

Community Safety Partnership Review Panel Meeting

11 September 2019

The Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee is the Council's statutory Crime and Disorder Panel and as such is required to meet at least once a year in this capacity.

In previous years consideration of crime and disorder has taken the form of receiving the Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) Annual Report as an agenda item at a formal committee meeting.

At its June 2019 meeting the Committee agreed to consider the work of the CSP and its priorities for the future at a dedicated Review Panel meeting. This allowed Members to take an in-depth look at the Partnership's performance over the past year and comment on the priorities contained within its Partnership Plan 2019-2022. The review meeting lasted approximately two hours and a summary of the issues discussed is presented below.

The meeting was held on Wednesday 11 September 2019 and attended by the following Members of the Committee;

Councillors Paula Burdess, Paul Galley, Jim Hobson, Jane Hugo, Martin Mitchell (in the Chair), Gerard Walsh and Paul Wishaw.

Also in attendance were the following representatives of the CSP;

- Councillor Gillian Campbell, Chair of the BSafe Partnership
- Mr Paolo Pertica, Head of Community Safety, Blackpool Council
- Mr Mark Morley, Chief Inspector, Lancashire Constabulary
- Mr Steve Chappell, Service Delivery Manager – Blackpool, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Elaine Seed, Deputy Director, Cumbria and Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company
- Fiona O'Donoghue, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults, Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Group

The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022 had been developed following the undertaking of a strategic needs assessment which had used research and analysis to develop a long term picture of the issues and threats facing Lancashire. Following this assessment Blackpool had then developed its own Strategic Assessment Local Profile, which identified the Blackpool specific threats that were then used to agree the priorities for the new Plan.

Issues discussed included the history of the CSP and the change in focus of the Partnership from reducing the overall volume of crime to addressing the number of harmful crimes committed.

The change in focus had seen the number of harmful crimes, such as domestic and sexual abuse, reported increase. This was attributed to an increase in reporting due to the campaigns of partners to encourage individuals to come forward and prominent media cases of abuse raising their profile.

Mr Morley provided an update on the work of the Police to focus on the vulnerability of victims of crime and the increase in partnership working to provide the help they may need. The Panel also queried if the police recognised a connection between lesser crimes such as shoplifting and its connection to more serious organised crime. In response, Mr Morley explained that preventing

lesser crimes was still a police priority, due to the impacts on victims it often had, and the link with more serious criminal behaviour had been recognised.

Members expressed concern regarding the 101 service for reporting non-urgent crime and perceived issues in delayed response to reports made by members of the public. Mr Morley responded that the issue had been recognised and a review of core services had been undertaken in 2018. This had identified the need for additional call-handlers and up to 40 had been recruited as a result. Training and additional resources had also been committed to improve the quality of how staff handled calls and helping ensure more reports were addressed. This had resulted in a reduction in average call times, allowing more calls to be answered.

The level of crime committed by individuals not resident to Blackpool was also discussed. Mr Morley noted that there was a rise in the number of crimes reported during the tourist season and a decline in the off-season. However the Police lacked the resources to monitor whether this was as a result of non-residents committing offences.

The Panel also noted the increase in reported rapes by under-16s. A total of 44 had been recorded in 2018-2019 and it was asked if information regarding the number of convictions had taken place following these reports. Mr Morley agreed to provide the necessary information following the meeting.

Mr Pertica also updated the Panel on work to protect individuals from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Although it was not a 'crime category' it had been an area which the Community Safety Partnership agreed to prioritise previously and it had remained a priority for the Community Safety Plan 2019-2022. This was due to the significant impact it has on the victims of CSE, their family, friends and the wider community. As part of its work to protect vulnerable young people and children the CSP had worked with Blackpool and Fylde College and 2Engage Performing Arts to develop a short theatre drama about the dangers and impact of Child Sexual Exploitation and County Lines related drug crimes. The drama was performed for approximately 2,000 students and 50 safeguarding professionals. Mr Pertica further reported that the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner had attended one of the performances and praised its impact and relevance for young people.

Mr Chappell informed the Panel of the work undertaken by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) to reduce incidents of arson and accidental fire in Blackpool. It was noted that fires attributed to arson had reduced from those recorded in 2017-2018 to 16 in 2018-2019. This reduction was attributed to increased awareness of the dangers of fire and regular meetings with partners to share information and identify issues. LFRS also worked with Blackpool Council to identify potential fire hazards in the community, such as piles of combustible materials stored incorrectly, so that they could be addressed.

Members also discussed risk of fire at unused buildings such as former hotels. Mr Chappell explained that properties identified as high risk were subject to regular inspections and owners were helped to ensure that they were safe. He also informed the Panel that LFRS discussed what measures would be undertaken in the event of an emergency at popular attractions, such as leisure parks and the piers, with their operators. This had led to the development of plans for reacting to emergencies at each location which were then regularly reviewed.

The duties of the CSP in relation to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) continued to be discharged. Mr Pertica informed the Panel that the principle duty of the Partnership was in relation to the Prevent Strategy which aimed to intervene to stop individuals from becoming

radicalised. He further explained that the main counter terrorist threat in Blackpool related to far-right extremist groups. Other work in relation to counter terrorism involved work to mitigate the impact on residents and local infrastructure in the unlikely event of a terror attack.

Mr Pertica highlight that Serious Organised Crime (SOC) continued to be a key cause of concern for the Partnership. The strategic needs assessment had shown that there had been an increase in offences relating to SOC, driven by factors such as County Lines. Other SCO offences included Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Mr Morley informed the Panel that the Police had identified the places of origin for many of the groups involved in SCO in Blackpool. The prevalence of SCO groups in Blackpool had led to an increase in serious acts of violence in relation to criminal disputes and had led to a significant response from the Police. These operations had led to a number of arrests and the seizure of sizable criminal assets. The Panel queried how the proceeds of crime seized by the Police were used. In response, Mr Morley explained that the proceeds went to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner from where partners could bid for funds to support crime reduction projects.

Ms Seed informed the Panel that Cumbria and Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company (CLCRC) would be merging with the National Probation Service in the upcoming year ending the monitoring of low-risk offenders by a private company.

Ms O'Donoghue explained that the Clinical Commissioning Group supported the work of the CSP through the commissioning of drug and alcohol support services.

In relation to the priority to reduce Homelessness and Begging in the Community Safety Plan 2019-2022 members queried if efforts to disperse people in the town centre had transferred the problem to other parts of Blackpool. Mr Pertica responded that enforcement was a last resort for addressing homelessness and that partners looked to provide the necessary support to help individuals with services such as Fulling Lives and Housing Options. However it was noted that some people did not engage with the help offered. Councillor Campbell asked that Members report any sightings of persistent or regular begging and homelessness within their wards.

Councillor Campbell also informed the Panel that the Council undertook an annual physical count of individuals sleeping rough and undertook twice weekly visits to areas with high numbers of people rough sleeping to try and engage them with Council and partner services.

The Panel asked if the Police had enough Officers to address the priorities within the Plan. Mr Morley responded that although reductions in the number of specialist officers had led to a shift in focus on neighbourhood policing and to responding to crime, rather than prevention. However he further added that the Police remained confident that the priorities contained within the Plan could be addressed in conjunction with other members of the Partnership.

The Panel also questioned if volunteers could be utilised to assist in delivering the priorities contained within the plan. Mr Morley responded that the police had an existing volunteer scheme, Lancashire Volunteer Partnership, of which he would share details following the meeting.

The outcomes of the Review Panel meeting were:

- That the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report be noted; and
- That the Community Safety Plan 2019-2022 be endorsed.