

SWT Community Scrutiny Committee - 30 September 2021

Present:

Councillors Dave Mansell, Simon Coles, Steve Griffiths, Janet Lloyd, Andy Pritchard, Ray Tully and Sarah Wakefield

Officers:

Chief Inspector Justin French (Avon and Somerset Police)

Scott Weetch and Marcus Prouse (Somerset West and Taunton)

Also

Councillors Mark Blaker

Present:

Via Zoom: Councillors Cavill, R Lees, Lithgow, Milne, Weston, Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

31. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Libby Lisgo, Dawn Johnson and John Hunt, who was substituted for by Cllr Mark Blaker.

32. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee**

(Minutes of the meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29th July 2021 were circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29th July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

33. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

34. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to make a statement or ask a question on any item on the Agenda.

35. **Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers**

- A query was raised as to whether the issue around the Fountains also applied to parks in Wellington?
- *This would be clarified with Officers, who had stated that “The fountains are not working as the pump had an issue with the bearings. They have undergone various repairs and all was working really well for a few weeks, then the bearings went, and a new pump has been ordered as they don’t make the bearings anymore for this type of pump”.*

RESOLVED to note the Community Scrutiny request and recommendation trackers.

36. **Community Scrutiny Forward Plan**

A request was made to add an Agenda item with an update on the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Executive Councillor Booth stated his support and would be happy to attend such a meeting.

RESOLVED to note and approve the Community Scrutiny Forward Plan.

37. **Executive and Full Council Forward Plans**

RESOLVED to note the Executive and Full Council Forward Plans.

38. **Avon and Somerset Police (verbal update)**

Chief Inspector Justin French (Avon and Somerset Police) the Local Policing Area Commander attended to present and answer any questions in relation to policing matters in the Somerset West and Taunton Area. He had been 18 months in post and gave an overview of his role. He outlined the areas that were being concentrated on at the current time, including County lines, murder suppression, protests, young people and anti-social behaviour and mental health. A new Police and Crime Commissioner had been elected and their priorities were being established alongside the recruitment of a new Chief Constable.

During the discussion the following points were raised: -

- A query was raised as to whether the Police would look to start using their ticketing powers to deter poorly parked vehicles, which blocked emergency service vehicles and refuse lorries from carrying out their work.
- The Local Authorities would take the lead on this but if an individual had a concern they could call it in and the attending Police Officer or PCSO could look to issue a ticket.
- A query was raised as to the expected timescale of an attending officer, and it was confirmed that it would depend on the priorities of the day as there was only a finite resource, but Councillors were urged to call it in as a starting point.
- Concerns were raised about the spike in rural anti-social behaviour, particularly during the periods of lockdown in the last eighteen months.
- It was confirmed that the evidence had shown there was a spike in this activity and the police had responded to the challenge. The area Commander had put more resources into the rural crime department as there was a recognition of the need to do more.
- In a discussion on the problems with anti-social behaviour and young people, the police had proven areas in the criminal justice system to address this e.g. Criminal Behaviour Orders.
- Concern was raised on crimes being committed by individuals below the age of responsibility, with specific reference to an area in Victoria ward.
- Comment was made that residents in the rural areas would still wish to see more of a police presence to offer reassurance. This was a recognised challenge and the Chief Inspector had instructed his officers to where possible walk or use bikes to be more visible.
- A concern was raised around the closure of Minehead Police Station and that if a youth picked up in Minehead for a crime and was taken to Bridgwater Police Station and to how they would then make their way home. Concern was also raised around the relocation of Williton Police Station and the need to make appointments.
- The Police had a concerted strategy to be cutting edge and encourage the use of 101/999 and online reporting as the traditional method was no longer viable, but it was understood this may not be the preferred methods for all.
- Reassurance was given over the Watchet Police office and that this was not going to be closed.

- Concern was raised over the budget cuts in recent years. Further information was requested on whether the PCC's consulted with Local Authorities and agencies on their priorities and how to feed into this process.
- The Chief Inspector had met with the PCC and talked about his priorities.
- Concern was raised about the prevalence of knives and racing cars in one locality. In regard to the new local Traffic Regulation order changes in West Monkton, further information was sought as to how long the Police would wait before they started to enforce.
- A discussion was had on Community Speedwatch schemes.
- The use of Facebook as an engagement tool was commended.
- The use of mini police and cadets as part of school engagement was commended.
- Further information as to the regularity of callouts to the Canonsgrove site were discussed, and it was confirmed this was not a current issue of concern.

The Chief Inspector was thanked for his attendance and the Committee looked forward to further engagement with the Police in future.

39. **To consider reports from Executive Councillors - Cllr Chris Booth**

Councillor Chris Booth (Community Portfolio Holder) introduced his latest Portfolio Holder report and gave an overview of the areas he had tackled and welcomed any questions.

During the discussion the following points were raised: -

- Concern was raised around the provision of CCTV in Wellington and the quality of information provided in the portfolio reports.
- A concern around the CCTV in Watchet was also raised and whether the cameras were working. It was confirmed that there was a known issue in Swain St which was being resolved.
- A request was sought that the information on the West Somerset area was more broader than a focus on Minehead.
- The work of the Portfolio Holder with the One Teams and the Link Centre grants was praised.
- The Community Grants Review was commented as being done at a bad time due to the uncertainties with Covid but it was clear the work was being done with integrity.
- With the advent of Unitary, it was commented that a holistic approach was needed in working with the Police and Health and Social Care.
- Further detail was requested on the Domestic Abuse funding grant and how that worked. Officers confirmed most of the funding in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act was given to the upper tier authority.
- In relation to a query on the Youth Funding being allocated to the One Team areas, officers confirmed there would be flexibility to go outside of those areas if needed.

Councillor Booth was thanked for attending.

(The Meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

