

HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

8 June 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pendleton (Chair), Mrs Cooper (Vice-Chair),  
Mrs English, Gregory, Mrs Haywood, Hughes, Needs and Yeates

Councillors Cooper and Goodheart were also in attendance for all  
or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillors Daniells and Thurston

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Cooper and Pendleton declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 [SAFER ARUN PARTNERSHIP] and item 8 [SAFEGUARDING AT ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL] as they are both West Sussex County Councillors.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 were approved.

61. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted for this meeting of the Committee.

62. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its meeting start time be at 6pm

63. SAFER ARUN PARTNERSHIP

The Chair explained to members that the report before them allowed them to scrutinise the Safer Arun Partnership (SAP), specifically, looking at how the partnership itself operated and how effective it was against its terms of reference. She then welcomed Chief Inspector (C.I) Bowman and Sergeant Paul Coles who were in attendance as the representatives of Arun's Neighbourhood Policing team.

In introducing the report, the Community and Wellbeing Manager reconfirmed the purpose and aim of its detail was to enable members to effectively scrutinise the SAP and support compliance of the Council's statutory duty to scrutinise the work of local partners in addressing Crime and Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within the district.

The Chairman then opened debate and invited members to ask questions clarification was sought on the serious organised crime priorities and why these had been discharged. It was confirmed by C.I Bowman that whilst these had been recorded as 'discharged' in the document, the work in relation to Serious Organised Crime (SOC) continues, however it had taken on a new governance recently. Explaining that the previous SOC group had been disbanded and the work was now being undertaken by the Partnership Tactical Co-ordinating Group (PTCG). He confirmed that outcomes of cases or areas that required additional scrutiny by the committee would be fed from the PTCG meetings into the SAP meetings it is hoped that this would see a more co-ordinated response to SOC.

It was asked by a non-member of the committee what would the communities see in terms of the changes made by the PTCG. C.I Bowman explained that the new format is in its early stages, its first meeting was yet to be held. However, none of these changes would stop the local policing work that was already in place and the new format would be under review to ensure that it delivers against expectations. C.I Bowman confirmed that residents of the district would be able to keep up with communications from his teams via the Police force website. The Chair then asked C.I Bowman what specifically would the communications look like for all the Parishes within the district. He confirmed that a 'one size fit's all' approach would not work. Each Parish has its own individual needs and there needed to be a tailored approach according to each Parishes need.

The Arun wide Child exploitation campaign had been documented as 'discharged' within the report, what did this mean? Arun's Safeguarding Officer confirmed that the campaign was a project that launched after a serious case review came to light within the district. An awareness campaign was then started to increase awareness in the specific area. Work on child exploitation within the district was confirmed as ongoing despite this specific campaign being discharged. C.I Bowman was asked by the Chair how the police specifically engaged with child exploitation issues. He confirmed that the special investigations unit managed high risk cases of child abuse, as well as a proactive missing persons team who complete a lot of work for those children who are at risk of exploitation along with many other partnerships who work collaboratively alongside these teams.

The Chair stated that as Arun is a rural coastal area, it was easy to understand why some may think that issues such as child exploitation and grooming may not exist. But it does. She then asked what specifically were the police doing with the cases of grooming that had been highlighted within the district? C.I Bowman confirmed that this subject was one that happens behind closed doors, much like domestic violence cases. Therefore, it required all those individuals who are a part of the safeguarding process, from lollipop persons, teachers, support workers, social workers etc. to continue to feed into the safeguarding process. He confirmed that there was a much more coordinated approach now and collaborative working with safeguarding leads across the district had improved alongside more robust procedures and systems being in place to address concerns when they are raised.

A question was raised regarding the police working with churches as it had not been mentioned in the report? It was confirmed by Sergeant Paul Coles that recently a Community Engagement Officer for Churches and Faith groups across Chichester and

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Arun District. He explained that this was a fairly new role and a 'development in progress' therefore more information on this role would be coming at a later date.

The Chair then asked for an update regarding drug related issues and cuckooing cases as she noted that the report details its actions as outstanding, and no further meetings had been held since January 2022. Sergeant Paul Coles explained that while work had been ongoing an internal restructure had taken place. He also advised that cuckooing cases were rare within the district. He confirmed that 1 case had been identified in Bognor Regis this year which resulted in a swift police response. There are currently 5 individuals/addresses that were being monitored and reviewed monthly with all those involved across the partnership. The focus is very much on protecting the individuals and this is done by robust risk management and deploying resources to where they are needed. Collaborative working across many teams within the force as well as a close working relationship with the Metropolitan Police for those issues who cross county lines.

It was also queried when the minutes from the SAP meetings would be updated as this was a vital tool for everyone to ensure they are kept up to date with progress being made on cases. It was confirmed by the Community and Wellbeing Manager that there was a technical issue which was being resolved and the minutes would be available to view within a matter of weeks.

The Vice-Chair reminded members that the community safety survey had recently been emailed out to everyone and requested that members raise awareness of this survey with parishes/wards. As well as encouraging individuals to complete the short survey as the more responses received, the better the data we have to work with.

The Chair then drew the item to a close and the committee noted the report and updates given at the meeting.

#### 64. SAFEGUARDING AT ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Safeguarding Officer explained that the report provided members with the opportunity to scrutinise the councils safeguarding function. It provides an overview of the categories of abuse, demand for the year prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and how this has shaped concerns and emerging themes. Data is also provided to show referrals from council staff, specialist advice received, actions given and taken.

The Chair then opened debate on the item, inviting members to ask any questions to officers present.

Concern was raised regarding section 1.9 of the report that detailed the number of incidents of domestic abuse it was stated that it was alarming to see Arun had the highest figures across West Sussex. The Safeguarding officer explained that as C.I Bowman confirmed earlier in the meeting, this was a hidden crime and the data was based on referrals or incidents reported that police had responded to. She confirmed that once police have responded to an incident of domestic violence, an automatic referral to panel is made. The panel consists of key people from a number of services such as health, probation and police. The objective of the panel is to put in place a

safety plan that sets out to reduce the risk to individuals suffering domestic violence. She explained that sadly the figures were a true reflection of domestic violence issues within the district, however, confirmed that there was a collaborative partnership across the services that work together in providing support where it's needed.

It was asked what further proactive steps the council could take in providing support and help for individuals of domestic violence. The Safeguarding officer stated she believed mandatory training for all front-line staff to raise awareness as well as an ongoing training programme of support would be of benefit. She also confirmed that lockdowns during the pandemic did certainly exacerbate the issue.

The topic of communicating with residents on how they can report cases of domestic violence in confidence was raised, specifically, what more the council could do to improve on current communications. The Safeguarding officer confirmed various internal communication campaigns had been completed alongside a women's safety event that enabled engagement with the local community. She agreed that a review of internal and external communication plans would be a positive action.

Further information was sought about the work the council does regarding temporary accommodation use in partnership with Chichester District. The Safeguarding officer confirmed that to help embed the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021 a small amount of funding had been awarded to local districts. After some consultation internally and with external partners it was decided to focus on those who were 'fleeing' and/or presenting to the Council for housing matters. This issue consists of many other needs that also require addressing from getting children into new schools, signing up with dentists, doctors' surgeries, or any other community links. She confirmed that the council and My Sisters House had commissioned a complex safe key worker who would work with housing options officers for those individuals requiring temporary accommodation.

Finally, there was discussion relating to section 1.18 of the report, suicide. Members were keen to understand how the council responds to these cases and what reviews are undertaken when these situations are known. It was confirmed that regular reviews were undertaken, further training was also provided to increase staff awareness and confidence in dealing with future situations.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That it endorses the work of the Safeguarding function at Arun district Council and the work of its officers.

## 65. WORK PROGRAMME

Members took part in a full discussion with officers regarding changes to the work programme, where it was explained that officers regularly review the work programme to ensure that each item on it can be effectively discharged against

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financial and operational constraints. Following this discussion, it was agreed that the following items would be added to the work programme as regular updates;

- Housing Stock updates
- Sheltered Housing updates
- New Housing Management System project updates
- Key Performance Indicators performance update

The Committee then noted its work programme for 2022/23.

(The meeting concluded at 7.39 pm)