

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Lynn Worrall (Chair), Angela Lawrence (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Mike Fletcher and Elizabeth Rigby

In attendance: Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager
Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

22. Minutes

The minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 December 2018 were approved as a correct record.

23. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

24. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Report

Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager, presented the report that provided an update on the areas of work associated with the Thurrock Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2017-2020. Despite the title, the strategy recognised and responded to the fact that men could also be victims in crimes of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. Areas included in this strategy were:

- Domestic violence and abuse;
- Sexual violence;
- Stalking;
- Child sexual abuse;
- So-called 'honour based' violence including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Gang related violence; and
- Human trafficking.

Project MAYA was aimed at tackling FGM issues and the service worked with Barnados who was embedded in the multi-agency service hub (MASH).

VAWG remains widespread and has a devastating impact on victims and families. Thurrock Community Safety Partnership remains committed to tackle these violent crimes and work in tandem with local and Essex wide multi-agency groups on the VAWG Strategy. With the appointment of a VAWG Co-ordinator from October 2018, this demonstrates the service's commitment to raising awareness of VAWG and delivery of the strategy.

Giving praise to the service's proactivity, Councillor Fletcher asked if there was evidence to show if the strategy was working so far. Michelle Cunningham answered that domestic abuse reports were not currently available and the service was working with the police on this. Success of approaches had been measured around repeat victims but this information was no longer available. Work was also carried out with perpetrators but again data wasn't always forthcoming.

Councillor Abbas arrived at 19.12.

The Chair questioned why the service no longer received the data on the work undertaken with perpetrators and the success of approaches with repeat victims. In answer, Michelle Cunningham said this was due to the lack of resources available to gather and send the data. This had been raised at the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board meeting and would raise again. Information was available from the perpetrator project in children's services. Councillor Fletcher commented that information was needed to measure the success of the work undertaken within the strategy.

Referring to the 'Violence Against Women and Girls' Strategy title, the Vice-Chair felt this was better titled as 'Violence Against Persons' as men and boys were recognised as victims of these crimes too. Bringing up police stations, the Vice-Chair went on to say there were too many numbers given which could be frustrating for victims trying to find help and support and to be told they had called the wrong organisation. There should be one phone number to call, similar to Childline which was easy to access. Continuing on, the Vice-Chair felt police officers needed training in dealing with crimes of domestic and sexual violence because many did not know how to handle these in a sensitive manner. The Vice-Chair would send a private email to Michelle Cunningham with a list of concerns and issues regarding VAWG.

Councillor Rigby queried if extra support was provided during peak periods. Confirming this was the case, Michelle Cunningham went on to say peak periods were usually after the Christmas period due to the money issues and bills. Specialist cars had been deployed in the past during peak periods and the service undertook more reporting campaigns. Picking up on the Vice-Chair's earlier point on the amount of phone numbers given to victims at police stations, Michelle Cunningham said the service was looking into arranging a 'one stop shop', which would include other services such as Citizens Advice Bureau.

Councillor Abbas questioned if there were plans to work with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Michelle Cunningham confirmed that Project Maya worked with BAME communities and would share this report if not restricted.

Based on the figures given within appendix 1, Councillor Fletcher commented that the hotspots seemed to be around Aveley and asked Officers if Members could provide support to the service in some way. In answer, Michelle Cunningham said the statistics represented areas where there was a concentration of local authority housing although the housing safeguarding officers worked across all tenures. The new community liaison officers and 'one stop shop' were in development and utilising community resources which would be the aim, similar to the one in Ockendon. The new health centres may also be a point of access and this was where Members could give their support. Agreeing that the Ockendon hub was an excellent start, Councillor Fletcher went on to comment that Ockendon was 'not quite there yet' with health services.

The Chair mentioned she had been on the South Essex Rape Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) Board a couple of years ago and at the time, there had been a commitment from the Housing Team to provide a secure flat. She went on to ask if this flat had been acquired for victims. Confirming the flat had been acquired, Michelle Cunningham said the flat was not utilised well. The process was that the flat would be occupied for a week or so and then the occupants would be moved on once suitable accommodation was acquired.

Referring to the figures provided on page 31, the Chair asked if these figures included the same set of families as the figures appeared consistent. Michelle Cunningham was unsure what the figures consisted of but the police would inform the service of high risk repeat victims. Information on this would be provided by an Officer within the service. Expressing further concern, the Chair felt that if it was the same set of families, the service would need to look into how the cycle could be broken and went on to ask if prosecution could be made without the support of victims.. Agreeing with the Chair, Michelle Cunningham explained that body worn video evidence could be used to progress domestic abuse cases.

The Vice-Chair suggested the service speak with people who reported crimes of domestic and sexual violence for their opinion of the service to check if there were areas of improvement needed within the service. Michelle Cunningham would check with the Housing and Safeguarding Team on whether this survey was undertaken. She was aware the police gathered this information but was uncertain if this was available by crime type.

The Committee agreed on the recommendations provided but wished to add another recommendation on. Councillor Fletcher also asked the service to let Members know of how Members could help, particularly on recommendation 1.2.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee champion the VAWG agenda and raised the profile of the services that are available to Thurrock residents.**
- 1.2 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee ensured that services are resourced adequately to help all victims of these crimes. In doing so Thurrock Council are addressing and preventing domestic and sexual violence and reducing demand on services.**
- 1.3 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee commended Thurrock Community Safety Partnership on the good work undertaken and be provided with an update on the VAWG Strategy.**

26. Update on Air Quality and Health

Mat Kiely, Strategic Lead Transportation Services, presented the report which gave an update on the actions, measures and initiatives undertaken by the service to tackle Air Quality issues to support and promote healthier lifestyles and to tackle health inequalities in Thurrock. The update also included information from the 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) which identified the actions and progress towards monitoring air quality in Thurrock.

Councillor Abbas queried if the cycle paths on the southern end of the Purfleet by-pass were part of improvement plans to help with air quality. Mat Kiely confirmed Purfleet by-pass was a part of the cycle improvement plan which the service was looking into.

Referring to London Road in Grays, Councillor Abbas commented on the increasing worry of air quality in the area and questioned if any steps would be undertaken to reduce the pollution. Confirming the area was being looked at; Mat Kiely said the plan was to reduce the impact of pollution on air quality. The area of London Road was challenging due to it being an industrial area and the aim was to encourage people to walk or cycle. The service would need to look at the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) to check what steps would need to be taken regarding London Road.

Continuing on with London Road, the Vice-Chair asked if there were plans to plant trees in the area and who the service consulted with on where trees should be planted. She suggested using low hedges instead of trees which was better as low hedges would not cause view obstruction for drivers. In reply, Mat Kiely said the service worked with colleagues in the Environment Department's Tree Officer on tree planting. Removed trees were replanted and the plans included the planting of trees. The service worked on a 1:3 ratio where the removal of one tree was replanted with three where practical.

The Vice-Chair suggested the service consult with Tree UK who would be able to provide best practise on tree planting. She went on to say that before the area became increasingly industrialised, there had been hedges and trees which had been wonderful and this was no longer the case. Agreeing that a cycle hub would be great to improve air quality, the Vice-Chair felt the planting of trees needed to be considered too. She went on to question how the A13 Widening would affect the air quality as there was no mention of the scheme within the report. There were houses within the area that was affected and trees had been pulled out for the scheme as well. Mat Kiely answered the A13 Widening Scheme was a report of its own and the service would need to speak with the Major Projects Team on plans.

The Committee discussed further on the planting of trees. Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure said the Tree Strategy had been brought to the Committee at the last Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in December 2018. Some trees had been removed because the roots were too big or because they were dying. He reassured the Committee that their comments would be brought to the relevant team.

Councillor Rigby asked how often the air quality readings were measured. Mat Kiely answered air quality was continuously monitored by the Environmental Protection team with large monitoring stations and diffusion tubes. Trends and issues were identified from the gathered data which suggested air quality was affected in traffic and weather conditions. Damp weather conditions appeared to be better for the air quality.

Referring back to tree planting, Councillor Rigby thought it was not practical to plant trees alongside London Road due to the lack of space but felt there was a need to improve air quality there because there were houses in the area. Agreeing trees had to be considered, Mat Kiely went on to say there were many other topics to consider such as electric charging in car parks for electric cars. Hybrid buses were already in place and helped with air quality. Electric buses were something that could be considered in the future as well.

Looking at the AQMA table in the report, the Chair noted there were a lot of investigations that had been undertaken. She queried when there would be an outcome of these investigations and when the Committee would hear of the outcome. Mat Kiely would update the Committee with the outcomes. The Chair went on to mention there was little information on the air quality in Calcutta Road, Tilbury and was aware of the health adequacies in Tilbury which had been brought to the Committee's attention in the Annual Health Report earlier in the municipal year. It was pleasing to see a plan for a cycle hub in Tilbury and the Chair hoped people would use it.

The Chair asked if the Council operated a cycle to work scheme for employees. Confirming a cycle to work scheme was in place, Mat Kiely explained how the scheme worked through salary sacrifice and said the scheme needed better promotion.

Referring to the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), the Chair understood the Council had asked for an independent report on the impact of LTC on air quality. She asked when this report would be received. Mat Kiely was unable to confirm when the report would be completed but would check and relay back to the Committee.

On National Clean Air Day, the Chair questioned if and how this was promoted by the service. Mat Kiely explained the service worked with schools through encouraging parents to turn car engines off whilst waiting for their children during drop off and pick up times. This had been successful last year and the service aimed to do the same this year. This strategy worked better with parents and schools as opposed to bus operators which were more challenging.

The Chair queried the service's plan to tackle health inequalities. Mat Kiely answered the Public Health Team were working with communities on a strategy and communicating with GPs on scorecards and identifying areas that required more help.

On HGV pollution, Councillor Fletcher thanked Officers for explaining and speaking with him on this topic recently. He brought up two issues which was budget and acquiring support from other Boroughs to tackle HGV pollution. Councillor Fletcher questioned what the service was doing to increase budget and what work was being investigated. Mat Kiely explained the service had a £950,000 budget per year and they aimed to work with Public Health of England in order to acquire funding under Section 106. With gained funding, this left the service to spend the £950,000 on other projects and schemes.

Councillor Fletcher pointed out that relying on external funding was a problem and delayed solutions. As air quality was identified from transport issues, Mat Kiely said the service would have to spend from their budget. Councillor Fletcher went on to mention the continuing issue of metallic dust in Tilbury on which residents were still concerned about. He asked if there was a possibility to put pressure on the Environment Agency to check the metallic dust and to test it. Giving reassurance that the Council was continuing to monitor the situation, Mat Kiely also said regular conversations were being held with the involved parties. The leading party was the Environment Agency and the Council was urging them to investigate if the metallic dust was hazardous to people's health. Initial monitoring of the metallic dust had shown it to be not hazardous but the Council continued to push for further investigation.

On Dalroy Close in Ockendon, Councillor Fletcher sought clarification on whether there were plans to concrete the grass verges for parking spaces. Unaware of plans for concreting grass verges, Mat Kiely said the Council had plans to prevent parking on grass verges as part of the 'Kerb It' scheme. The plan was to cover grass verges with a mesh material which would still allow grass to grow through. The service had been made aware of concerns on the scheme and the Portfolio Holder was looking into these.

The Chair asked that the report be brought back to the Committee in the next municipal year and added this as a new recommendation which the Committee agreed on.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and considered the monitoring regime, measures and initiatives set out in the report.**
- 1.2 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the report form part of the 2019/20 work programme.**

The Vice-Chair left at 20.15.

27. Bartec Update

Presented by Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure, the report outlined the progress of the Bartec Collective which was being implemented for Environment and Highways Services as a back office system. This would provide a digital scheduling and reporting tool and the ability to allocate work to frontline staff via a mobile app or in-cab unit which would be visible to all staff who had access.

The Chair praised the success of the Bartec Collective and was pleased to hear it was working well. She queried if the system also covered cemeteries. Daren Spring confirmed the system covered grounds maintenance work which included cemeteries.

RESOLVED:

That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and noted the report.

28. Refuse Collections Update

The report was presented by Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure, which gave an update on the performance of domestic waste collections, development of the commercial and business collection service and expansion of refuse collection services that were expected over the next year in line with the Borough's growth.

With the introduction of the shunter drivers, Councillor Fletcher was pleased to hear these seemed to be working well. He questioned whether it was good value for money to recruit a Waste Services Engagement and Education Officer for communication services. The Council already had a good Communications Team and Councillor Fletcher queried if waste services communication could be undertaken there. Daren Spring explained the purpose of the new Officer would be to focus on recycling and waste only and

it would need a person experienced and knowledgeable in this field to be successful.

The Chair asked if the additional budget mentioned had been factored into the overall budget for the service. Confirming this, Daren Spring explained the service had been working with the Finance Team to factor the additional budget in.

The Chair mentioned that Council Tax may have a 0% increase and she hoped not to see the increases made elsewhere within the Council. The Chair went on to ask the process on missed waste collections. She mentioned how small or narrow roads were sometimes missed when the big waste vehicles were unable to access the road and questioned if smaller vehicles could be sent out to collect instead. Daren Spring explained a Late crew was sent out and missed collections were the reason why rounds were rebalanced to reduce the pressure on the Friday collections. In cases of traffic, collections were sometimes missed and work would be rearranged to collect. Smaller vehicles were not sent out as they were too small to hold much waste.

The Chair was aware of a pilot project on waste collection in blocks of flats and she asked Officers for an update. Daren Spring answered the project was still quite new and would need more time to analyse the success.

RESOLVED:

That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and noted the report.

Councillor Fletcher left at 8.41pm.

29. Recycling Service Update

Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure, gave an outline of the report which stated that the service was in the process of reviewing the new government document titled, "Waste, our resources: A Strategy for England", to establish the possible implications for Thurrock. The report also contained performance on weekly residual and recycling collections for 2018/19 and the service's focus for 2019/20.

With the Bartec Collective system in place, Councillor Abbas sought clarification on whether the 'Oops' bin tags would continue to be used. Daren Spring explained the tags worked in conjunction with the system. Bartec identified contamination within the bins and staff would tag the bins.

Councillor Rigby noted the figures of reduced rate in recycling and questioned the causes. Daren Spring explained there were many factors that contributed to the reduction on recycling. Some of these could be due to thinner glasses and plastics. Councillor Rigby went on to ask if bin tagging had helped with contaminated bins. In answer, Daren Spring said it was still too early to see

results but the tagging had helped some residents understand why their bins were missed.

As Thurrock's recycling rates were low, the Chair questioned the rates of neighbouring local authorities. Answering that there was a general trend in declining recycling rates, Daren Spring said it was dependent on which local authority's process and policy was.

With some products, the Chair asked why these were not recyclable in Thurrock's bins despite the packaging stating it was recyclable. Daren Spring replied that this was dependent on which company the Council used for waste. The waste company Thurrock used would accept glass but another may not.

The Chair mentioned previously requesting recycling bins in Thurrock's cemeteries and open spaces, she asked for an update on the request. With cemeteries, Daren Spring said the service had been trying to establish the best type of bin and had been in conversations with three waste bin providers. Having an open bin would encourage people to throw anything in and the current bins in the cemeteries were not adequate. On open spaces, the service was rolling out a public bin programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the report for information and comment.

30. Work Programme

As this meeting was the last Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the municipal year, the Chair asked the Committee if they wished to add anything to the work programme for the next municipal year.

The Committee requested for the following reports to be added:

- An update on air quality with the AQMA table to be updated
- An update on the tree strategy

Before closing the meeting, the Chair informed the Committee that the Prevent Violent Extremism Members Working group would become a formalised committee in the next municipal year. She encouraged Members to join and attend.

The Committee thanked the Officers for their support and hard work on reports to the Committee.

The meeting finished at 9.04 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**