

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 March 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Hunter-Watts (Chairman); Councillors Adams, Beall (in place of Stuchbury), Bond, Mrs Brandis, Cashman, Mrs Chapple, Fealey (Vice Chairman), Foster, Mrs Phipps, Mrs Russel, Mrs L Smith and Winn.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mrs Pearce, Sir Beville Stanier, Stuchbury, Takodra and Vick.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014 be approved as a correct record.

2. DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation from the Safer Bucks Partnership Manager on the key developments and the substance misuse picture in Aylesbury Vale which included information on:-

- the extent of alcohol misuse in the Vale, which was greater as a percentage of the population than the Bucks average.
- the impact of drug/substance misuse on crime levels and offending (446 clients were in structured substance treatment at some point during 2012/13 – 33.6% primary alcohol related (150), 12.8% non opiates (57) and 53.6% opiates(239)). This compared to the Bucks average of alcohol 28.7%, non opiates 28.7% and opiates 56.8%.
- the role of treatment services, including key areas of success.

There were a range of reason why it was important to invest in the service including:-

- that the majority of acquisitive crime was committed to fund class A drug use.
- that the majority of crimes of violence were attributable to drug misuse.
- that 35% of safeguarding plans in Bucks were as a result of an underlying substance misuse problem.
- that 25% of all male deaths of those aged 16 – 24 years old was attributable to alcohol.

The National Treatment Authority VFM tool estimated that for every £1 spent on treatment, £4.78 was saved in health and crime costs.

In Bucks it was estimated that 90,000 people drank at harmful levels and deaths attributable to liver disease had doubled since 1980. Heroin users were also 10 times more likely to die.

A greater analysis of the figures for Aylesbury Vale also showed:-

- that the figures for alcohol and drug misuse for 2013/14 were likely to be similar to 2012/13.

- that, compared to the Bucks average, clients from Aylesbury Vale in structured treatment with drug misuse as their primary problem were:-
 - more likely to have a dual diagnosis, i.e.. issues with drug misuse and mental health, to be white British by ethnicity, be aged 20-29 years, and have a status of currently injecting on entering treatment.
 - less likely to have children living with them.

Maps of Buckinghamshire also clearly showed that drug and alcohol misuse was higher in the larger populated towns of Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham.

Some of the emerging issues and challenges for the Service was the increase in the use of legal psychoactive substances that mimicked the effect of illegal highs. Overall, there was also an reducing use of opiates and an increased use of alcohol, which mirrored the national picture.

An explanation was also provided on the 2010 England Drug Strategy which placed a greater focussed on moving opiate users from treatment into recovery. Funding for services to reduce substance misuse was now made to Public Health England and then passed down locally to BCC Public Health as the upper tier local authority. Some funding was also available through the Police and Crime Commissioner. Overall, the service was still being fully funded.

Achievements over the last year or two were:-

- that the service had been given a 4* 'Excellent' Healthcare Commission rating in commissioning, and a 3* 'Good' rating on diversity.
- that in 2012 the service had been given the highest value for money rating in the south east.
- that the contract for alcohol and drug misuse services providers now included a small element of payment by results to providers for getting people off opiates.
- that the adult and young people's services had been re-tendered at a lower cost. Performance which was generally in the upper quartile had dipped due to this but it was anticipated that this would improve again as the contract bedded in.

Members requested further information and were informed as follows:-

- (i) that the service tried to work with schools and teachers to provide resources and training tools that could be used to raise awareness of drug and alcohol issues with young people. However, a few schools chose not to engage with the service as Personal, Social and Health Education was not a statutory subject. Experience had shown that the service had the least problems engaging the best schools. A charge was not made to schools for accessing these services.
- (ii) that the service was looking at how better use could be made of social media to reach younger people, particularly relating to opiate and alcohol misuse.
- (iii) that there was an emerging and worrying trend for people to use legally obtainable substances to get 'legal' highs. Some of these substances could be more harmful to people than illegal opiates and were also as addictive as illegal opiates.
- (iv) that people could access treatment programmes through a referral from charities that focussed on helping people with substance abuse issues, through professional providers or local doctors, or people could self refer themselves.

- (v) on the strategies that were used to reach hard to reach groups within society.
- (vi) that there had been an increase in substance misuse due to the recession.
- (vii) that a lot of medicines prescribed for more common conditions could be highly addictive.
- (viii) that it was estimated that approximately 60% of inquisitive crime had a direct causal link to alcohol and substance misuse.
- (ix) that the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner had commented that he believed the Buckinghamshire Community Safety Partnership partners were working well together on issues relating to drug and alcohol services.
- (x) on the links between alcohol and substance misuse and Troubled Families.

Members also commented that campaigns to reduce alcohol and substance misuse should try to involve parents and affected families to get across the message of the real harm that was being done.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Safer Bucks Partnership Manager be thanked for attending the meeting.
- (2) That the presentation and current work being done in the Vale in response to drug and alcohol misuse be noted.

3. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2014-17 AND ANNUAL PLAN 2014-15

The Committee received a report on the proposed priorities for the next three year Community Safety Strategy 2014-2017 and the Action Plan 2014-2015.

From 1 April 2013 to the end of January 2014 the overall level of crime in the Aylesbury Vale area was 6,510 incidents, a small rise of 0.96% compared to the previous year. The level of serious acquisitive crime (SAC) is 0.29% (3 crimes) higher than the same period last year. Performance in relation to specific areas of crime is as follows:-

- Burglary fell by 5.3% (16 crimes).
- Theft from a vehicle rose by 16% (13 crimes)
- Theft of a vehicle rose by 2.75% (17 crimes).
- Robbery fell by 22% (11 crimes)

Current legislation required Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership (AVCSP) to produce a three year partnership strategy, and an annual action plan, setting out how it would reduce crime and disorder that affected the local community. The current strategy period ended in March 2014.

During the last strategy period (2011-2014), the AVCSP had achieved the Purple Flag Award for the night time economy (NTE) of Aylesbury town in 2011 and again in 2012. Campaigns and operations had also been delivered in the Buckingham town centre. In addition in Buckingham the Partnership had worked closely with the University to address complaints about ASB of students.

Reducing burglary had been a key focus over the strategy period. In 2010/11 there had been 400 burglaries across the Vale, with two identified risk periods being during

peak summer and when the clock go back.. In 2012/13 the summer campaign featured our first "YouTube" film "Don't let thieves house sit this summer". Wintertime campaigns had consisted of a series of awareness raising events in which approximately 1500 households received information packs. This had resulted in burglary being reduced during the strategy period.

The AVCSP had been concerned about a rise in robbery involving young people during the 2011/12 period and had worked with Mandeville School to write and direct a film called "Snatched". This had been shown in all secondary schools' assemblies in the Vale, with a property marking session to mark their personal property. Over 12,000 students watched the film, and a further 2,500 people viewed the film via our website. Robbery had reduced during the strategic period.

Operation Ranger had been a new TVP rural crime initiative in 2013, based around "action weeks" in various locations throughout the year. During the first week of action 1600 addresses were visited in rural communities giving crime prevention advice and getting people to sign up to the TVP alert (717 new sign ups). 18 heritage sites and 89 farms had been visited and crime prevention advice given to rural businesses at the Buckingham Cattle Market. This had been a successful campaign engaging with rural communities and businesses to raise awareness of crime prevention.

Theft from vehicles had increased during 2012/13, mainly due to thefts of catalytic converters. The increased value of the metal they contain, and ease of stealing them from high sided vehicles, such as vans, made this an easy crime to commit, and a fairly difficult crime to detect. Etching catalytic converters makes them less attractive as they are identifiable. 18 vehicle servicing garages across the Vale now offer this service with approximately 500 residents taking up the offer to date. This had been a successful campaign in working with local businesses in the Vale.

In 2011/12 all Government targets for Community Safety Partnerships had been abolished, and instead local strategies were determined by locally recorded crime (through the strategic assessment) and community consultation findings.

AVCSP had considered the priorities of other plans in developing the local action plan. There was also a reciprocal duty to have regard to the Police and Crime Commissioner's plan introduced in November 2012. Additionally in two tier areas there was a requirement to prepare a Community Safety Agreement, which set out the countryside priorities. This was known as the Safer Bucks Plan. More details of these plans can be found on page 6 of the Strategy document.

The draft Community Safety Strategy 2014-2017 (attached as Appendix 1 to the Committee report) set out the key priorities for the next three years which had been identified using this approach. The following paragraphs outline the key points arising out of the strategic assessment for the period July 2012 to June 2013:

- (i) 53% of violent crime occurred within the vicinity of the town centre, with three-quarters of these offences occurring between 9pm to 5am. It was assumed that quite a few of these crimes were alcohol related.
- (ii) three crime categories had an increase in offences, these were theft from vehicles, violence against the person and burglary non dwelling (such as sheds and garages).

Since 2011 AVCSP had conducted public consultation to help shape and inform the activities within the annual Action Plans. Communities had previously informed us that

domestic burglary, bogus callers, ASB, and burglary non dwelling were areas of concern.

The 2013 consultation asked communities what particular crime types they wanted to see addressed in the 2014/15 Action Plan. The main areas identified in the feedback had been home burglary, violent crime, drug dealing and substance misuse, and speeding. This had led to the identification of two key priorities for the new strategy:-

- Safe and Secure town centres.
- To cut ASB and Crimes that are of most concern to the public and to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

In the previous strategy there had been a third priority around reducing reoffending. Probation services were facing a major transformation over the forthcoming strategy period. Integrated Offender Management (IOM) was now a countywide issue and with the restructuring of local provision it had been addressed in the Safer Bucks Plan. As such, it was therefore proposed to remove it from the local strategy.

Action Plan 2014-2015

The Action Plan for 2014-2015 (included at page 13 in Appendix 1) set out a number of activities for the partnership to deliver to tackle the issues identified and contribute to the overall target of the strategy.

The overall target for the Action Plan 2014-2015 was to achieve a reduction in the overall level of crime in the Vale. The Community Safety Partnership had agreed not to set a numerical reduction target for all crime. This was because:

- Overall crime in the vale has fallen by 32% since 2005,
- Population of the Vale has grown by approximately 5% since 2005 and continues to grow
- AVCSP target should reflect the PCC's target to reduce/maintain crime levels locally.

Examples of some of the activities planned for the forthcoming year included:

- **Safe and secure town centres** – continuing to support our ambition to retain the Purple Flag Award, rolling out good practice to other town centres in the Vale, raising awareness of alcohol misuse and supporting community self help initiatives such as “Street Angels”.
- **To cut ASB and crimes that are of most concern to the public and to protect the most vulnerable members of the community** – a focus on activities which addressed the diversity of crime across the Vale, including tackling rural crime (and the many diverse crime types that sit within this category) alongside a focus on areas where crime was still higher than the average for Aylesbury Vale. The CSP would continue to monitor and respond to emerging crime issues by utilising the Police tasking process.

Reducing ASB is still important to the AVCSP and our communities and we will continue to work with partners, and make use of any new ASB powers (introduced through the implementation of the ASB, Police and Crime Bill) to help us address this type of disorder.

Members requested further information and were informed as follows:-

- (a) that there had been a number of burglaries in the Bedgrove area between January-March 2014, although this was likely to quietened now that some offenders had been apprehended.
- (b) that where Neighbourhood Action Groups were effective and worked well, they would be supported. However, where NAGs were no longer in place, local issues would continue to be addressed in other ways. For example, it was normal for information on local issues to be provided to Parish Councils for inclusion in newsletters.
- (c) that while the instances of violent crime were still very low, the TVP would continue to be proactive to target any emerging trends.
- (d) that street patrols by PCs and PCSOs would continue to be an important part of the TVP policing strategy.
- (e) that the CSP was looking to promote awareness of the work done to reduce speeding, as while the CSP believed that speeding was not a massive problem, public perception was that more needed to be done. The TVP would continue to target hot spots and known problem areas.
- (f) that there had been a reduction in the number of Neighbourhood Watch Areas, which was primarily attributable to people now obtaining information through other sources such as online information portals.
- (g) that a briefing note on Troubled Families that had been presented to a recent CSP meeting and would be provided to Members.
- (h) that AVDC's Licensing Manager had recently visited Buckingham to talk to public house landlords on strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Members also commented:-

- that they were supportive of the Safer and Secure Town Centres good practices that had worked well in Aylesbury being rolled out to other town centres in the Vale.
- that better use could be made of Parish Councils to obtain information on vulnerable people in the community.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the successes of the current Strategy 2011-2014, in particular relating to crime prevention activities, be noted.
- (2) That the comments on the Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2014-2017 and the Action Plan for 2014-2015, as detailed at the meeting, be reported to the Cabinet Member for Community Matters, to be taken into account in finalising the Strategy and Action Plan.

4. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their work programme for the period up until March 2015 and commented as follows:-

- (i) that they would like to receive a report and look at the lessons learnt from the recent flooding to the September 2014 meeting.
- (ii) that they would like to receive information on Alzheimers and community friends as part of the Public Health update in September 2014.

- (iii) That Members were keen to re-commence the Task and Finish Group work that they had been doing on Development Management policies (including on building on agricultural land and building on flood plains).

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be agreed, as discussed at the meeting.