

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 4 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)
H Hellier (Vice-Chair)
I Ashraf, K Khan, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors B J Burgess and Y Khan

Officers Present:

Georgina Bouette	Head of Community Services
Dan Carberry	Public Protection and Enforcement Manager
Ian Duke	Deputy Chief Executive
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors J Millar-Smith, A Pendlington, S Piggott and S Raja

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

No disclosures or whipping of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 26 June 2023 and 10 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Exempt Information – Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

5. Review of the Community Warden Service and the Creation of Community Protection Team

Exempt Paragraphs 1 & 4 –
Information Relating to an Individual; and

Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority.

The Commission considered report HCS/064 of the Head of Community Services. The report sought a review and proposed restructure of the Community Warden Service, including the Straying Dogs provision..

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, the Head of Community Services and the Public Protection and Enforcement Manager, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that following a review, it was determined that the current service model was, in parts, no longer fit for purpose and was not currently designed to meet the increased level of demand for more complex enforcement activity.
- Recognition that meaningful change was required, and the proposed revised Community Protection model sought to modernise the service in order to meet the identified demands. It would provide local residents with an enhanced enforcement response to anti-social behaviour, low level public-space crime and environmental crime.
- It was remarked that it would be beneficial to consider the future financial longevity of the service.
- Confirmation was sought and explanation provided on the financial aspects documented in the appendix, along with clarification on the service resources, which was confirmed were of a similar nature to those benchmarked.
- Clarity was also sought on the straying dogs service and its future provision.
- Recognition that it was paramount that any change needed to be clearly communicated to the public and this included reporting mechanisms, monitoring systems and analysis.
- General support for option 2, which was felt would deliver an improved service for the benefits of residents, stakeholders and the community. Given the importance of the service, it was moved by Councillor Ayling (seconded by Councillor Hellier) that the OSC receive an update on the newly formed Community Protection Team in approximately 18 months' time (subject to timescales and resources).

With the agreement of the Chair, Councillor Burgess also spoke on the item and the Cabinet Member together with the Public Protection and Enforcement Manager responded to their questions on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, including the recommendation above, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

Re-Admission of the Public

The Chair declared the meeting reopen for consideration of business in public session.

6. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Yasmin Khan and questioned her on a variety of issues relating to the portfolio. A general summary of the key points included:

- A youth consultation was to be held in collaboration with the two week Junior Citizen programme (with assistance from the Youth Council). This would establish where young people feel most and least safe, and what were their biggest safety concerns when out in the town's public spaces.
- Operation Browning was established following a knife crime incident close to the town centre and through the intelligence gathering, work conducted by the Police, Council, and alongside intensive safeguarding work in partnership with West Sussex had resulted in a reduction in street gang activities.
- Work had taken place with the Town Centre BID to install CCTV cameras in the Memorial Gardens and this had assisted in a positive reduction in incidents within the park.
- The revamp on the Safer Crawley Partnership had been a successful piece of work which has been led by the Council. The partnership agreed 5 new priorities in January 2023, and they were Violence Against Women and Girls, Protecting Vulnerable Individuals, Violent and Organised Crime, Youth-related Anti-social Behaviour and cost-of-living related crime. In July 2023, an additional priority was agreed; Drug-related harm, which would see the partnership champion a drug demand survey to provide detailed analysis of drug use in Crawley and the impacts of this. The OSC still receives its regular annual updates (next one agreed for January OSC with Police). Full review of priorities was due 2024.
- Community Safety Panels for women from Black and minority ethnic communities would be launched this year, which would be used at a platform to increase community understanding of areas such as hate crime, prevent, exploitation and domestic abuse.
- Since April 2023 work, activities and inspections had regularly taken place throughout the nighttime economy and at premises, as there was a commitment to ensure those enjoying their time out felt safe. During the summer, 'Have fun, stay safe' joint initiative was launched with partners.
- It was paramount that plans for CCTV networks were accelerated to ensure that these would be retained given BT was retiring the current contract. Work was ongoing with regards to the retention of the current contract in relation to the existing cameras.
- With regards to parking, the current contract with WSCC was until 2024/2025 to deliver on and off street parking enforcement.
- The 'Immediate Justice' scheme was due to launch in Sussex in autumn 2023, which will see offenders tasked with delivering reparative action within 48 hours of their 'out of court disposal' in the communities they have harmed. Three locations in Crawley have been chosen for this activity; Town Hall & Orchard Street Car Park for litter picking and decoration and Tilgate Park for litter picking. The scheme was due to last for two years and was designed to provide a visible message that the council take anti-social behaviour seriously. For young or

vulnerable people, there were alternative activities such as improving woodland areas overseen by the Youth Justice Team.

- A Senior ASB Officer had been appointed and is assisting in the work throughout the service. The NASB service had introduced an app, whereby residents can upload photos and footage to assist in evidence gathering. Although some evidence still requires an authorised officer to witness the event, the benefit being that the photos were date and time stamped.
- It was noted that as the private sector housing regulation appeared until the Public Protection remit, four properties had been issued with improvement notices. There was a quality assurance system in place, together with the council's complaints system. It was acknowledged that the council took a balanced approach as to when to promote its enforcement and prosecution powers.
- Recognition that it was important to keep reporting all issues, to either the council via MyCrawley or 101 (depending on the problem) as this would ensure accurate intelligence, reporting and monitoring.
- It was hoped that the split between the Community Engagement and new Cabinet member Public Protection role had resulted in being able to create a greater emphasis on each area whilst being able to engage with the community.

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Yasmin Khan for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued.

7. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

1. 2023-2024 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 1
2. Proposed Land Disposal of St Catherine's Hospice Site – PART B
3. Future Acquisitions for Affordable Housing Delivery – PART B

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.23 pm

M L Ayling (Chair)