

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 13 JANUARY 2020 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors T Morris (Chair)
 A Dodwell
 R Berry
 J Silverstone
 V Harvey
 R Goodchild
 S Owen
 K Cursons

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 Inspector C Gurr
 T/PS B Craven
 PCSO E Weedon
 L Farmer (Tactic Manager) (part meeting)

Members of the public: 6

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor F Kharawala (substituted by Councillor K Cursons) and Councillor J D'Este-Hoare.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

Councillor Dodwell declared an interest as a member of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel.

24 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Several members of the public present were representatives of the local Pub Watch and Shop Watch schemes and it was agreed that they could speak under that agenda item.

25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Sub-Committee received the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 October 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 October 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

26 **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN**

The Sub-Committee received and considered a report regarding the creation of a Community Emergency Plan, following the suggestion by Central Bedfordshire Council that all parish councils should do so. The Plan would provide local detail to support Central Bedfordshire Council in the event of an emergency. Statutory responsibility rested with the local authority and activity would be directed through them, which would then ensure insurance cover for volunteers.

Once adopted it was anticipated that an element of testing would take place and that the plan would be periodically reviewed and updated. It was anticipated that the next About Town in March/April would invite members of the public to sign up as volunteers for the Community Emergency Plan.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Finance Committee approval of the draft Community Emergency Plan.

27 **OPERATION DODFORD**

(a) The Sub-Committee received a written report regarding crime and antisocial behaviour with activity undertaken in respect of Operation Dodford and incidents of note for October, November and December 2019. It was noted that there had been an increase in reported robberies, especially with young people against other young people for bicycles and mobile telephones. The Police introduced Operation Sparkler to target these specific crimes.

A question was raised regarding drug use within the town and especially an area of land owned by a local business, where drug users gathered and rubbish had accumulated. The police would investigate and would speak to the site owners to see whether the land could be better protected to avoid potential future incursions. Concerns were also raised regarding drug use and crime in the High Street.

It was noted that shopkeepers within the town appreciated the presence of extra officers through Operation Dodford who are used solely for patrols within the parish and not deployed elsewhere.

RESOLVED to note the report.

(b) The Sub-Committee received and considered a report regarding use of Operation Dodford underspend for the purposes of providing a community-based initiative to address the fear of crime.

A question was raised asking why the underspend had accumulated and what the funding could now be used for. The Town Clerk informed Members that a number of factors had resulted in an underspend of the Community Safety budget, including a change in the way the police charged for their services and the availability of police officers to work overtime. It was hoped that senior police officers attending Council later in the month might be able to provide ideas on how the community safety budget could best be used, given the underspend in the last couple of years. In the meantime, the Sub-Committee recommended any remaining underspend go into earmarked reserves.

A suggested project was a boxing-based activity called 'Box Release' aimed at vulnerable young people within the area. It was hoped that a sporting activity with a qualified coach would help young people channel their anger and aggression in a constructive way whilst learning about and improving their physical health. The course would run for 12 weeks and TACTIC would encourage vulnerable young people to take part. An evaluation would take place after the initial twelve weeks with a report provided back to committee.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) endorse the use of Operation Dodford underspend to provide a community-based initiative in order to help combat the fear of crime within the Parish.**
- (ii) endorse that a maximum of £3,000 of Operation Dodford underspend be used to facilitate the running of a 'Box Release' course to start from Easter and to extend for a maximum of 12 weeks and report back to committee on the outcomes and whether to continue the initiative.**

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Finance Committee that any underspend of the Community Safety revenue budget (4401/410) for 2019-2020 be put into the earmarked reserve for Community Safety (9042/920) until decisions and projects for the funds had been agreed.

28 CCTV & REDEPLOYABLE CAMERAS

The Sub-Committee received a report of recorded CCTV incidents in Leighton Buzzard during October and November 2019.

A question was raised regarding whether the Community Safety budget underspend could be used to provide improved CCTV. It was confirmed that Central Bedfordshire Council had now secured a location for a new control room and at the appropriate time, the Town Council would engage with the police and Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss the potential to purchase additional equipment such as redeployable cameras for example that would remain the property of the Town Council.

RESOLVED to note the report.**29 "WATCH" SCHEMES UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal update in respect of the 'Watch' schemes within the Parish including Pub Watch, Shop Watch and input from a new local group called Leighton Buzzard Safety in Numbers.

Pub Watch

A member of Pub Watch spoke of their concerns regarding a lack of police response to incidents which had occurred over the festive period and which had been reported to police when they occurred.

Inspector Gurr could not comment on individual cases without a crime reference number but would follow up and report back to Pub Watch if crime references were provided.

Shop Watch

A member of Shop Watch spoke stating similar problems and concerns as Pub Watch and were disillusioned by the lack of response from police when crimes were reported. The process of reporting via 101 was lengthy and often deterred shop owners from telephoning and even when CCTV images had been captured some crimes were not investigated. Prolific shoplifters were known to police and shop owners and it was suggested perhaps other services or organisations could work with these people to try to address problems through rehabilitation outreach.

Inspector Gurr acknowledged the difficulties encountered when reporting crime on 101 but stressed that if reports were not received then the statistics would not show the amount of crime occurring.

Leighton Buzzard Safety in Numbers

A group had been set up called Leighton Buzzard Safety in Numbers to encourage people to participate, promote and protect so that the community worked together and all were aware of the perpetrators of crime in Leighton Buzzard.

An article regarding a group called 'My Local Bobby' formed by ex-police officers was mentioned and it was agreed the Chair circulate the information to members of the Sub-Committee for future discussion.

Bedfordshire Police officers acknowledged that police resources were extremely stretched. Between 7am – 10pm the Community Policing Team endeavoured to respond to reported crimes with the resources available. The team consisted of 3 PCSOs and 7 PCs spread over early, late and weekend shifts and covered a geographical area stretching from Leighton-Linslade across to Barton-le-Clay.

After 10pm any police response would come from Response Officers, located either at Dunstable or Luton and once on shift could be anywhere in the area when an urgent response was needed. The police control room had to assess all reported incidents for threat, harm and risk and had to prioritise the assignment of response officers accordingly.

It was suggested that Police officers from other teams should attend these meetings on occasion to give a wider view on how reported crimes were dealt with when the Community Policing Team were off shift. Councillor Owen requested a letter be written to the Police Crime Commissioner stating the incidents highlighted by Pub Watch especially attacks on landlords and request a response to this letter. The Town Clerk confirmed that Superintendent Whittred and Inspector Gurr of Bedfordshire Police had been invited to the next Council meeting on 27 January to discuss policing matters within the town.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Shop Watch submit a list of six problems they currently encounter to take to the Council Meeting on 27 January 2020.**
- (ii) that a letter be written to the Police Crime Commissioner re concerns raised from Pub Watch and crime within the town and a response requested.**
- (iii) To request that the Police provide data regarding response times for reporting crime on 101 system and any planned improvements for telephone/web reporting of incidents, for Council Meeting on 27 January 2020.**

30 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

There was no requirement to exclude the public.

31 **OPERATIONAL POLICING**

There were no confidential operational policing matters to be reported.

The meeting closed at 9.24 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 13 JANUARY 2020.