Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 26 April 2018

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
26 April 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Michael Weinhonig - Chairman; Councillor Nigel Hedges - Vice-Chairman; Councillors Cheryl Johnson, Andy Jones, Nick Rose, Rae Stollard, Allister Russell, Philip Stanley-Watts, Kieron Wilson.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Jane Kelly - Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Health; Councillor Robert Lawton - Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Pat Oakley - Cabinet Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture, Councillor David Smith - Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment.

ALSO ATTENDING: Gary Josey Service Director, Housing and Communities, and Panel Lead Officer
Kelly Ansell Head of Communities and Enforcement
Steven Day Private Sector Housing Enforcement Manager
Cat McMillan Interim Communities Team Leader
Superintendent Jared Parkin Chair of Bournemouth Community Safety Partnership
Sophie Ricketts Senior Operation Galaxy Officer
Caroline Roundhill Housing Policy and Strategy Manager
Andy Williams Community Safety Manager

The meeting commenced at 6:00p.m.

To see a copy of the public reports that were considered by the Panel and to listen to the Council’s audio recording of this meeting please visit: https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/councildemocratic/CouncilMeetings/CommitteeMeetings/communityoverviewandscrutinypanel/2018/04/26/communityoverviewandscrutinypanel26-apr-2018.aspx

SECTION I - BUSINESS RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL

No items

SECTION II - BUSINESS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gina Mackin, and from the Deputy Leader, Councillor Nicola Greene.
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2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Rae Stollard was substituting for Councillor Mackin at this meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND ACTION SHEET

The Panel considered the minutes of the Panel meeting on 3 October 2017 and the actions arising from this and previous meetings.

DECISION MADE:

a. The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2017 were agreed and signed by the Chairman;
b. The update provided on actions arising from previous meetings was noted.

5. PUBLIC ISSUES

There were no public questions, deputations or petitions for this meeting.

6. QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor Bob Lawton, Cabinet Member for Housing, responded to a question from Councillor Andy Jones on the plans to increase further the provision of affordable family accommodation in Bournemouth. To read a copy of the question and reply please visit:


Councillor Nick Rose asked if there was any update on the Council’s position regarding the length of its fixed term tenancies following his question at full Council on 21 February. The Service Director, Housing and Communities, explained that the Council was awaiting further detail and guidance from the Government on its proposals to make fixed term tenancies mandatory. The Council’s current policy of fixed term tenancies of five years fell roughly in the middle of the two to ten year terms currently under discussion. While appreciating that some Members may have an opinion on what the length of the term should be, the Council was not in a position to take a formal view until further guidance was published.
Councillor Lawton also provided a statement on the fire at flats in Commercial Road on the evening of Saturday 21 April. He outlined how the Council and its partner agencies and residents had responded to the incident. He highlighted the actions taken by the Council to ensure that residents had access alternative safe accommodation as required. He wished to thank Lorraine Mealings, Caroline Roundhill and the Housing team, Social Services, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, South West Ambulance Service, and Insight Security for their roles in dealing with the incident.

Councillor David Smith, Central Ward member, reported on an email he had received from a local resident affected by the fire, thanking the Council and the emergency services for their excellent response. He had forwarded the correspondence to the Managing Director and relevant officers to take forward the issues raised about mandatory fire extinguishers and fire blankets in flats.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked all those involved in responding to the incident, including Council staff, the emergency services and the residents.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Community Safety Manager introduced a report which set out the key priorities and areas of focus for the Bournemouth Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for the year 2018/19.

The key priorities of domestic abuse and sexual violence, public space violent crime, and anti-social behaviour were outlined in section 5 of the report. The priorities were based on the results of the annual pan Dorset Strategic Assessment of crime and disorder. Using this approach to set the priorities enabled the CSP to work strategically with Poole and Dorset while retaining focus and delivery at a local level. A summary of the current and planned work to address the priorities was provided in section 6 of the report. One of the actions which the Community Safety Manager highlighted was the upgrading of the CCTV system to high definition in the town centre and seafront. He also referred to Bournemouth’s retention of the Purple Flag and the steps taken to ensure the continued operation of the Safe Bus. The Community Safety Manager drew attention to cross cutting issues identified in the Strategic Assessment which had an impact on community safety, including issues around the vulnerability of victims and perpetrators of crime and disorder.

It was noted that a formal CSP Delivery Plan would be published and circulated to the Panel in May 2018.

The Community Safety Manager and the Chair of the Bournemouth CSP, Superintendent Jared Parkin, responded to questions from the Panel on how the Partnership and individual partners were addressing the priority areas:
Targeting of public space violent crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB):

The CSP Chair explained that the Police were working with the Council’s Community Safety and Housing & Communities teams as part of a task force which was taking a co-ordinated and tactical approach this year, especially over the summer months. Data was being used to ensure the required level of resource was in the right place at the right time. The Police had introduced a change in shift patterns to focus on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings, targeting hotspots at peak times. The Community Safety Manager reported that policing was very visible in the night time economy.

CCTV upgrade:

The Community Safety Manager reported that the CCTV upgrade to high definition cameras in the town centre and seafront had been funded through the Council’s Capital Programme and Section 106 monies. It was noted that the cameras in Boscombe had already been upgraded. He was asked about redeploying the old cameras in other parts of the borough, and explained that this was not possible as they were of poor quality and a different type to the newer model. He confirmed that the Council was looking to extend the use of CCTV to other areas such as Southbourne. There were also a number of mobile cameras which could be deployed at the request of neighbourhood policing teams. He confirmed that the budget for the upgrade included provision for ongoing maintenance. He was asked about the Council having access to CCTV in retail premises and explained that this raised data protection and legal issues. He assured Members that the Police worked with all premises which had CCTV to ensure that footage was available when requested.

Recording and reporting of crime:

A Member queried a statistic showing an apparent 40% increase in town centre crime. The Community Safety Manager reported that this figure did not apply across the town centre, but was related to some night time economy work. There had also been changes to the way crime was recorded and reported. The CSP Chair confirmed that there had been no specific rise in crime in the town centre. He explained that changes had been made nationally to the counting rules for recording crime to improve the accuracy and integrity of data. Locally, Dorset Police was now working with a new, more professional computer management system for crime recording. The Community Safety Manager was asked to account for the decrease in ASB in the last quarter. He explained that this was due to a combination of targeted work, particularly focussing on repeat/vulnerable victims, and the seasonal nature of ASB which was usually less prevalent in winter months.

Borough wide focus of CSP:

A Member sought assurance that resources to tackle anti-social behaviour were not focussed on the town centre at the expense of other parts of the town. He was
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concerned about the rise in youth related ASB in other wards. The CSP Chair confirmed that the CSP had a Borough wide focus. There were tactical boards for each area of the town to ensure a fair share of resources.

Policing structure: Role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)/Police Community Support Investigators (PCSIs):

The CSP Chair explained that the primary function of the new PCSIs was to investigate certain types of crime. PCSOs would continue in their role with some reconfiguration. These changes should improve the service in terms of support and expectations. He was asked about town centre patrols and confirmed that officers were directed to engage with the community while on duty, and where appropriate they worked as a single crew. There were occasions when officers were required to double up for operational reasons, particularly when working in the night time economy.

Links with Councillors:

The CSP Chair explained that people were using an increasing number of ways to contact the Police, including online and social media. There was a difficult balance to achieve in focussing resources in the right areas while ensuring that people were able to contact the Police when needed. In his role as Superintendent he had a clear expectation that officers should be improving links with local councillors. He agreed to follow up a Member’s request to identify a contact officer for his ward. Another Member reported on regular ward meetings held with his neighbourhood officer and how useful these were for councillors in providing updates to local residents. More generally, the CSP could do more to promote its role and accountability.

Listening to the community:

A Member asked how much weight was given to information provided by local residents, e.g. when reporting an increase in anti-social behaviour in their parks and green spaces. The CSP Chair talked about the value of anecdotal evidence from the community. He explained how this information was used, and where necessary corroborated, to enable the Police and partners to take positive action to tackle specific issues. He also spoke about enabling communities to challenge their own behaviour where it was safe to do so and the difference this made to outcomes, giving the West Howe Action Group as a good example.

Funding from Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC):

The Community Safety Manager explained that the CSP had regard to the Police and Crime Plan and shared many of the same priorities. The CSP and PCC were in regular discussion, and the PCC contributed funding for some CSP projects. It was noted that the CSP was currently undergoing a refresh. In future it was intended to approach the PCC for funding on a more regular basis.
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The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Health thanked the Community Safety Manager and the CSP Chair for their work. She spoke in support of the CSP priorities and commented on the excellent partnership with the Police. She highlighted the hard work of officers in securing the funding for the upgrade of the CCTV cameras. The Panel agreed that it would be useful for Members to have the opportunity of visiting the CCTV control room to see the improvements. It was noted that this would need to be arranged in small groups of three or four and dates scheduled according to officer resource.

DECISION MADE:

a. That the Panel endorses the Community Safety Partnership’s priorities for 2018/19 and notes the current and planned activities to deliver these as set out in the report;
b. That arrangements be made for Panel Members to visit the CCTV control room.

8. COMMUNITIES AND ENFORCEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel considered a report introduced by the Head of Communities and Enforcement which provided an update on the performance of the Communities and Enforcement team over the last 12 months. The report gave a summary of the output and performance in each of the service areas, including a breakdown of the number of service requests received, some of the actions taken to respond to these, and the outcomes. The Panel received a presentation to accompany the report, in which lead officers provided further information to give Members a comprehensive picture of what each service had delivered in the last year and the main challenges for 2018/19.

The Head of Communities and Enforcement explained that following the merger of Housing and Community Enforcement with Community Regeneration in January 2018 the service had been reviewed and a new management structure was due to be in place from 1 July 2018. The revised structure now covered an even wider range of service areas. Key priorities were to deliver the targeted enforcement team, increase enforcement resources for private sector housing enforcement, increase frontline resources for anti-social behaviour (ASB), and improve efficiency.

The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Manager highlighted the amount of changes to legislation, regulation and tax which the service had responded to during the last year. He reported on the type of work undertaken in dealing with landlords and advising tenants. The team had made significant contributions to the Local Energy Advice Programme (LEAP), which had included the mobile home sites, and the development of the new targeted enforcement approach. The Council had also provided evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee looking at private rented sector regulation. Areas of focus for 2018/19 included the extension to mandatory HMO
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licensing, banning orders for rogue landlords, the implementation of targeted enforcement and the specific project at Westhill.

The Head of Communities and Enforcement (on behalf of the Community Enforcement Manager) highlighted the change in approach in dealing with out of hours noise complaints and the increase in noise abatement notices served. Despite more complaints being received this year, the response rate of the team remained high with 89% of calls attended within 45 minutes. She also highlighted the increase in waste related cases, and it was noted that the extension of mandatory HMO licensing should help tackle this problem.

Although there had been an increase in the use of anti-social behaviour enforcement powers in 2017/18 the majority of work was done at an informal level through early intervention. The ASB team continued to strengthen its multi-agency partnerships. This included the virtual team with the Police, which was helping to improve communication and collaborative working. Priorities for 2018/19 included youth ASB focusing on prevention work, refreshing procedures for dealing with vulnerable victims and neighbour disputes, and taking a tactical approach to hot spot areas.

There had also been an increase in the use of formal powers relating to Town Centre Enforcement. It was noted that the number of engagements (5,741) included some duplicates. A review of the service had been undertaken in 2017/18. It was proposed to relaunch the service with a fresh approach in May/June 2018. This would see the implementation of a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) in partnership with Dorset Police, with similar powers to the Boscombe scheme, and would enable a more effective and coordinated operation of the service.

The Head of Communities and Enforcement gave an update on the work of the Empty Homes officer in supporting owners to bring empty properties back into use. Looking forward, the service was strengthening links with community enforcement to assist with the increasing use of enforcement against more problematic properties.

The Senior Operation Galaxy Officer reported that Operation Galaxy was now in its final year. A review of the project had identified best practice and this was being used to develop the new borough-wide Targeted Enforcement approach to be launched in July 2018. Since 2015 Operation Galaxy had led to a 4000% increase in enforcement activity in the Boscombe area with no prosecutions required. The Boscombe CSAS continued to operate effectively and was well supported by the local community.

The Interim Communities Team Leader reported on the wide range of activities undertaken by the service, including support and advice for community groups, assisting with funding bids, support for those running the community centres, and promoting local enterprise and business growth. The team also provided dedicated support for the priority areas of Boscombe, West Howe and Townsend.
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She highlighted some of the work of the past year, as set out in section 53 of the report, including the 5 Ways to Well Being activity-based project in West Howe. Priorities for 2018 included development of the Neighbourhood Strategy, launch of the BH Coastal lottery, delivery of the Heart of West Howe project looking at the future development of Cunningham Crescent, a refresh of the Boscombe Regeneration Partnership, and the commissioning of local advice services.

The Head of Communities and Enforcement highlighted the Neighbourhood Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Strategy as two key pieces of work where the Panel’s input would be valuable in the year ahead. The Communities and Enforcement team also contributed to the Panel’s statutory scrutiny work in relation to community safety. She also gave an update on the development of an enforcement directory which was hoped to be available later in the year.

The Head of Communities and Enforcement and her team responded to questions on issues raised by Members:

- A Member commented on the positive impact of Operation Galaxy and the joint working of the different agencies involved. The Panel was assured that this approach would continue to evolve through the development of Targeted Enforcement work. The Council and its partners worked together at strategic and operational levels, taking a collaborative approach and making best use of resources.
- Legislation introducing Banning Orders for rogue landlords came into effect on 1 April 2018. A Member asked how this provision would work in practice and the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Manager agreed to provide further information about the details of the Order to Members by email, including what safeguards were in place to prevent fraud and whether a ban was permanent or for a fixed period of time.
- A Member asked whether the Council could take any action on empty commercial properties. The Vice-Chairman referred to the roundtable work being done by the Economic Development team with relevant stakeholders, and agreed to liaise with the Head of Economic and Cultural Development to provide some feedback.
- A Member commented on the costs associated with the Selective Licensing consultation. It was explained that the information which the Council gleaned from the public consultation had been extremely valuable. Although the Council had decided not to proceed with a selective licensing scheme the results of the consultation had shaped the development of the new targeted enforcement approach.
- A Member asked whether signage with contact details for people to report noise nuisance could be installed in West Hill car park and other problem areas. The Head of Communities and Enforcement and the CSP Chair agreed to discuss this suggestion further outside of the meeting. Any action would require a joint approach.
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- A Member referred to the exceptional performance of the community enforcement team in attending 89% of domestic noise complaints within 45 minutes, particularly in view of the high level of demand on the service.
- It was confirmed that the Council and Bournemouth University had a good working relationship. This included working together to address issues associated with student accommodation. The extension to mandatory licensing would include some student HMOs. This was an opportunity to improve the standard of housing for students. It was noted that the University part-funded the out of hours noise complaints service. The University also had good links with the CSP. There was a dedicated neighbourhood policing unit and crime prevention advice was provided to students at freshers and other events.
- It was noted that individual partners in the CSP provided training to fellow partners on their specific areas of expertise, raising awareness of each other’s legislative responsibilities and powers.

The Cabinet Member for Housing thanked the Communities and Enforcement team for their excellent work. He also thanked Dorset Police for its significant contribution to the success of the EPIC partnership. He highlighted the significant improvements being made to address the problem of rogue landlords. He also referred to the value of the intelligence gathered through the Council’s consultation on selective licensing.

DECISION MADE:

a. That the report be accepted, with thanks to the Head of Communities and Enforcement and her team for their hard work over the last 12 months.
b. That a further update on the Communities and Enforcement service be considered in 12 months.

9. INFORMATION CIRCULATED BETWEEN MEETINGS

The following report was circulated to the Panel for information since the last meeting of the Panel and was published with the agenda. Members were asked to confirm whether further scrutiny was required in respect of the item below:

- Skills and Learning, Bournemouth Dorset and Poole - Quality Improvement Plan update

No questions had been submitted on the report.

DECISION MADE:

That having read and considered the information the Panel accepts the report and agrees that no further scrutiny is required.
10. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Cultural Strategy

The Chairman reported that members of the task and finish group had the opportunity to comment on the final version of the Cultural Strategy in February/March this year. The Strategy was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 24 May. If Members wished to make further comment on the Strategy they could do so through the Cabinet meeting. Having completing its work the task and finish group had recommended that the Panel reviews the executive summary of the Strategy on an annual basis.

Community Engagement in O&S

It was noted that the work of this group was now being taken forward through the Local Government Reorganisation work streams looking at overview and scrutiny arrangements.

11. FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered its forward plan and noted that it would be updated to reflect any matters arising from this meeting. Members were advised of the process for requesting items for inclusion on the forward plan.

The Chairman referred to the development of a mental health café discussed at a recent Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting and explained that Councillor Fear would be reporting back to the Health Panel on this item.

DECISION MADE:

That the Panel approves its forward plan as updated at this meeting.

Councillor Russell left the meeting at 7.50pm and Councillor Stollard left the meeting at 8.17pm

The meeting closed at 8.24pm

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