

CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES

TUESDAY 19 DECEMBER 2017
IPSWICH COMMUNITY CHURCH,
CLARKSON STREET, IP1 2JP
7.00 PM

Present: Alexandra Ward Councillors: J Cook, A Leeder and J Riley
St Margaret's Ward Councillors: O Holmes and L Reynolds
Westgate Ward Councillors: J Gibbs, C Jones and C Kreidewolf
SCC Councillors: C Chambers

There were 17 members of the public in attendance.

44. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lockington.

45. Unconfirmed Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2017 be signed as a true record.

46. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be confirmed as printed on the Agenda.

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

48. To Confirm the Venues of Future Meetings

Resolved:

that the meetings and venues be confirmed as follows:

- **Wednesday 17 January 2018, 7pm – Reg Driver Visitor Centre, Christchurch Park, IP4 2BX**
- **Wednesday 7 March 2018, 7pm – Bramford Road Methodist Church, Bramford Road, IP1 4AY**

49. Responses to Public Questions Received and Open Discussion on Local Issues

- 49.1. The Chair reported that this additional Central Area Committee meeting had been arranged to consider the concerns that residents had raised with regards to crime within the Central area of Ipswich at the meeting held on the 8 November 2017.
- 49.2. County Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, reported that since that meeting a lot of work had been undertaken by Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and the Police and a joint agency approach was being taken to tackle the concerns within the community.
- 49.3. Councillor Alasdair Ross, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Customer Services, commented that there had been some communication issues around what work had been undertaken; however, this would be addressed going forward to ensure that information was communicated to residents. The Police had undertaken a large number of arrests and drug raids; however, it had been recognised that further intervention would be required. Communication from residents and local businesses would continue to be of great importance.
- 49.4. Ms Sara Blake, Head of Communities & Partnerships at Suffolk County Council, gave a presentation about the research commissioned in response to the recent increase in gang and drug related violence amongst vulnerable young people in Ipswich. The research had identified a number of issues that included local criminal families being supplied with drugs by London gangs and the recruitment of vulnerable children.
- 49.5. The research report had highlighted that there needed to be clear leadership and accountability with all agencies working together, and community engagement and ongoing evaluation would be key. The aims were to stop the gang violence, the sexual exploitation of vulnerable children, to reduce the illegal distribution and the demand for drugs. An action plan had been produced to consider how early intervention and enforcement could best be employed.
- 49.6. Ms Blake confirmed that a Gangs Co-ordinator had been appointed to assist the multi-agency response to the problems and the Urban Street Gang initiative would continue to be operated. Ipswich Borough Council had also funded an additional advisor to support the Ipswich Community Safety Partnership in developing a joint plan to tackle issues within Ipswich and extra funding had been secured from the Home Office.

- 49.7. Councillor Jones suggested that meetings take place with the owners of the Masons Arms and Sanctuary Housing and key partners regarding the issues taking place on their premises as a result of the poor state of these buildings. Superintendent Kerry Cutler agreed that meetings could be organised with both owners and the Design Out Crime Officer would be requested to attend to provide advice on improvements to make these buildings more secure and so deter crime.
- 49.8. Superintendent Cutler reported that afternoon Police surgeries could be held with the Jubilee Park Residents Association to discuss their concerns. Superintendent Cutler acknowledged that youth engagement would be key to tackle substance abuse in this location in order to reduce the demand for drugs.
- 49.9. Superintendent Cutler added that Operation Woven was established in March 2017 to tackle gang related issues with dedicated resources from both the Response Team and the Ipswich Central SNT, and this was led by Inspector Weaver. This operation has now been re-branded as the Urban Street Gang Unit. Up to October 2017, there had been 226 arrests in relation to drugs/gang crime, but enforcement alone was not stopping these crimes from recurring. Therefore, a long-term solution was required to engage with young people and divert them from getting involved with drugs and gangs.
- 49.10. Local resident: Are any actions currently ongoing or planned concerning Jubilee Park, such as the installation of cameras in light of the high levels of vandalism and abuse of young people in the area?
Some of the funding allocated would be put towards Jubilee Park and Queens Way to improve the public realm in these areas and ward councillors/residents would be asked for their input on this. CCTV was being upgraded to become digitalised, which would provide better picture quality to assist with prosecutions, and cameras would be relocated to provide better coverage.
- 49.11. Local resident: More resource was needed on the streets as children were openly dealing drugs in public on a regular basis. Whilst prevention work needs to be considered, people should still be arrested for these crimes.
The Urban Street Gang Unit were continuing to patrol the streets and make arrests, often in plain clothes, and they were working early, late and night shifts. Additionally, Police were liaising with offenders as they were released from prison. The Police would continue to arrest offenders, but further resources were not available.
- 49.12. Councillor Gibbs: Has there been issues with the sentences given by the Magistrates' Court?
Superintendent Cutler reported that Criminal Behaviour Orders had been imposed whereby an individual could be banned from entering a certain area, but some of the offenders didn't live in Ipswich. Other issues included people re-offending not long after release from prison, and this was being monitored on a regular basis. Superintendent Cutler would continue to raise the issues of sentences with the judges and magistrates in Ipswich.

49.13. Local resident: There has been no feedback to residents on what the Police have been doing behind the scenes to tackle the issues in the area, so some residents feel that nothing has been happening. Often drug deals are done within a few minutes, so it is difficult to report. There needs to be visible policing, but PCSO shifts finish at 6pm; there should be a presence later in the evening, which would provide a community presence and make residents feel safer.

Inspector Cutler advised that there were 25 Response Officers on duty to answer emergency calls across the Southern region. In Central Ipswich, Officers worked to different shift patterns whilst the Police Community Support Officers worked until 6pm. Cuts in public funding had affected the Police similarly to other public services and resources had to be managed in accordance with budgets. The picture of policing had changed drastically in recent years, and the Police were now also having to deal with different types of crime, such as cybercrime and safeguarding of vulnerable members of the community. Even simple drug arrests involved a large amount of work in order to prosecute offenders. However, the Police remained committed to tackling drug-related crime in conjunction with its partners.

49.14. Local resident: Whilst the YMCA provide activities for young people, it also accommodates some troubled young people and rough sleepers, some of whom could be involved in drug use/distribution.

The YMCA provided a place for vulnerable people to live and the Police and YMCA worked together to tackle the issues identified there. Other agencies, such as SCC's Social Care, also worked alongside the YMCA to support individuals placed there and if an employee had concerns about someone living at the YMCA, the Police would be informed.

49.15. Local resident: Has there been an increase in off street or on street prostitution?

Inspector Cutler reported that any information or evidence of potential street prostitution was being closely monitored; although there hadn't been a large volume of calls, 2 individuals had been identified and a multi-agency response was being put in place to provide the appropriate support.

49.16. Local resident: There has been drug activity, antisocial behaviour and low level vandalism occurring on a regular basis around St Mary Le Tower Church by a large group of young people who congregate there after school closing time, despite PCSOs patrolling the area. This has included drug use and discarded needles. Staff have tried to report problems to the Police via the 101 number, but this often resulted in long delays, by which time drug deals have already taken place. There is a safeguarding issue here as young children also use the church facilities.

Inspector Cutler reported that the young people involved may have been displaced from outside McDonalds in the town centre. Needle finds should be reported to the Council's Cleaner Ipswich Hotline (Ipswich 433000) so that the needles could be safely disposed of and the information could be mapped and fed back to the Police to help identify drug-taking hotspots. Police Officers had been briefed on the issues taking place at this location and this issue had been included as part of the policing priorities within the Central Ipswich area. Delays

in response times for the 101 service was a national issue and new technology was awaited to improve the waiting time of this service.

- 49.17. Local resident: Could the 2 Councils provide extra money to the Police to recruit more Police officers?
*Councillor Ross reported that the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been granted authority by the Government to increase the policing element of Council Tax by up to £12 per household to put towards Police resources. Ipswich Borough Council would be investing £500,000 in the improvement of the town's CCTV system.
County Councillor West commented that in order for Suffolk County Council to provide additional funding for the Police, funding would need to be taken away from existing budgets, such as Early Intervention and Youth Offenders Team. If the PCC chose to exercise the full power, that could equate to a budget of £300million across Suffolk.*
- 49.18. Local resident: Councillors have a duty to keep residents safe and secure. This should be made a priority to ensure future investment and growth for Ipswich.
- 49.19. Local resident: Because the area is perceived as a bad place to live in, it is affecting local property values. I like this area and my neighbours; it is people from outside the area who are causing the problems.
- 49.20. Councillor Jones requested that a monthly 'infographic' outlining the work that had taken place by all partners be produced to keep residents informed and improve awareness; this information could be circulated via the Jubilee Park Residents Association.
- 49.21. Representative from local school: What is the timeline for getting schools involved and what happens next?
The Gangs Co-ordinator should be in post by the end of January 2018, in the interim, the IBC-funded advisor would be developing a plan for the Gangs Co-ordinator to take forward once in post. The Gangs Co-ordinator would be responsible for liaising with local residents and ward Councillors and keeping them updated in conjunction with all the agencies involved.
- 49.22. Councillor Holmes: Drug-related issues were also taking place in St Margaret's and Alexandra wards. If residents were not able to get through on the 101 service to report issues, then they could contact their local Councillors and this information would be relayed to the Police through their regular meetings. Residents could also report matters online through the Suffolk Police website (<https://www.suffolk.police.uk>).
- 49.23. Local resident: There are 2 youth projects being run from the South Street Studio off Norwich Road for young people that provide them with a positive creative outlet. Some of these young people could be invited to a future Area Committee meeting to showcase the work they had created relating to the issues discussed today.

49.24. In closing, the following points were made by the key partners present:

- This was a 4-year joint project to address issues that were affecting all of the country, not just Ipswich.
- Communication needed to be improved and there should be a 2-way dialogue so that residents know what was being done to address the issues and how they could get in touch to pass on community intelligence.
- Enforcement would remain a key part of the joint response, but greater focus needed to be placed on reducing the demand for drugs.
- Many of the Police Officers serving in Ipswich have lived in this town and were proud to police this area. The Police were keen to listen to residents, ward Councillors and local businesses and would continue to attend these meetings.
- Residents should be reassured that these issues were being taken seriously by all partners. The Gangs Co-ordinator had been recruited and an Action Plan was being put in place to make a difference, with work to prevent young and vulnerable people from becoming involved in drug-related crime.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

Chair