

Present: Councillor Claire Rylott (Chairman), Councillor Lina Savickiene (Vice-Chairman),
Councillors Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Mike Gilbert, Patricia Marson, Barrie Pierpoint,
Ralph Pryke, David Scoot and Suzanne Welberry

In attendance:

Assistant Director - Regulation, Safer Communities Manager, CCTV Manager, Insights
and Transformation Manager and Democratic Services Officer

Guests:

Inspector Colin Clarkson Lincolnshire Police

Zoe Walters – Community Safety Co-ordinator Lincolnshire County Council

10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were tabled by Councillor Alison Austin.

11 MINUTES

With no quorum of members in attendance to agree the minutes, the Chairman signed them as seen.

12 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were tabled.

13 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions tabled.

14 PROPOSED JOINT SCRUTINY ACTIVITY FOR 23 - 24 FOR THE SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP (S&ELCP)

The Portfolio Holder presented the report to the committee confirming that it outlined the proposed joint scrutiny topics for the Partnership for 23/34 and the establishment of a Joint Task and Finish Group for each topic. The topics included had previously been considered by scrutiny committees at each Council, but the report brought forward more detail on each topic and requested appointments to the Joint Task Groups.

In establishing the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership, Members of each of the partnership councils recognised that matters of common strategic interest would benefit from a co-ordinated partnership approach to scrutiny.

The establishment of the joint scrutiny framework, to consider matters in depth from a Partnership perspective, had resulted in the development of Policy; as well as enabling the Partnership to collectively explore issues facing the sub-region (such as transportation).

At the end of the last municipal year, scrutiny committees across all 3 Councils considered a list of potential scrutiny items for the 23/24 year with the topics identified for scrutiny being Health and Wellbeing, Housing, and Enviro Crime, with Public Transport scrutiny continuing from 2022/23.

The agreed approach was that each Council's relevant scrutiny committee should appoint up to three Members to a Joint Task and Finish Group for any given topic. Each agreed topic would have its own Joint Task and Finish Group. The 'parent' scrutiny committees would agree the broad remit of the Joint Task and Finish Groups, but each Group would have a delegation to determine the detailed lines of enquiry/witnesses. A Lead Officer would be appointed by the relevant Deputy Chief Executive, and that Lead Officer would support the Group and prepare any final report with the Group.

Final reports would be submitted to each council's parent scrutiny committee for final review and subsequent recommendation on to the relevant decision-making person/body, as appropriate. 2.4 It should be noted that two of the councils have more than one 'parent' scrutiny committee. The approval of topics and the appointment of Members to Joint Task and Finish Groups would be determined by the parent committee whose terms of reference most closely reflect the topic in question – but with the overarching aim of equal distribution of topics between those parent committees as far as practicable.

The report tabled sought approval of the establishment of Joint Task and Finish Group for Environmental Crime Enforcement and the appointment of three committee members to the group.

The scope for the review was not to scrutinise crime but at the procurement of the contract and to monitor the contracts effectiveness.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Anton Dani, Ralph Pryke and Lina Savickiene be appointed to the Task and Finish Group for Environmental Crime Enforcement.

15 JOINT SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIP

The Portfolio Holder presented the report confirming that when the Partnership was formed it was agreed in the Memorandum of Agreement that there would be an annual joint scrutiny undertaken, to review progress of the Partnership and to understand its effectiveness and the opportunities for its further development. In November 2021, Council agreed that the annual Partnership Scrutiny Task Group should be made up of the Scrutiny Committee Chairman, Vice Chairman and one additional Scrutiny Member from each of the Partnership Councils' relevant Scrutiny Committee. Once the scrutiny has been undertaken, the Task Group's report would be presented back to the relevant Scrutiny Committee at each Council before being presented to each Cabinet with an associated Action Plan for consideration.

The report tabled sought the appointment of one member of the committee to the group, with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Barrie Pierpoint be appointed to the group with the Chairman Councillor Clare Rylott and Vice Chairman Councillor Lina Savickiene.

16 CRIME AND DISORDER ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Colin Clarkson of Lincolnshire Police to the meeting, and confirmed that his attendance was solely in support of the report to be tabled and the content therein. Members were advised that Inspector Clark would be attending a future meeting of BTAC and it would be at that meeting that members would be able to table general questions.

Presenting the report the Portfolio Holder commended the report author on the depth and scope of information provided. The report provided an overview of the work currently being undertaken by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership at County level, the South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership at a local level, along with information on CCTV across the partnership and Anti-Social Behaviour activity in Boston Borough.

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) had been established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. A CSP was required for each local government area, bringing the police, local authorities, fire and rescue, health, and probation to formulate strategies for the reduction of crime. Locally, the South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership (SELCSP) was an informally merged partnership administered through the South and East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership (S&ELCP), covering Boston Borough, East Lindsey, and South Holland.

At a county level, there was an informally merged countywide partnership known as the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP), administered by Lincolnshire County Council. Boston Borough Council currently discharged its statutory duties for reducing crime and disorder at a strategic level through the above mentioned partnerships and at an operational level by delivering services such as CCTV and ASB investigation work.

The statutory duties of a Community Safety Partnership were to prepare and implement a partnership plan that set out a strategy for the reduction of reoffending, crime and disorder, combatting substance misuse, serious violence, and community engagement and addressing the priorities identified in the strategic assessment. To set up protocols and systems for information sharing. To regularly engage and consult with the public about their community safety priorities and issues. To commission domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) following notification from the police of a domestic homicide. To hold one or more public meeting during the year.

The report provided an overview of the work of the local SELCSP and the county SLP. The report also provided summary data in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and the alcohol-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Boston, and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) across the partnership area.

Prior to opening the meeting for deliberation, the Chairman asked for an update on Operation California and was advised by the Safer Communities Service Manager that the two Itemisers currently used supporting entry to premises, were dated, and a bid had been submitted to replace them with new improved units and further information would be provided in due course.

Members were further advised by the Portfolio Holder, that the information was historic in its detail and that a number of initiatives were underway following the recent election which would be identified moving forward.

Significant discussion followed which is condensed and included the following:

A question asked how the various campaigns were monitored, identifying which had been successful and what level of impact they had on the targeted area. Members felt it important to receive such feedback to allow them to relay to their residents, but caution was urged that, whilst certain factors could be monitored, not all information was quantifiable and certain data could not be monitored. Members were reassured that the Council 'piggy-backed' certain campaigns and supported local campaigns.

Advising that the public currently accessed information in respect of the Police via the neighbourhood policing website, a member noted that the focus over the last few months for the South Boston area had shown a concentration on traffic crime and nothing in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour. The member asked if it would be possible if the outcomes on campaigns could be referenced on the NPC website identifying where successes had been achieved.

Inspector Clarkson advised that data from the PCC survey identified Boston as being at the top in relation to fear of crime, but then sat as average for all other areas of actual crime. The perception and fear of crime in Boston was particularly prevalent in the elder residents who were too afraid to go out in the evening, and sadly in many cases, to visit the town centre in the daytime being afraid of the large groups of men who congregated within areas of the market place. It was agreed that with a large ageing population, proof that the town was safe was required to reassure the residents and to turn their negativity around.

A member voiced concern that whilst there was the facility to activate a Community Trigger, they were unaware as were many other members, of the actual process to activate such a trigger. Inspector Clarkson confirmed that the process for Boston was being improved and stressed that the trigger process was in place not to apportion blame but to find a solution.

Referring to the CCTV data, members were advised that there were currently 73 cameras operating within Boston, many of which were out of warranty and would be replaced by the end of the year. Members felt that the public should be better informed about the size and range of the CCTV service and the positive impact it has on the community in keeping residents safe.

A number of 'hot-spot' sites were referenced within the town which were subject to on-going anti-social behaviour, with members questioning the siting of the cameras. Officers confirmed that when positioning CCTV they were constrained by issues relating to the provision of power and also the line of sight with the location of buildings and trees sometimes prohibiting a camera into a specific preferred location. Furthermore, members were advised that detailed intelligence was required to move a camera to a new site, as the Council had to be careful not to end up falling foul of blanketing a specific area, with no evidence nor outcomes to back up the need for the siting.

Members were advised that there was a maintenance contract in place for the service with the engineers reacting speedily to an urgent issue, and within a week for other issues with a visit to the destination to assess the issue.

Responding to a problem identified within the village of Kirton, the CCTV Manager advised they were aware of an outage issue connecting to the recorder via the internet connection. However as the internet connection was located within the Town Hall, it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to rectify the internet connection. Referencing concerns in respect of the camera sited at Irby Street, the CCTV Manager agreed the concerns of a member in respect of continued incidents of fly-tipping, and confirmed that the camera was currently focused on the car park area and a change of coverage would be considered.

In response to a question seeking information how quickly the team responded to actual issues taking place, members were advised that the two partnerships were different with the Council's response being from a strategic stance. They looked at a strategic issue but needed to be able to change to emerging priorities when a spike arose. Daily meetings were held to address what had arisen within the previous 24 hour period and monthly meetings ensured identification of any changes in crime.

On questioning what training programmes were in place for future volunteers, members were advised that any potential applicant was vetted initially to the police's standard. Training programmes would then be implemented moving forward with the volunteers.

In conclusion the Chairman thanked Inspector Clarkson for his attendance and all the officers for their support throughout the item.

17 QUARTER 3 AND QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE MONITORING.

The Portfolio Holder presented the report supported by the Insights and Transformation Manager. Members were advised the detailed report was backward looking to identify any KPI's that had reached their target (highlighted in red within the report). A detailed narrative was provided for such KPI's providing a reason as to why they had not reached the target.

Committee questioning and comment followed which included:

In response to concerns raised in respect of the drop in occupancy of market traders, members were advised that the time line of the report was for Quarter 4 – the first three months of the year, and weather conditions did impact during that period. The Portfolio Holder advised that the new Portfolio Holder for the markets provision was actively improving the markets offer and sourcing additional stall holders.

On voicing concerns in respect of the workforce survey identifying that many staff members did not feel informed about the partnership and the decisions it was making, members were advised that work was ongoing to look at and to understand the reasons for the response. A staff survey with more in-depth questioning would be issued to try to identify the issues. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the situation had been picked up by the recent Peer Review and advised it was being looked into.

Referencing the differential in car parking a member queried the budgeting for the service as they felt it should be accurate with previous years' incomes to work from. Members were advised that there had been an obvious loss during and following lockdown with changes in the usage in car parking, but it was anticipated that the budget for the current year would be more accurate. Members also noted issues of ticketing machines being out of operation for long periods due to a lack of parking attendants and the Portfolio Holder agreed the sentiments and further advised that new parking machines were being sourced. They would enable cash and card payments, and also require registration details to stop any ticket sharing.

In response to a member question about scrutiny being provided with comparative data with similar authorities, the Insights and Transformation Manager confirmed that whilst some benchmarking did take place, it was reliant on a comparable authority to provide such data. All authorities recorded their data differently there was not one system across the Councils, and not all Councils offered the same services such as a markets offer. As such, if members had any areas of interest then research could be carried out for reporting. Historically Boston had used South Holland District Council for benchmarking but that was not practical now as it was a member of the partnership.

A request was tabled for information relating to Council Tax collections to identify any changes being due to the changing nature of houses within the Borough.

Members were advised that the scrutiny provision could scrutinise any service delivered by the Council and members should table such requests during the work programme item or direct their request to the relevant Chairman of the relevant committee.

18 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that a request from the sister committee, Corporate and Community, from its last meeting of the previous year – sought a review of a decision to amend the parking facility for Councillors in the rear car park of the Municipal Buildings. The Assistant Director – Regulatory, Lead Officer for the committee advised he would liaise with the Lead Officer for the Corporate and Community committee to get a clear steer on the situation prior to scheduling a report onto the agenda.

A request was tabled for a report to scrutinise the management and maintenance of the Princess Royal Sports Arena, following concerns received in respect that the existing conditions were depleting. The Lead Officer confirmed they would speak with the Leader of the Council to confirm whether the site was within the levelling up programme, prior to scheduling a report onto the agenda.

In response to a query in respect of the Council's stance on air pollution and what it was doing to address the very high levels in certain areas of the town, the Lead Officer advised the Council had a statutory duty to monitor air quality which it did, and that prior to any report at committee, a member briefing paper be provided prior to the next scheduled meeting, to explain the current position in respect of monitoring air quality and actions taken to address them, to reassure members and enable them to familiarise themselves with the procedure.

Following a request for a report on domestic waste bins and contamination, with concerns raised in respect of education for waste disposal and information packs the Lead Officer suggested that with so many new members, a full member briefing evening be scheduled to explain the system in place and enable members to question the respective officers.

The Meeting Closed at 9.20 pm