

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 3 November 2021

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Barley, Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, Cooksey and R. Elliott.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Pitchley and Wyatt.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 15 September 2021 be approved as a true record.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of members of the public or press.

53. SAFER ROTHERHAM PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT

For this item the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board sat in its role as the Council's Statutory Crime and Disorder Committee, as defined by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance and the Head of Community Safety attended the meeting to present the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) Annual Report 2020/21. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety advised that the report and the attached annual report of the SRP provided an opportunity for the Council to scrutinise the activity of the SRP during the period March 2020 and April 2021.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member advised that the picture of crime and disorder in the timeframe covered by the report had been significantly impacted by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was

noted that during this period some crime issues had decreased significantly as a result of lockdowns and the forced closures of local businesses, in particular in the retail, hospitality and night-time economy sectors, but that conversely new and emerging risks and issues had become apparent during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member advised that throughout 2020/21 the partnership had continued to address previously agreed key areas for joint working that impacted on Rotherham's communities, retaining its focus on protecting vulnerable children and adults and addressing community safety concerns in local neighbourhoods, including anti-social behaviour and hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual offences and serious organised crime. It was noted that the SRP's response to the challenges created by the pandemic had been focussed on those areas of criminality adversely affected by it, and that this had then been reflected in the subsequent allocation of resources and services across the SRP.

The Cabinet Member advised that for 2020/21 the SRP had utilised £118,000 of funding that had been allocated to it by the Office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner. This funding had then been used to deliver eight key projects that supported the SRP's agreed priorities for action of Protecting Vulnerable Children, Protecting Vulnerable Adults, Building Confident and Cohesive Communities, Domestic Abuse and Serious and Organised Crime.

The Head of Community Safety noted that during 2020/21 that there had been here a particular emphasis by the partnership on activity focused on domestic abuse, tackling hate crime, safeguarding from extremism, modern slavery and mental health. The full Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report was attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

Members noted the reduction in the number of recorded incidents of knife crime and asked whether this reduction would be sustainable now that society had reopened after the end of pandemic related restrictions. The Head of Community Safety advised that that after a small recent rise in the number of knife crime incidents the number of incidents recorded had now stabilised. The Head of Community Safety advised that the new Violence Reduction Programme would seek to address the challenges around knife crime and would work to ensure that the continued reduction in the number of incidents was sustained.

Members noted their concern regarding the increase in referrals regarding Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation (CSE/CCE) and modern slavery and asked for further information on this issue. The Head of Community Safety noted that it was a key objective of the SRP to increase the number of high-quality intelligence reports received on these issues so that action could be taken in identifying potential crimes. Members asked how many intelligence reports were received regarding CSE/CCE each quarter. The Head of Community Safety advised that the number of intelligence reports received was relatively small and that the SRP

carefully tracked and monitored how these intelligence reports then led to offences being recorded.

Members noted that it would be beneficial for them to receive a briefing on the specific data in relation to the information regarding the CSE/CCE, modern slavery and other priority areas for the Safer Rotherham Partnership in order gain further assurance around the activities being carried across the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

Members asked for further information regarding the Encompass Project that alerted schools when a pupil had been involved in an incident of domestic abuse and asked whether there was an expected level of response from a child's school to the disclosure of an incident. The Head of Community Safety advised that each response would vary depending on the individual incident but advised that a training package had been rolled out to all Safeguarding leads in schools in order to ensure a consistent response was delivered.

Members asked for further information on the increase number of reports of Hate Crime that had been received and asked whether these were an indication of an increase in actual incidents or in the number of incidents that were being reported. The Head of Community Safety advised that the number of incidents of Hate Crime recorded would certainly be an underestimate of the number of incidents that had occurred as victims often did not contact the Police until they had suffered multiple instances of Hate Crime being carried out against them. The Head of Community Safety advised however that it was positive to note the increased levels of reporting as this showed that victims had the confidence to come forward and report incidents to the Police. The Head of Community Safety advised that unfortunately the number of positive outcomes related to incidents of Hate Crime remained low as due their nature, these crimes were very difficult to investigate and obtain evidence for.

Members asked whether so called "County Lines" crime was a major issue of concern in Rotherham and for the SRP. The Head of Community Safety advised that in direct relation to the accepted definition of "County Lines" that related to the use of dedicated phone lines to manage the distribution of illegal drugs, then this was not a major issue in Rotherham. The Head of Community Safety advised however that the more important issue was the related crimes of CSE/CSE and the supply of illegal drugs, all of which were high priority areas for the SRP.

Members asked how the SRP intended to respond to the increased focus that the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner would be placing on tackling rural and wildlife crime, both of which had links to serious organised crime given that this issue was not a current area for priority for the SRP. The Head of Community Safety noted that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the SRP had different statutory duties, and as such would have different priorities for their activities. The Head of Community Safety noted that the SRP was

currently reviewing its priority areas of activity by analysing crime data and then applying it against a risk assessment process in order to establish priority areas for future focus. The Head of Community Safety advised that whilst it was too early to say what the new priorities would be he assured members that they would be fully involved in the consultation of what the final agreed priorities for the SRP would be.

Members asked how the SRP was engaging with ward members regarding reports of CSE/CCE in order to utilise their local knowledge and connections in order to ensure that as much information of potential CSE/CCE was gathered by the Police and other partners. The Head of Community Safety noted that discussions held at local Community Action Partnership meetings fed directly up the SRP but acknowledged that the information shared at these meetings was not always what was required locally. The Head of Community Safety assured members that the that the Cabinet Member, as Chair of the SRP had made it a clear priority to improve the quality and focus of the data supplied at these meetings in order to maximise their usefulness. The Head of Community Safety advised that the SRP had recently created a coordinator post in order to facilitate the flow on information and intelligence between partners and to ensure that ward members received the local information and intelligence that they needed.

Members asked how the SRP was engaging with the evening economy sector and the wider business community in order to maximise the amount intelligence reports received regarding CSE/CCE as well as other types of crime. The Head of Community Safety advised that the activity to increase activity in this area that had been planned prior the pandemic was now being resumed and noted the many activities in this area such as the "Ask for Angela" initiative that were in place. The Head of Community Safety assured members that new ways of raising awareness were always being looked at and considered. Members noted that this type of activity needed to be delivered right across the Borough and that activity should not be solely focussed on Rotherham Town Centre. Members also requested that Police representation at local Community Action Partnership should be from a senior officer which was currently not always the case.

Members asked for further information on the activity being carried out across the partnership to address the problem of drug dealing and related crime. The Head of the Community Safety noted that under the SRP priority of serious and organised crime there was a comprehensive set of specific objectives around drug dealing and supply that were carefully monitored in order to deliver on the objectives of maximising convictions and disrupting chains of supply.

The Chair noted the comments that had been made during the discussion around the lack of specific data in the report and how this was in contrast the previous annual report that members had considered to have contained far too much data that had resulted in analysis of the work of

the SRP difficult to carry out. The Chair agreed with members that a briefing for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for them to receive more specific data would be very beneficial.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance and the Head of Community Safety for attending the meeting to present the report and to answer members questions.

Resolved: -

1. That the Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 be received and noted.
2. That members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board receive a briefing on the specific data in relation to the information regarding the priority areas for the Safer Rotherham Partnership in order gain further assurance around the activities being carried across the Safer Rotherham Partnership.
3. That the issues of Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery be added to the Board's Work Programme.

54. COVID BUSINESS GRANTS - UPDATE

The Chair advised that due to unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances that the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services and the Head of Corporate Finance were unable to attend the meeting to present the report.

The report (that had been requested by members at the June 2021 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (Minute No8)) set out the Councils administration of Covid-19 business support grants that it has been required to administer since 11 March 2020 Budget announcement that Government would provide financial support packages to businesses impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. The report set out the timeframes, criteria and performance against these schemes as well as setting out the Councils approach. The report clarifies the final position on each of the schemes as well as providing details of any funding returned to Government unspent.

The Chair advised that due to the thoroughness and comprehensive nature of the report, that in consultation with the Vice-Chair, it was proposed that the report should be noted and that if members had any outstanding questions then these should be emailed directly to the Head of Corporate Finance.

Resolved: -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services, the Assistant Director - Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Finance and all staff who had been involved in the administration of business support grants, be thanked and commended for their work in supporting businesses across the Borough during the pandemic.

55. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

56. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Work Programmes for the three Select Commissions had been included in the agenda pack for information.

The Vice-Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission provided a verbal update on the work of that Select Commission.

57. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 November 2021 to 31 January 2022.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

58. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

59. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

60. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 11am on Wednesday 17 November 2021 at Rotherham Town Hall.