The Committee receive a further update during the next municipal year.

18. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 35 to 50, which gave an update on civil parking enforcement (CPE) within the Borough.

The report set out that the operation of CPE, as administered by the Council's contractor NSL, had met the objectives set out for the scheme adopted by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) specifically by improving the flow of traffic by challenging drivers' previous parking behaviours. The introduction of the service had been cost neutral as intended, with income from parking fees and penalty charge notices continuing to cover service costs. The service had grown from 4 CPE officers in 2017 to 8 CPE officers in 2020 and now 12 CPE officers in 2022. Additional CPE officers had enabled the service to respond more regularly to parking concerns raised by residents and members.

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking and Road Safety Team Manager), and Andy Glencross (Assistant Director for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- Were there any specific TROs in place across the Borough in terms of pavement or verge parking? Executive Member response – If there were double yellow lines on the adjacent carriageway, then enforcement could be taken on the verge or footway. If there was obstruction of the footway itself, then this was a police matter.
- How often was the strategy for the location of patrols reviewed by WBC? Executive Member and Assistant Director response – This was reviewed constantly to target the areas where enforcement was needed the most. Every school was targeted every month with many receiving visits every week, and if a particular issue was raised by

residents or members then this was passed to the contractor to tackle until the compliance rate was increased substantially.

- Why were there no figures or targets in relation to the KPIs for the contractor? Assistant Director response – These were operational KPIs in relation to the contractor.
- Had a policy decision been made with regards to moving traffic enforcement? Executive Member response – This was being actively looked at whilst a business case was being evaluated, with the deadline for submission to the DFT (if desired) in January 2023.
- Why were enforcement penalty notices more expensive in Reading compared to Reading? Executive Member and Assistant Director response – This figure was set by the regulator on a national scale, and WBC's were already at the higher level.
- Was the CCTV trial at schools going to be rolled out to other schools, and would Beechwood be included in this? Executive Member response – There were 3 cameras available for use, and the trial would go live in September 2022 at two particular schools. The trial would be undertaken to ensure that this was working, and the cameras could be moved to other schools to address specific issues. A growth bid could be placed in future if the scheme was successful and deemed necessary for expansion. Beechwood was within the top 6 schools in terms of priority of dealing with existing issues and concerns.
- With regards to the contract renewal of 2 plus 2 years, would it be sensible to take such renewals to Overview and Scrutiny in future prior to renewal? Executive Member and officer response – Whilst the renewal was in line with the constitutional requirements, this would be a good idea in future to ensure that contracts were working well and were still the best solution for our residents.
- Were there plans to renew and replace old off-street car parking signs, especially considering the new 24 hour charging period (noting that this did not mean that it costed users money to park at all times)? Assistant Director response – There were some very old signs within the Borough, and these were being reviewed to ensure that they were in line with the most up to date TROs.
- It was requested that Crockhamwell Road car park be assessed for a change away from no return in 24 hours, to be more user friendly.
- What was the basis behind Wokingham Town having 6 to 10 times more penalty notices per month than the other towns? Assistant Director response – This was likely due to having more car parks in Wokingham compared to Woodley and Earley, and potentially a higher propensity for violations within Wokingham town centre.
- Was there data in relation to the usage of electric vehicle charging points and requests from residents for charging points outside of their homes? Assistant Director response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- How were responses to residents in terms of requests for TROs measured? Assistant Director response – TROs were undertaken via a Borough wide amendment which was more efficient in terms of administration however it took around 6 months. A

customer relations management system was being developed which would allow acknowledgements to be sent to residents and members.

- Was enforcement at schools heavily weighted towards town centre schools? For example, Floreat Montague school has seen various issues over time with little evidence of enforcement officers? Assistant Director response – Floreat could not be enforced prior to adoption of the road. It was not the job of the enforcement officers to talk to parents, as it was their job to issue tickets if the rules were being broken. Parking on zigzags were an immediate offence, whilst parents were allowed to unload on double yellow lines which meant it was difficult for enforcement officers to catch parents on double yellow lines long enough to issue a ticket, especially at drop off time. Every school was targeted and patrolled, and if there were specific concerns then members could contact officers to who would pass this on to the contractors to allow them to focus on a specific school for a period of time.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Fishwick, Martin Heath and Andy Glencross be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) A written answer be provided in relation to the usage of electric vehicle charging points and requests from residents for charging points outside of their homes;
- 3) An annual update be provided to the Committee during the next municipal year.

19. LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Committee considered a timetable, set out in agenda pages 51 to 52, which set out the timescales for the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways), and Andy Glencross (Assistant Director for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- It was noted that it would be helpful for the Committee to receive a further update in November 2022.
- Could dates and metrics be included within the project plan with regards to actual delivery of infrastructure, and could some projects such as safe railway crossings which would be required regardless of the final shape of the plan be noted within the plan with dates for delivery. Executive Member response – This was a very high priority, and active travel England required an LCWIP, with a report to be produced in October 2022. The Borough had been awarded funding for the Woodley to Reading route, which would be consulted on in July after the previous proposal gathered significant objections. This year would see the start of a compliant LTN 1/20 between Woodley and Reading.
- Adrian Betteridge, Wokingham Active Travel, provided a number of comments to the Committee. Community views had been listened to and taken on board, both in terms of help with local knowledge of routes and how this was to be positioned with the local

public. It was crucially important to sell this to the public as they might otherwise only see the large costs, road vehicle space being given up to cyclists, and temporary disruption. The major benefits of the LCWIP included tackling climate change, air quality, health and wellbeing and congestion. If these priorities were not focussed on, people would likely only focus on the disruptions caused and not the benefits. The target of five-times the number of cyclists in the Borough by 2030, as set out in the climate emergency action plan, would not be met unless the LCWIP was progressed from a funding and delivery point of view.

- When will the proposed consultation and wording be shared with the Woodley Borough and Town councillors? Executive Member response – This would be shared very shortly, hopefully by the coming weekend.
- Had any further investigations been made with regards to the proposed removal of a number of car parking spaces within Woodley, which were used by low income and elderly residents? Executive Member response – A plan would be finalised and communicated prior to this coming weekend.
- Would a more detailed plan and report be presented to the Committee in November? Executive Member response – The original first draft plan was sent out for consultation last year, and responses were being evaluated to inform on a second stage of consultation later this month. More detail would be provided at future meetings.
- Was the consultation regarding a cycle route from Loddon Park to Twyford station part of the LCWIP? Executive Member and Officer response – This was a levelling up fund bid which was also included within the LCWIP, which had the support of Theresa May MP whilst a petition was being arranged by residents to support this proposal. This was a long-term aspiration of the Council to have a cross valley route to link Woodley to Twyford station.
- Would it be ensured that schools were engaged and consulted with? Executive Member response – It would be ensured that schools were thoroughly consulted with.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Fishwick, Andy Glencross and Adrian Betteridge be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) An update be taken to the Committee in November 2022;
- 3) It be ensured that schools were thoroughly consulted on the emerging LCWIP.

20. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their work programme, set out in agenda pages 53 to 56.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Callum Wernham and Neil Carr be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The Committee work programme be noted;

- 3) An update be sought from officers with regards to bus services, specifically detailing options for funding routes and services as DFT funding was coming to an end;
- 4) An update on tackling fraud within the Borough be considered during September 2022;
- 5) An additional meeting be organised in November 2022 to consider the LCWIP Update and the Arts and Culture Strategy Update;
- 6) It was noted that a budget scrutiny training session was being organised;
- 7) It was noted that Committee members were invited to attend pre-meeting sessions 30-minutes prior to the beginning of each meeting.