

# Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee

27 MARCH 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Jenkins (Chairman); Councillors B Everitt (Vice-Chairman), M Bateman, S Chapple, A Cole, S Cole, T Hunter-Watts, R King and M Rand

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors C Adams and M Winn

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors P Cooper and S Jarvis

## 1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

## 2. COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE AND ANNUAL PLAN

The Committee received a report which informed Members of current crime levels, a summary of activity on the delivery of the Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership (AVCSP) Plan 2018/19 and also updated on some of the recent and future changes taking place in connection with community safety. In summary, total recorded crime for the year to date showed an increase of 3% which equated to an increase of 318 crimes, as compared with the same period 2017/18. This upward trend was in keeping with national statistics which had increased for the second year running. The report detailed completed activities from the AVCSP 2018/19 action plan and provided an update on legislation relating to anti-social behaviour (ASB) intended to deter offending that impacts communities. There was also a table that provided year to date figures of crime categories and the percentage increase/decrease when compared to the same point last year.

Violent crime was of particular national interest currently and recent homicides amongst younger people involving knives had prompted debate on police resourcing and cuts to Local Authority spending. The incidence of knife crime in Aylesbury Vale remained low. However the exploitation of young people in dealing and handling illegal drugs was of concern. There had been an increase of domestic homicide of one compared to last year. In such cases, the Community Safety Partnership would conduct a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) to investigate the circumstances of the deceased prior to their death. This review process was outlined in the report. There were currently three DHRs in progress with a fourth set to conclude and report to the Home Office. The cost and administrations of DHRs were covered by AVDC, with some funding secured through the PCC's annual community safety grant, however the administration had utilised considerable officer time. The cost of each DHR was a minimum of £6,000 and it was noted that the number of concurrent reviews was unprecedented locally.

AVDC's partnership working with the police and the Community Safety Partnership continued to focus on organised crime and a TVP initiative called Operation Stronghold. This initiative aimed to achieve better knowledge sharing and suitable resourcing to disrupt and prevent the work of organised crime gangs and provide safeguarding to the innocent victims caught up in the middle. Burglary to homes and thefts from work vans were often products of organised crime groups. It was felt that a recent seizure of two containers full of stolen power tools had made a huge impact and led to a temporary reduction in this crime type. Modern slavery remained a focus and a joint initiative called Hotel Watch had proven successful to raise awareness amongst staff and managers in

premises that may be used to commit exploitative crimes against young people. There was also a focus on Hate Crime which was being addressed by a new Interfaith Network made up of representatives from nearly all recognised religions groups in Aylesbury Vale. At a recent breakfast meeting hosted at the Gateway, the groups acknowledged that they had a role to play within their communities.

Consideration had been given to the renewal of Aylesbury Town's Purple Flag status as part of the new plan having been successfully renewed annually since 2010. A review had found that, on balance, Purple Flag status was not an effective use of CSP resources as it was not a well-known scheme nationally. The award itself did not attract sufficient national marketing from the Association of Town Centre Management; the awarding body. The Partnership's work towards high standards, for instance through the 'Night Moves' group, would continue as before.

There was a legal requirement for the AVCSP to produce a three year partnership strategy and annual action plans to achieve its strategy. The 2017-2020 strategy had two key priorities:

- Supporting communities and town centres to become safer, more resilient and cohesive places to live and work.
- Work closer in partnership to cut crimes that are of most concern to the public and to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

The status of the actions planned for 2018/19 was outlined in the report as was a draft plan for 2019/20.

Members had further questions and were advised that:-

- i. A co-ordinated approach to tackling aggressive begging in Aylesbury Town Centre was considered a useful allocation of resources as it could identify those that need genuine help and could be assisted under the Rough Sleeper Initiative. Officers were mindful that interventions could be subject to scrutiny e.g. Oxford
- ii. Modern Slavery and procurement would be covered in the Council's upcoming policy statement.
- iii. The current terror threat was 'Severe' nationally and had been consistently for the last 3-4 years with some fluctuation up to 'Critical'. There was a protocol in place for the Council building in the event of an anticipated attack. Further assessments would be carried out regarding staff safety and the office building.

The Committee were supportive of the proposed plan and there was particular support of not renewing Purple Flag status due to its resource intensity. Other comments also included the need for sensitivity when managing aggressive begging. Overall, Members were satisfied with proposed content.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted and the Committee's comments on the draft plan be considered by Cabinet.

### **3. SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

An internal audit had been carried out on AVDC's safeguarding policies and procedures. Since then, officers had been working to highlight the responsibility officers and members had in relation to Safeguarding. New, mandatory training had been rolled out to officers, with completion pushing 90%, and Members had received a presentation at full council in 2018. Since the training's introduction, referral numbers had increased.

The training had also included the waste crews as they visited every household across the Vale.

Officers also recommended that a new Modern Day Slavery statement be adopted by the council and publicised. The statement also included procurement in relation to contractors and service providers. Where the council awarded a new contract for goods services or works in which there was a significant risk of modern slavery abuse, AVDC would seek reassurance that the contractor had policies, procedures and training in place to detect and deter such abuse. There was a risk assessment process relating to larger contracts included within the procurement process. Officers advised that the statement had been drafted diligently and so that it could be followed rather than be a token gesture. The full safeguarding policy and full statement on modern day slavery were included in the report pack.

Following the officer presentation, Members sought more information and were advised that:-

- i. TVP carried out operations and investigations of businesses that may be linked to modern slavery such as car washes and nail bars. An operation had recently been carried out in Milton Keynes around December 2018 regarding car washes. The CSP were aware of potential public concerns about certain industries but did want to know any specific cases that individuals could refer.

Members were supportive of the safeguarding policy and the modern day slavery statement and had no further comments to add.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee comments be noted and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

#### **4. THAMES VALLEY POLICE LPA COMMANDER ANNUAL UPDATE**

Thames Valley Police were a key partner in the Council's joint working including the Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership. Thames Valley Police Superintendent Tim Metcalfe, the Local Police Area Commander Aylesbury Vale, attended to update the Committee on the last year's local police operations and provide an overview on current and future priorities.

April – June 2018 had been a busy quarter for TVP with various events including the Royal Wedding in May and the visit of President Trump. Officers had been deployed from Aylesbury and Buckingham to Windsor and London. The quarter had also seen the carrying out of Operation Armenia which was targeting drug dealing. After considerable covert activity, there were six arrests, one kidnap victim rescued and one kidnap victim safeguarded. Weapons were also recovered and a vast amount of evidence was gathered. All six arrests were charged and given considerable custodial sentences. The Superintendent commented that the Vale was safer without these individuals in public. The quarter also touched on youth knife crime in Aylesbury in relation to the Walton Road attack in June 2018. This had received national media coverage; it was noted that the perpetrators were youths outside the education system.

The quarter July – September 2018 saw the carrying out of Op Advance in August which related to drugs in Southcourt. 22 street dealers were arrested in five days with the suspects having links to Birmingham. This operation was still ongoing. TVP Aylesbury Vale posted updates on social media regarding the operation which had been received positively by residents.

In the quarter October – December 2018 there had been cases of murder in Maids Moreton and attempted murder on North Drive, Aylesbury. Burglary enforcement was also highlighted and various cases were touched upon in Buckland, Wendover, Cheddington, Ivinghoe Aston and Stewkley. An arrest of three people in November 2018 was linked to total of 367 burglaries nationally. Burglary was often driven by substance abuse and the cases discussed by the Superintendent for this quarter were from perpetrators living outside the Vale which was an example of cross-border activities. The borders between Bedfordshire and Northants were common areas of movement. The Superintendent also updated Members on convictions for violence and GBH in this quarter. Drugs, gangs and vehicle theft interventions were also discussed. The interventions were often proactive police work.

The Superintendent touched upon engagement activity and the power of social media to reach out to people. Posting updates on activities were received positively by residents and had the ability to reach tens of thousands of people. An example was provided whereby one TVP Aylesbury Vale post engaged with 22,427 people and was reached by 72,188 people. March 2019 had seen the carrying out of Rural Crime Week whereby TVP organised events in communities in Northants, Bed/Herts/TVP Eastern Borders, Winslow, Buckingham, Haddenham, Long Crendon and Waddesdon.

A performance summary 2018-19 showed that:

- All recorded crime in Aylesbury Vale had increased 3% compared to 10% increase in TVP
  - Within that, victim based crime had reduced 0.3% whilst crimes against society had increased 23.7%. Crimes against society were also known as victimless crimes and an increase was associated with proactive police work, not reactive. For instance, removing a knife would be under this category due to there not being a victim.
- Residential burglary: AV 7% reduction (TVP 1% reduction)
- Violence with injury (excluding domestic abuse): AV 1% reduction (TVP 14% increase YTD)
- Domestic abuse with injury: AV 16% increase (TVP 20% increase YTD)
- Serious violence: AV 52% reduction (TVP 36% reduction)
- Theft from motor vehicle: AV 24% reduction (TVP 12% increase)
  - This had been achieved through the proactive scheme in Aylesbury Vale to suppress tool theft.
- Hate crime: AV 14% reduction (TVP 2% increase)
  - The Superintendent was very conscious of monitoring this trend

Information was provided on how TVP were managing anti-social behaviour with Criminal Behaviour Orders. These civil orders were intended to prevent ASB before it escalated further and allowed support to be given for underlying causes of the ASB such as substance abuse. Examples were given on how the Orders had been utilised in two ASB cases in Aylesbury.

Stop & Search was touched upon with statistics based on the amount of searches carried out 2015 – 2017 versus knife crime. The statistics showed that stop & searches had dropped and that knife crime had increased. Stop & search had to be evidence based and 24% of those carried out by TVP led to arrests. Results of stop & search had been posted on social media with examples of items seized but caution was exercised to ensure public fear was not generated. Intelligence led stop & search had led to further police operations and two cases were highlighted with regards to charges of possession with intent to supply. The Superintendent felt that stop & search was an important power for the police to have.

Looking forward to 2020-21, a new Superintendent would be arriving at the end of June along with a new Chief Constable. It was felt that key issues for 2019-20 would include hate crime, drugs markets and domestic abuse. An updated TVP Plan would also be published which intended to:

- Reduce crime and incidents through targeted and effective problem solving
- Bringing more criminals to justice by improving investigation quality and timeliness
- Improve protection of vulnerable through proactive measures and interventions
- Increase victim satisfaction by responding appropriately and improving communications

Following the presentation, Members had further questions. In response, Members were advised that:-

- i. The intention was to deter Class-A drug dealers from operating within Aylesbury through various operations. Drugs often motivated other criminal activities.
- ii. Instances of ASB outside the Grange School had been recorded and would be picked up in the TVP patrol plan. There may be other scope for further work depending on the plan's outcome.
- iii. Office usage of the Terrorist Act from a video recorded in 2014 was an inappropriate use of their powers. TVP were not considering posting videos on YouTube and would instead continue using social media.
- iv. The measures to reduce ASB were a better indicator of strategic success as 'before and after' data could be applied to specific cases e.g. number of call outs by individuals or households.
- v. Collaboration with mental health service providers, such as White Leaf Centre, had improved considerably over the past few years.
- vi. With the reduction of stop & search, alternative strategies were needed. To develop the strategies, work was done to understand why people carried knives. It was found that there were generally two types of people that carried a knife: 1) drug dealers for protection or 2) young people for status. TVP's anti-drug operations should reduce the first category organically. For young people then early intervention was key. It was also noted that a stop & search that resulted with nothing found may deter someone from carrying in future.
- vii. Police resourcing had been challenging but there was a gradual funding shift from national to local with council tax precepts. Precepts would mean better responses, more officers and further use of technology. TVP itself was a relatively lean organisation.
- viii. The growth agenda in Aylesbury Vale, such as the NIC and Expressway, were expected to have a significant impact. The HS2 development works had already attracted threat from criminals through the tools and plants used. The funding model by central government did not take local issues, such as growth and development, into account.

The Committee were also advised that the Superintendent was moving roles so this would be his last appearance at this Scrutiny Committee. Members thanked the Superintendent for his ongoing work and support and for coming to Committee annually to provide updates from TVP. The Members wished him well in his new role.

RESOLVED –

That the Police Superintendent be thanked for attending and the update be noted.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the work programme that had been included on the agenda. Members saw merit in an enforcement update coming to committee which should also include information from the Environment team regarding fly tipping following the charges introduced at County household recycling centres. It was felt December would be a suitable time for this update.

The Committee were advised that a final report on would VAHT be scheduled into the work programme.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be noted.