

Community Safety Scrutiny Review
Final report of the scrutiny review panel

Review panel:

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Background

The original brief for the review, in July 2004, outlined the concern to be addressed, which was that:

- there is no overall council strategy for community safety, although community safety matters are included within other strategies and service plans.
(note – the council has since approved their support for the CDRP Community Safety Strategy which sets out priorities for crime reduction)
- the council's traditional response to community safety has been concerned with aspects of building and land management whereas more recent legislation and government expectation is concerned with behaviour management.
- there is no agreed definition of community safety as a reference for the wide range of council services that touch upon it and, in particular, one which encompasses the full range of behaviour management initiatives.
- new legislation is bringing an expectation for better co-ordination of resources to deal with priority community safety issues, particularly with regard to behaviour management.
- both the current expectations for some aspects of the councils service and new expectations arising from new legislation might not be sustainable or achievable within the limits of the available resources.

With these in mind, the objectives for the review were defined in terms of the success criteria which were agreed as, that:

- the council adopts an approach toward developing intervention mechanisms that deal with the behavioural aspects of community safety

- the approach or strategy should contain the following elements:
 - a) Defining what we do in service terms that influences community safety (even if it remains as a 'virtual' service)
 - b) What needs to be established to improve the co-ordination of activities
 - c) Looking at where the revenue and capital costs fall and what the pressures are on these over, say, the next five years in terms of expectations and general financial constraints. With regard to capital expenditure, a particular issue has already been flagged up with reference to the central control/CCTV management service and it's ability to meet growing expectations, keep up with technological development and replace redundant equipment.
 - d) The council's response to the behaviour management powers enshrined in recent legislation, particularly the anti-social behaviour act 2003 and licensing act 2004
 - e) A consideration of the council's relationships with key partnerships as a means of delivering the approach – local strategic partnership and safer communities partnership
 - f) Whether there is a need to target resources to deal with emerging issues, high risk localities, high risk groups and how we manage and communicate this
 - g) Performance measurement arrangements

Process undertaken

The review panel has taken the following steps in order to gather sufficient information to formulate a recommendation:

- Analyse current council activities that contribute to community safety.

The panel considered a strategy outline which detailed the council's involvement in community safety in terms of:

- Direct intervention
- Achievement of national standards and accreditation
- Supporting and contributing to formal partnerships and partnership working to identify and tackle issues
- Developing a preventative model
- Promoting what is good

- Interviews with senior council officers and heads of service.

The following table shows the results of the officer interviews, summarised in terms of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

Officers interviewed	
Roger Vick – licensing Paul Williams – statutory nuisances Peter King – housing management Suzi Wakeham – young people	

<p>Adrian Bray – CCTV and out of hours Chris Wallis – Street scene Trevor Kennett – PSU Janet Taylor – Legal structure Dennis Button – Street lighting and inconsiderate parking</p>	
<p>Strengths</p>	<p>Opportunities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operative working to deal with issues • Range and variety of skills • Professional background • Emerging neighbourhood management approach creating a better focus • Strengthening partnerships • Getting to grips with the concept of ASB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chance to improve the strategic approach • Improve the range and depth of partnership working • Rationalise our approach to get better value for money for delivery • Changes in licensing arrangements • New agenda toward polarisation – separating land management issues from person centred issues
<p>Threats</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing expectation on the council to manage problems but not linked with additional resources • CCTV equipment with relatively short life and no resources to replace it • Changes in licensing arrangements • Boundaries confused between services that provide similar arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of what Community safety is (is it just ASB?) • Generally a reactive environment and consequently inefficient • Lack of overall planning and co-ordination • Lack of analysis of scale and nature of problems across the district • Separate IT systems and databases which are inadequate for managing ASB • No business plan for CCTV and Lifeline • Expensive resources being used to deal with low level problems • Confused legal decision making process

The interviews with Heads of Service also highlighted the limitations of the council's out of hours response, the resource implications posed by new legislation, training/skills issues and the trend toward neighbourhood policing and management.

- Public meetings held in Whitstable, Herne Bay and Canterbury to invite views of residents across all areas.

Appendix A shows the analysis of comments made together with press articles covering some of the issues that were raised. The common themes identified were :

- authorities, especially the police, not responding to complaints. There were several comments made that suggested that calls to the police, were not responded to and that there were difficulties contacting the police and Public Safety Unit. Generally it was felt that the police were not interested in low-level crime, e.g. anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
- a lack of police presence on the street. The impact of community wardens does not appear to have been borne out, with many residents unsure about their powers and the areas that they cover. Some residents who lived in areas covered by Community Wardens were not sure of their powers or their role.
- several residents said that they lacked confidence in the CCTV network. They were unsure who operated it and some felt that the council did not do anything with the information received.

- Visits to the Public Safety Unit and Control Room.

These visits improved the knowledge of key front line activities, which are run in close co-operation with Kent Police.

- Improved knowledge of the impact of new and emerging legislation.

Analyses of the extent and impact of new legislation are included at Appendix B. These include the duty on local authorities under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and details of powers enshrined in the most recent legislation - Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Housing Act 2004 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

- Identify links with other key strategies

Although the CDRP exists as the key strategic body in relation to crime reduction, the panel has identified links that need to be made with other council plans:

- Play strategy in terms of creating positive diversionary activities and also avoiding the creation of locations of anti-social activity.
- Local cultural strategy.
- Housing strategy as a means of maintaining social inclusion through the provision of adequate housing and support.
- Kent waste strategy, particularly with regard to dealing with fly tipping.
- HRA business plan in terms of prevention policies and the application of management and capital resources to impact at a neighbourhood level.

The panel has also acknowledged the linkage with those aspects of the current student impact scrutiny review concerned with behaviour issues in relation to student activity.

Broad conclusions

In general terms the panel has identified the following components which, collectively, justify the need for a different response from the council with regard to the way that services relating to community safety are organised and managed:

- *The current social environment.* There is a current government expectation that local authorities gear up their response to the developing community safety agenda. Both national and local surveys place community safety issues and tackling anti-social behaviour high on the service agenda for local authorities. The public meetings held by the panel reaffirmed this view and indicated that there is a general sense of frustration at the lack of a speedy and effective response to local issues. Although this frustration was generally directed toward the police service, the council needs to consider the ways in which it can help meet these concerns.

The more extreme aspects of bad behaviour are universally condemned but this is not always the case with lesser misdemeanours. The council's response to local issues is therefore always open to criticism and their approach may be considered to be too soft, too hard or just ineffective. This is part of a current national debate focussing, particularly, on the use and effectiveness of ASBOs on the back of a rapidly increasing rate of application. Different views prevail on the best approach to be used in terms of proportionality or process and this is an area where a clear view from the council is needed in a climate of rising expectation for action to be taken.

- *The changing legal environment* with regard to the duties being placed on local authorities and the available powers for tackling behavioural issues means that:

- it is harder to identify, within our current service structure, where the responsibility should lie for administering new legislation. The current approach is to apply a 'best fit' test to existing service structures, which is not necessarily the most effective or efficient way.
- the need is growing for central co-ordination of our response to these changes including the development of clear operational policies and procedures and published service standards.

- *Dispersed service structure.* The current response to community safety is dispersed across various council departments and the response generally lacks co-ordination. Officers and heads of service voiced this concern as part of their interviews for the panel and would support action to change the current arrangements.

The concern is compounded by the establishment of the Public Safety Unit in recent years which is not a council service but a joint Kent Police / Canterbury City Council initiative reporting to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). As such, the Unit sits apart from the council's general service structure and performance monitoring arrangements. Officers raised concerns at the lack of protocols defining the relationship between council services and the PSU and the barriers this creates to establishing productive and co-ordinated working arrangements. The point has been made that the strength of external relationships is greater than those existing within the authority.

There is a prevailing view from officers that the PSU has closer working relationships with Kent Police than with the council. However, feedback from the public meetings suggests that the public perception is the opposite - that the PSU is run as a council service.

- *A legacy of historic short term funding arrangements* has created a climate of uncertainty for the future viability of some aspects of the service. An exit strategy has been established for the PSU and funding has been secured for the medium

term. However there is capacity issues which cannot be addressed by the current funding structure, particularly with regard to logging and processing service requests resulting from the increasing public expectation.

Funds have been established for CCTV repairs and replacements but a recent consultants report on the current provision suggests that substantial investment will be needed in the next few years to increase capacity and upgrade the equipment.

This is part of a national problem concerning the sustainability of services previously funded through one-off bidding opportunities. (see Home Office seminar notes – A whole agency approach to crime an disorder, 11 May 2005)

Progress on scrutiny objectives

- service definition

The following council front-line activities make a contribution to community safety and have the strongest synergy with each other. The combination of these activities would provide the greatest opportunity for improving service delivery if brought under the same management umbrella. This is not to deny the need for other crucial cross-service relationships, particularly with tenancy management and town centre management.

- *Public Safety Unit*
- *Neighbourhood management*
- *Street scene inspectors, including parks and open spaces*
- *Environmental protection technical officers*
- *Foreshore patrols*
- *CCTV*
- *24 hour response arrangements*

Within some of these service areas, officers currently fulfil several functions and some would need to be separated out, as they do not relate to community safety. The panel has not looked at this aspect and it will require a more detailed assessment of the situation by the Head of Environment and Street Scene to measure the full impact and decide how best to manage the residual functions.

- improved co-ordination / performance management

This needs to be developed at both the strategic and operational levels. The strategic level would define the operational arrangements by:

- defining the relationship with other council services, other agencies and with the CDRP
- formulating the council's response to legislation
- establishing a service plan for community safety to include:
 - a) performance management arrangements
 - b) service standards
 - c) operational policies
 - d) exit strategies

- revenue and capital costs

The review has not tackled these in detail due to their complexity and the time available. However they need to be a priority for a restructured service. The various funding streams, capital equipment replacements and opportunities for income generation justify the need to develop a business plan for the service as a means of identifying and planning for the future. This applies particularly to CCTV which would show the greatest benefit from following this approach.

- response to new legislation /relationship with partners

The major shift in powers encapsulated in new legislation in the last 2–3 years justifies the creation of a better defined and broad based community safety service. The need to operate within a partnership environment is intrinsic so the service needs to be led by an officer with sufficient authority to engage with other agencies at a strategic level and who has sufficient staffing and budgetary resources to deliver a cohesive service.

- targeting resources

This aspect hasn't been analysed in any depth by the review panel. Since the review commenced a number of neighbourhood management projects have been initiated and these are progressing positively. The projects can witness to the benefits of a multi agency response to local issues in terms of the level of engagement with residents that is created, the creativity of solutions to different problems and the access to resources. However, as community safety is only one aspect of neighbourhood management it might be appropriate, in future, for initiatives to be led from other, more relevant, organisational perspectives such as might exist under the wider health or regeneration agendas.

The benefits of targeting resources have also been recognised through initiatives such as Shop Watch and Operation Cubit which gives confidence that this approach might be used to tackle other community safety issues.

Concern has been raised that recent terrorist events draw resources away to tackle security matters and therefore have an indirect impact on the ability of agencies to tackle local issues.

Option analysis on way forward

The options identified as a means of dealing with the concerns and achieving the review objectives are:

- (a) continuing the current structure
- (b) bring key functions together
- (c) commit more to the CDRP structure

Option (a) – continuing the current structure

This does not tackle the identified strategic gap or lack of co-ordination in service activity. It is therefore difficult to see how a 'virtual' service can be developed. The next round of CPA will have a greater focus on:

- meeting customer needs
- safer and stronger communities

- showing the evidence that section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act has informed service delivery priorities
- showing how community safety is built into services rather than being merely 'bolted on'.

However improved cross service integration would clearly be beneficial and it is proposed that an officer working group look at this aspect in some detail as part of their assessment of the implications of the following options – b(i) and b(ii).

Options b(i) and b(ii) - bring key functions together

This is the preferred option as it has the potential to:

- Increase the status of community safety within the council's overall priorities and integrate community safety within the council's structure.
- Establish a clear and cohesive service.
- Provide adequate resources for strategic development and to improve efficiency of delivery.
- Establish a platform for service and business planning.

If this option is pursued, the Panel agreed that the officer management team should be requested to consider whether community safety be established as a stand-alone service or be part of an existing service.

If the latter route is followed, the Housing and Community Development service has the closest link with community safety issues, mainly through the CDRP, PSU, housing management and community development. It would therefore be the most appropriate service to receive those functions that are currently located in Environment and Street Scene. This is option b(i).

However there are concerns that this approach would not:

- give the developing community safety agenda sufficient status within the council.
- provide the capacity needed to promote and develop the service.
- show the degree of commitment from this council that might be expected in the future.

To support this argument, the weight and volume of new legislation alone brings with it an expectation that council services readjust substantially. However this expectation must be balanced against the needs of the area and the available resources. Consideration might therefore be given to establishing community safety in a separate service although there would be budgetary implications to consider in the creation of a new head of service post. This is option b(ii).

The argument against a separate service is the risk that the links with Community Development and Housing would be weakened. This was considered by the Panel to be an important point due to the benefits that flow from Community Safety and Community Development being brought together.

Option (c) - commit more to the CDRP structure

This is not a preferred option and, in some respects, the need to give greater support to the partnership would be met through option (b). The CDRP is primarily a strategic body for crime reduction and not a service vehicle, although the PSU does fulfil such a role. It is key that the council continues to support and complement the CDRP but this needs to be through better definition and delivery of its own services in a similar way to that undertaken by Kent Police. The council is unable to abrogate its responsibilities by transferring them to the CDRP because of the conflict that this would create with its own core business.

Conclusions

In summary, the key points of the review are:

- the community safety agenda is developing nationally and the local community is frustrated that police and the council aren't providing the level of response that they would like.
- the council's resources are dispersed and in some respects inefficient because of the lack of a co-ordinated approach
- although local strategies have been developed for the sustainability of services in the medium term, there is a national problem with respect to funding for the future sustainability and development of services established under short term funding arrangements such as CCTV
- section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act demands a 'build-in', not 'bolt-on' approach to community safety if the 'safer and stronger communities' theme in the next round of CPA is to be met.

Recommendations

- 1 ***That, as agreed by the officer management team, an officer working group be set up to:***
 - ***agree a definition of community safety as a reference point for the future structure of council services***
 - ***consider the resource and service delivery implications of pursuing options b(i) and b(ii) and improving cross service working.***
 - ***bring recommendations to the Executive on whether to create a community safety unit or a new service with its own service head.***
 - ***bring recommendations to the Executive on how the Member management structure could also reflect the developing community safety agenda and complement any recommendations for changes to the service structure.***
 - ***in parallel to this, also consider making recommendations to Members on a more formal involvement for them in community safety issues***
- 2 That community safety is aligned with the council's emerging branding and a communication plan that clearly explains the council's position and response to community safety.
- 3 That the communication plan includes a further series of public meetings with local communities and that Kent Police be invited to attend those meetings alongside council officers to provide feedback on the outcome of the review.
- 4 That a framework for providing a service outside of normal working hours be developed

- 5 That a skills audit be completed of staff delivering community safety objectives with a view to establishing a training plan to meet the demands of an improved service