

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Report on the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership

Report by Richard Webb Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety

Background

1. To fulfil the requirements of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the county council's Safer and Stronger Communities Committee has a duty to review or scrutinise decisions made and actions taken by the 'responsible authorities' which work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder across the county.
2. This report provides an update on the work of the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP), the multi-agency, strategic group including the responsible authorities. The responsible authorities include Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire District Councils, Thames Valley Police, Thames Valley Police Authority, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and the Probation Service.
3. Under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 (and updates), these authorities have a duty to reduce crime, fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, reoffending, racially-motivated crime and environmental crime. The authorities work with a range of stakeholders including the Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team and voluntary sector representatives who are key to shaping and delivering the community safety agenda. Authorities must also mainstream Community Safety within their organisations.
4. Besides the requirement to have a Strategy Group in place to formulate and implement a community safety plan for each local authority area, Community Safety statutory obligations include:
 - the requirement to have an annual **Strategic Assessment**, which includes evaluation of the previous year's work and priority setting based on public consultation
 - **An agreed information sharing protocol**, with a designated Liaison Officer in each Responsible Authority to assist the sharing of datasets, including depersonalised information, shared quarterly
 - **An annual "Face the People" session**

- In two-tier areas, a **county-wide Community Safety Partnership** and a clear escalation process of issues to the county from districts
5. In Oxfordshire the countywide CSP and Strategy Group function is delivered by OSCP.

The role of OSCP

6. Partners have agreed to work together to support the delivery of Community Safety Partnerships' and Oxfordshire 2030 priorities. Five Tactical Business Groups (Young People, Drugs, Alcohol, Domestic Abuse and Integrated Offender Management) report to OSCP, along with the Public Confidence Steering Group and the Oxfordshire MANTRA Challenging Hate Crime Steering Group.
7. Community Safety partners have signed up to an Information Sharing Protocol allowing sharing of data and information to help tackle crime and disorder.
8. The OSCP Officer Group, comprising Community Safety Managers from both statutory and supporting agencies at operational level, reports to OSCP and provides information, updates on new legislation and makes recommendations on policy, finance and performance.

What kind of work has OSCP done in the last six months?

7. The report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee in July last year highlighted some of the previous achievements of the Partnership. Recent activity of the partnership includes-
 - **The Oxfordshire Safe and Confident Communities Project** has developed dramatically in the last six months. The project utilised Experian Mosaic data to design and implemented community and street level engagement plans with the aim of delivering targeted messages about crime and community safety in the most appropriate way for the local area. The work is very cost effective and enhances engagement with local people. The model has since been adopted by the police at Force Level. The autumn campaign increased public confidence levels significantly. An evaluation has now taken place, and the Home Office and National Police Improvement Agency have highlighted the work as good practice.
 - The 2010/11 Strategic Intelligence Assessment took a new form this year, focusing on risks and opportunities in the current climate. Over 100 partners and stakeholders were engaged in the process. It will help to guide priorities in the new three-year rolling Community Safety Strategies for 2011/14 and will help with improved intelligence, crime prevention and enforcement. The Community Safety strategies will be presented to Scrutiny Committee for comment and approval in due course.
 - In September, OSCP had a presentation on the fourth annual report of the Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire. This is an important

independent assessment of challenges in Oxfordshire for public health and social determinates as well as health care. Challenges were updated with an assessment of progress which was generally good. For the first time, alcohol was included in the annual report. There were around 7,000 alcohol-related hospital admissions last year and 11% of crime is alcohol related within Oxfordshire.

- **A review of the Drugs Tactical Business Group (TBG)** resulted in a more focused approach to two main elements of drugs work: Operation Falcon, covering drugs enforcement countywide, and Recreational Drugs. The DAAT launched a new campaign on Youtube targeting colleges and addressing the harms of Ketamine, Mephedrone, Cocaethylene and Cannabis. This campaign was very successful, reaching a wide audience. The Government's new Drugs Strategy, was published at the end of the year, and for the first time, included alcohol. Additional government money going to the criminal justice element of drugs work, amounts to £600m nationally, with £1 billion to the National Treatment Agency. This doubles the current spend. In future, a quarter of the national public health budget will be drugs and alcohol related.
- **The Alcohol TBG carried out its consultation on new draft alcohol strategy** for 2011-14. The consultation included 100 contributors, and the final version was presented and adopted at the January OSCP. The central challenge is to raise awareness of alcohol's impact on the family and community and challenge social acceptability of alcohol. The strategy focuses on three areas: Community safety, health and young people. The post of Alcohol Co-ordinator for Oxfordshire has now ended, and Sarah McHardy has left the county. Sarah had a significant impact on the co-ordination of alcohol work across the county and she had a key role in pulling together the new strategy. Her work has been divided up between partners to ensure progress and delivery of the new strategy, with a co-ordinating role provided by the DAAT. But due to the current restrictions on recruitment and lack of sustainable funding for the post there are no immediate plans to replace Sarah.
- **OSCP approved and adopted the Domestic Abuse TBG's Sexual Abuse Strategy.** Half of sexual abuse falls under domestic abuse and 80% of rape is estimated to be undisclosed. The strategy was produced by an advisory group set up to meet the requirement to produce a Sexual Abuse Strategy under the cross-government Violence against Women action plan. The children's section was adopted by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The Priority for domestic abuse in 2011 is to find sustainable funding, particularly to maintain the service for high-risk victims, which faces a serious risk of closing in the autumn if funding is not found. Partners are now looking at a social enterprise initiative based initially on the award-winning Champions scheme to raise money in the medium term. A process mapping exercise supported by the PCT was positive and confirmed the value of Oxfordshire's integrated domestic abuse services.
- **The Young People TBG** reported on the Validation visit from the Criminal Justice Board. Capacity and capability were rated excellent

and performance adequate due to an increase in custody rates, the size of the cohort and young people's more entrenched problems. The service is looking at reoffending rates and ethnic groups. It was commended for the impact of community safety work on reoffending, prevention and Restorative Justice.

- **The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) TBG** is leading on the preparation of an Oxfordshire Reducing Re-offending Strategy 2011-14. The strategy will identify target groups, their needs, related staffing and programme resources, what success is and how it will be measured. There is concern at the lack of statutory supervision for short-term offenders on release, and that the Police reorganisation may be a significant risk to IOM development. The service is losing 10 posts out of 87. The plan is to keep local delivery units including one for Oxfordshire. Work is on-going on **the Oxfordshire Offender Health Strategy** which sits with the IOM group partners. There is a close link between health improvement and reduction in offending.
- **The Quarter 3 performance information** showed that across Oxfordshire all crime is down. Vale at 47.2% has highest detection rate in Thames Valley and Cherwell, though marginally bottom in its family is still showing a decrease in crime. There have been 3,600 fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour since the Quarter 2 report, especially incidents involving nuisance neighbours. Overall Crime and ASB Performance presents a very encouraging picture

The Review of OSCP

8. Along with other thematic partnerships in Oxfordshire, OSCP has begun to review its role and function in the future. This review has been initiated to ensure the partnership remains effective given the changes to community safety funding, performance requirements and partners.
9. Very early recent discussions in the review, including comments from both OSCP and its Officer Group, have indicated that there is strong support for a countywide, strategic group; that there is a good relationship and effective communication between OSCP and its Officer Group, and that the Officer Group works well to inform and advise the partnership. It was also felt that OSCP gives weight and authority to a partnership approach to community safety.
10. Areas highlighted for review include Governance and Accountability and the relevance of the current Tactical Business Groups. The review will also look to ensure that OSCP is able to deal with the challenges ahead in view of future obligations which are emerging from the Coalition's new legislation and the partnership's changing role in relation to funding.
11. In the meantime, the Officer Group has been tasked with researching good practice in relation to strategic Community Safety Partnerships, and further plans for the review process will develop in due course.
12. A draft review paper will be produced in the late Spring/early Summer for consultation.

Challenges ahead for Community Safety

13. There are some major challenges ahead, and it is vital that Community Safety partners are equipped to meet them. Recent and forthcoming changes and policy initiatives include-

- The National Indicator Set will be replaced with a single comprehensive list of all the data that local government is expected to provide to central government.
- Crime data is now published at street and neighbourhood levels. A standardised format will enable third parties to create crime maps, to help communities engage and interact with their local community safety partners in a meaningful way. As a result two way communication will need to improve.
- Neighbourhoods will be 'the key building block for the Big Society' and reforms will build on neighbourhood policing.
- The abolition of the Youth Justice Board opens up opportunities for councils and LSPs to take on wider roles in this field, with potential budget responsibilities.
- A Government Green Paper on sentencing and rehabilitation is due, following the Independent Commission on youth crime and the ASB report "Time for a Fresh Start" with a focus on prevention, restoration and integration.
- There is a national review of Early Intervention and Prevention to be published in the Spring.
- For the Criminal Justice System, there will be a review of sentencing, a new approach to youth crime and tackling ASB, sentencing reform and a focus on reducing re-offending and the rehabilitation of offenders.
- A high-profile cross-government strategy to end violence against women and girls was launched in December.
- The Government's new Crime Strategy is due out in 2011.
- The Organised Crime Strategy is due out in Spring 2011.
- The new Drug strategy, including alcohol for the first time, is based around three overarching themes: Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply and Building Recovery.
- A review of anti-social behaviour, tools and powers is also due.
- The new Public Health White paper hands responsibility for public health to local authorities. The statutory responsibility for participation in community safety partnerships will remain with the PCT until it ceases to exist in March 2013. It is assumed that this responsibility will

then be taken up by the GP Commissioning Consortium. Public Health has been representing the NHS in the community safety arena in Oxfordshire for some time now. There may be changes in this representation as we go through organisational change, but this isn't clear yet.

- An E-crime strategy will help to tackle crime affecting on-line trading.
- Community Budgets will be piloted in 16 local areas from 2011-12. These will involve pooling of departmental (i.e. central) budgets for families with complex needs. CLG plans for other areas to have the chance to follow suit from 2013-14. CSPs will have an interest in this initiative, given the potential for multi-agency approaches to anti-social behaviour, family breakdown, and reducing reoffending.
- A new National Crime Agency will fight organised crime, protect borders and other national level services including online and computer-enabled crime.

Changes to Policing in Oxfordshire

14. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill was published on 1 December. It has a wide-ranging impact on community safety.

- Police and Crime Commissioners will be elected for each Police Force outside London, with elections every four years from May 2012.
- Councils covered by a police force have to establish a Police and Crime Panel. Thames Valley will have a panel of 18 councillors and up to two co-optees. Panels will have to represent all areas of the force area, and represent the local political make up. The panel must review the draft police and crime plan and report or make recommendations on it, review the annual report, review or scrutinise decisions taken by the commissioner, and publish any reports it makes to the commissioner and send them to the relevant councils.
- Commissioners will be required to produce a police and crime plan, having consulted local people, including the victims of crime, and chief constables will have to have regard to the plan. The Home Secretary can issue guidance on what the plan should contain.
- They will have to publish information to allow local people to assess their performance and that of the chief constable, as well as publishing an annual report which has to be presented to the Police and Crime Panel with the commissioner having to answer questions on it. Chief constables have to obtain the views of local people about crime and disorder in their neighbourhood, including through regular meetings between local police officers and the public.
- Commissioners and community safety partnerships will be able to enter into collaboration agreements covering more than one partnership to produce strategies for reducing crime and disorder, with the

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commissioner having the ability to convene meetings to help formulate community safety partnership strategies and compel partnerships to produce strategies if they are not doing so.

15. A Thames Valley Police re-organisation will see significant changes to the policing structure in Oxfordshire from 1st April 2011. Most directly, the Basic Command Unit (BCU) structure will cease to exist, and the new structure will see delivery at a Local Policing Area (LPA) level or a force-wide level. In Oxfordshire there will be four Local Area Police Commanders working at district level in Oxfordshire:

- Chief Inspector Colin Paine - West Oxfordshire
- Spt Amanda Pearson - Oxford City
- Spt Rob Povey - South and Vale
- Spt. Howard Stone – Cherwell

16. Above the LPA commanders, Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball will have responsibility for Oxfordshire.

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Background papers: Nil

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