

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Jane Potheary (Vice-Chair), Steve Liddiard, Maureen Pearce, Elizabeth Rigby (*arrived 7.08pm*) and *Graham Snell* (Substitute) (substitute for James Thandi)

Apologies: Councillor Thandi

In attendance: Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager
Vincent Taylor, Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services
Cheryl Wells, Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

26. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

27. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

28. Thurrock Councils response to Prevent Duty 2015

Michelle Cunningham introduced the report that allowed Elected Members the opportunity to scrutinise the implementation of the Prevent Duty by Thurrock Council and to ensure that all elements of the Council worked together to ensure that the Council was fulfilling its duties in regards to Prevent, in line with the Councils responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Councillor Redsell thanked Michelle Cunningham for the report and stated that safeguarding measures should be put in place to protect members who may be working on their own in offices. Councillor Redsell asked whether personal alarms previously provided to Members were still available.

Councillor Liddiard thanked Michelle Cunningham for a good and very comprehensive report and stated the more you read on this subject it provided ideas on how best to talk to residents in the community and that other organisations in your ward were sharing the same information.

Councillor Potheary questioned the role of hate crime in relation to Prevent as the strategy had not mentioned this but obviously was a big problem nationally with anti-Nazi kind of terrorism and extremism and questioned whether links had been made with people convicted of hate crimes. Michelle Cunningham stated a report on Hate Crime would be presented to the Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee on the 17 February and direct democracy would forward a copy of that report to members for information.

Members questioned what Prevent training was available to which members were directed to the e-learning prevent session, details of this would be sent to members. Online learning is available at:

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/edu/screen1.html>

A further specific session on Prevent could be provided to members if required. Further guidance for members and communities can be found from the following link: [ACT Early | Prevent radicalisation](#)

Councillor Snell thanked Michelle Cunningham for the report and referred to the Home Office Prevent Handbook. He asked for some clarification on where it stated that 'almost' (so less than 50%) half of referrals were right wing but that figure was higher than for Islamist extremism, the report had suggested that there was a gap in the figures (right wing extremism cases would need to be in excess of 50% for the figures to add up). Michelle Cunningham stated this was a Home Office report but would seek some clarification and confirm back to Councillor Snell.

Councillor Redsell thanked Michelle Cunningham again for the very informative report and encouraged members to undertake the training sessions.

Councillor Liddiard questioned whether any literature could be distributed to members and it was agreed that the "Lets Talk About It" handbooks would be tabled at February Council meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Members of the Committee scrutinise and assure themselves of the response to the self-assessment audit completed using the Local Government Association Toolkit and provided for scrutiny at Appendix 2.**
- 2. That Members of the Committee scrutinise and assure themselves of the response to the Channel Panel self-assessment completed in April 2021 and provided for scrutiny at Appendix 3.**
- 3. That Members are assured that the action plan in place through the Community Safety Partnership responds to the risks outlined in the Counter Terrorism Local Profile and that these are routinely reviewed and are in line with increased National risk.**

29. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

Michelle Cunningham presented the report that provided Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the areas of work associated with the Thurrock Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2020-2023. The current VAWG strategy and vision had been agreed by members of this committee in February 2020, a month before the Covid pandemic brought unrecognisable change to the world. The Community Safety Partnership through the VAWG Coordinator worked to ensure that all partners, both statutory and voluntary worked together to provide effective support and protection to victims, including children, and response to perpetrators. For many women and children who were experiencing VAWG crimes, staying at home was not a place of safety.

Councillor Redsell thanked Michelle Cunningham for another good report but stated there had only been one sentence about violence against Men and Boys and felt the strategy should be updated to reflect more information on this.

Councillor Redsell questioned how many places of safety were there in Thurrock to which Michelle Cunningham stated there was one refuge in the borough that supported victims individually. Councillor Redsell questioned was this enough to which Michelle Cunningham stated no concerns had been raised with her and that other options would be available to victims such as areas of safety outside the borough. Councillor Redsell questioned whether Thurrock would be used for refuge for victims from outside the borough to which she was informed that was the case for Women and Girls but currently no refuge space for Men and Boys. Members were informed that this was the case in a lot of authorities but there was national support through charities who offered refuge spaces for men but not locally.

Councillor Potheary referred to number 6 of the executive summary of the assessment of the needs of Domestic Abuse Victims residing in Safe Accommodation in Thurrock that “no space/or capacity to support was the second most recorded reason for being refused safe accommodation” and asked for some clarification on this point. Michelle Cunningham stated that no women would not be supported at any time in a crisis, it may mean that the offer was not suitable or an offer that did not want to be taken up.

Councillor Potheary stated in 2020/21 the solved rates of offences in Thurrock had gone down by 1.3% and questioned what steps could be taken by the Community Safety Partnership and the Police to improve those solved rates. Michelle Cunningham stated the Police were putting lots in place such as wearing body worn cameras which would allow them to take action rather than the witness having to come forward. The Community Safety Partnership supported and helped fund the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy workers who supported victims through the whole of the court process. Through the CSP strategic board had discussions with SERICC on the reasons why victims who had come forward did not continue to court. A national change proposing to extend the time for victims to come forward. Michelle Cunningham stated it was important to listen to victims and this formed part of the new DA Duty to hold focus groups to talk and listen to and

understand their journey to try and unpick where things could be done better or differently to get the victims to court.

Councillor Redsell stated a lot of women were still out there who would not seek help and unfortunately there would be people out there that we would not hear off because of the potential reprisals of what might happen. Michelle Cunningham stated if members were aware of anybody and they were afraid to come forward they did not necessarily have to go to the Police, the housing safeguarding team and the community liaison officers worked with victims to put safety plans in place. This might not mean refuges, there were lots of options and the community officers would look at how that person could be safeguarded and put plans into place.

Councillor Potheary referred to the priorities and proposed the word “disproportionality” be removed from that paragraph as it focused on Women and Girls and not Men and Boys and suggested it should read “Tackling violence on Women and Girls whilst recognised that Men and Boys can be victims”.

Councillor Liddiard thanked Michelle Cunningham for the very comprehensive report and questioned whether this crime was evenly spread across Thurrock or were there hot spots such as his Tilbury ward and this was the impression he got from this. Councillor Liddiard stated it would be good to have a campaign of awareness events for those people affected in his ward. Michelle Cunningham stated that campaigns would be borough wide and unfortunately the outreach work that had been undertaken had been paused due to COVID. The CSP and housing safety safeguarding team were aware of those wards and Michelle Cunningham agreed to take this action point forward and make sure that some awareness events on domestic abuse were held in the priority wards

Councillor Rigby stated it was important that the strategy highlighted that it was important that Men and Boys were treated the same as Women and Girls. Michelle Cunningham stated that data testified that Women and Girls were more affected but those of Men and Boys and their families would be treated the same way, with the same support.

Councillor Snell referred to the characteristics of domestic abuse victims in safe accommodation and questioned whether some households were less likely to report or was this a true picture. Michelle Cunningham stated there was an issue of underreporting in all areas and for so many different reasons such as culture, age or fear. The data identified certain patterns and going forward what could be done with that data. Where it was underrepresented in some community’s increases in awareness and promoting those services may need to be undertaken.

Councillor Pearce questioned whether violence against Men and Boys had increased in Thurrock to which Michelle Cunningham stated she would check with SERICC and let members know.

RESOLVED

- 1. Note the progress on delivery of responsibilities detailed within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and scrutinise the recommendations.**
- 2. Provide comment on the proposed Thurrock Community Safety Partnership priorities in relation to VAWG for 2022/23. Members agreed to remove the word “disproportionality”.**
- 3. Note the key successes and the programme to deliver on the VAWG strategy for Thurrock 2020/23.**
- 4. Request that members champion the VAWG agenda and raise the profile of the services that are available to Thurrock residents**

At 8.06pm, Michelle Cunningham and Cheryl Wells left the meeting.

30. Scrutiny Review - Waste Strategy Implementation Updates - Verbal Update

Daren Spring updated Members with a progress update towards the implementation of the waste strategy:

- From September 2022, households would receive alternate weekly refuse collection, alternate weekly garden waste collection, weekly recycling collection and weekly food waste collection.
- Single Use Plastic Policy agreed by the committee would be going to Cabinet next week for approval.
- Current bin collection days, for brown bins, are advertised on the council's web site. Information on collection days for the waste strategy work would be included as part of the communications process.
- Food waste – Communication process is being supported by RAP, had worked alongside other local authorities, detailed planning and communications would play a key part of this process, communicated with crew, residents, staff and trade unions. Information would be provided on what goes in each bin, frequency and day of collection.
- Primary schools in the borough would be given the chance again to name the new bin lorries, they would be invited to submit a drawing and proposed name for the new waste vehicles. The competition would start in the summer with the winners being announced after October half term.
- Food caddy contract was currently being undertaken and expected by July 2022, distributed to all households from September 2022.
- Disposal waste contracts would be in place to support the food waste collections, these are currently being evaluated and be awarded in time for the new food waste service in September.

Councillor Redsell thanked Daren Spring for the update and although the food waste was a good idea she foresaw problems with the smaller bins disappearing, residents not taking them in or being blown away. Daren Spring

stated work had been undertaken with other local authorities who had not reported any problems, the current policy would stand if a caddy/smaller bin would need replacing and that they were lockable, so therefore fox proof. As part of the communications plan would encourage residents to put their bins away.

Councillor Liddiard stated his support for more recycling and questioned whether implementation would be staggered and would there be a trial of the food caddies and if so could Tilbury be first. Daren Spring stated that there would not be a trial, but as part of the implementation process the delivery of food caddies would be staggered and would put forward Councillor Liddiard request but could not guarantee anything, due to the logistics.

Councillor Potheary questioned how the alternate collections would work to which Daren Spring stated this would be picked up as part of the route rationalisation work and that recycling and food waste would be picked up by the same vehicle which had different compartments.

Councillor Rigby questioned whether these implementations would increase the borough's recycling rates and prevent non-recyclable items being put in recycling bins. Daren Spring hoped that the fortnightly refuse collection would encourage more recycling with an increase projection of around 10% in time, but would hope for more. Also garden waste would be a better quality as food waste would be put into the food caddy.

31. Tree Strategy - Verbal Update

Vincent Taylor provided Members with a brief overview:

- Over the last couple of years had planted way more trees than required for the tree replacement for every one tree removed.
- Ability to have attracted funding through Thames Chase and the Woodland Trust.
- This year had secured funding through a bid to the Forestry Commission.
- Bids had been submitted to those respective organisations by the Tree Officer.

Councillor Redsell questioned why money from the Council had not been sought again to which Vincent Taylor stated there had been a surplus of money identified being put towards the planting of trees, but due to the pandemic this money was no longer available. That external funding had been sought to fund the planting of a considerable amount of trees into the borough.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether the trees planted were whips to which she was informed there had been 400+ normal sized trees planted alongside 4000 whips.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether ward members were notified when an old tree was taken down to which Vincent Taylor stated where it was possible members would be informed. That it was not always possible to plant in the same street or in that year as all variables needed to be considered when planting trees and where possible would plant in the immediate vicinity.

Councillor Redsell praised the exceptional good work undertaken by the team, especially the Tree Officer Liz Wood and asked that message was relayed to her for what she had achieved.

Vincent Taylor stated he would like to look at areas that were losing trees on a more project basis rather than replacing one tree in, one tree out, this would enable a more structured and strategic view on how trees were being planted. Also work would be undertaken with developers to look at how trees could be planted as part of new developments in the borough.

Councillor Potheary questioned where a tree needed to be replaced would this be in the same ward to which she was informed that every effort would be made to this.

Daren Spring asked those members who had not yet nominated a tree as part of Councillor Rigby's motion for their ward to do so as soon as possible please.

Councillor Rigby questioned how many of the 400 trees planted were anticipated to survive to which Vincent Taylor stated there had been a good success rate, trees would only be planted where they would survive and be planted and established at the right time ideally before the warmer weather. Teams would monitor and water those newly planted trees.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether there was any budget left for this year to which Vince Taylor stated they were using the funding received from the Forestry Commission and undertaking a large scale of planting for them and enabling the team to do some of their own work. To also use a portion of the general budget for arboriculture to buy new trees, if possible.

32. Work Programme

Members signed off the work programme for 2021/22.

The meeting finished at 8.49 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**