

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Thursday, 19 October 2023
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor M. Brown (Chair)

Councillors A. Thwaites (Vice-Chair) H. Cliff
M. Gordon S. Lumley
R. Sharp

In Attendance Inspector Darren Richardson, Leicestershire Police

Officers Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Assistant Director Housing Management
Assistant Director for Customers and Communities
Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Officer (AB)
Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Officer (JP)
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer (CB)

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17	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Atherton, Child, Evans and Webster.</p>
18	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were approved, subject to an amendment which states that Councillor Gordon was advised that she was able to participate in items 14 and 15, as they did not relate to any items under consideration at the meeting.</p>
19	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST No declarations of interest were received.</p>
20	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p>
21	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 The Chairman introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 and invited Members to comment upon the document.</p>
22	<p>CRIME AND DISORDER The Assistant Director for Customer and Communities, Aysha Rahman, introduced the report, and a presentation was given to Members.</p> <p>Members were advised that no cases could be discussed as this could compromise any ongoing investigations.</p> <p>Inspector Darren Richardson was introduced, he explained he had been at Leicestershire Police for 15 years and is a local resident. He gave an update on various areas they have been working on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug and county lines – Inspector Richardson stated that since January this year, they have arrested 30 people for drug offences and have seized a significant amount of cash and drugs. They have given out section 8 warnings and by being proactive he is confident that this area will see improvement. • Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and environmental crime – Inspector Richardson recognised that this area has had a big impact. The constabulary have been looking at different approaches and have worked well with the partnership targeting hotspot areas. A section 35 dispersal order was raised 18 October due to ASB in the town centre with a group of young people, several people were arrested and 1 charged. • Rural Crime – This has previously been a weak point for Leicestershire

Police. The Police and Crime Commissioner is now targeting this area, with a rural team of 2 officers and a vehicle fit for purpose. There have been 1100 engagements in the last year, call handlers have been trained to deal with rural crime, there are now 6 rural WhatsApp groups and 20 volunteers on horseback. This has resulted in a 53% reduction in rural crime, £1M of stolen agricultural equipment has been recovered.

- Hate Crime – This has been made a force priority, although it is not as prevalent in Melton.
- Violent Crime – This has been a partnership priority, working with local secondary schools.
- Nighttime Economy – There needs to be more focus, with more presence of local officers, the installation of CCTV has helped in this area.

The Chair thanked Inspector Richardson for his report. A Member commented that they had witnessed how the police had dealt with drug dealers in their area, they thought they had handled it brilliantly and were very impressed.

In response to a query on how long a caution stays on a young person's record, Members were advised young people do have access to support and they are given every opportunity to reflect on their choices in order to make the correct decisions. However, if they are charged it does stay on their record, if it is a community notice then that is not disclosable.

Following a query on the working hours of PCSO's, the Committee was informed that PCSOs are civilians and are not contracted to work after midnight. Melton Police Station is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, resources can be stretched if there is a major incident however Officers will be brought in from surrounding areas if required.

It was asked if there have been issues with young people using social media to arrange large scale gatherings (e.g., flash mobs), so far this hasn't been an issue in Melton.

In response to a query, Inspector Richardson stated that Leicestershire police have a public order unit with specially trained officers and that protesters such as Just Stop Oil can be dealt with accordingly.

The comment was made that submitting reports online is a lengthy process and could be more user friendly. This was acknowledged however the contents are not managed by Leicestershire Police and they have to comply with national crime recording standards.

It was asked that as the prison population is overcrowded are there plans for prisoners on remand. In response, Inspector Richardson stated that Operation Safeguard is in place so the Police can hold prisoners in the custody cells, space permitting.

The comment was made that reporting via Crimestoppers by phone or internet is

really good and effective. It was acknowledged that the Police do need to build trust, but the different ways of reporting to them does help improve this. Inspector Richardson stated that the Police do try to use every platform to communicate.

It was noted that rural crime has decreased with the introduction of dedicated beat officers. A query was raised as to whether there are any patrols in the evenings. In response, Inspector Richardson stated that there are no patrols that are dedicated to rural areas, however officers that are on duty at night do cover rural areas.

Members wanted to know if there was a measurable increase in retail crime in Melton. In response, Inspector Richardson stated that county lines and drugs do impact on retail crime and there are measures in place to deal with this, along with the radio communications that shops have with each other.

Following a question on how much of stolen equipment is returned and how long it takes, Members were informed that this would depend on whether it is needed for forensic evidence. Inspector Richardson stated that there would be a good reason if equipment is not returned in a timely manner.

The Officers from the Community Safety team spoke about the work they have been doing. Ms Bailey said the closure order had worked well in work they have been doing regarding ASB.

Mr Poole talked about the stop and search operations they had recently undertaken with regard to fly tipping. He was asked if the mobile CCTV had managed to catch any, however to date, there have not been any prosecutions. It was noted that the mobile CCTV is deployed in the hotspot areas. The question was also asked that if a contractor is hired and they fly tip who would be liable, in response it was stated that both parties have a duty of care, so if anyone is hiring a contractor to dispose of waste, they should check that the contractor is registered.

A Member commented that the public need to be made aware, members were advised that a fly tipping campaign was held earlier in the year.

Suggestions were made to improve road safety, such as installing convex mirrors on Dalby Road and Hartopp Road and the use of Radar speed signs that show when someone is speeding.

Details were asked regarding the E-Cins software, it was explained it stands for Empowering Communities and it is used in Case Management and the community support hub. The software links with other services and their systems. Outside of Leicestershire, neighbouring authorities also use it.

Members raised whether Community Triggers can be more widely advised to the public. In response, the Committee was informed that they are on our website and their use has increased over the last couple of years.

The Chair thanked the team for a comprehensive report and gave his thanks to

Darren, Aysha, Amelia, and John for attending the meeting.

23

URGENT BUSINESS

Housing Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022/23

The Director for Housing and Communities, Michelle Howard, introduced the report explaining they wanted to bring it to Members attention as soon as possible as Officers take complaints seriously and want to be open and transparent. The Director stated that very few do go to the ombudsman with 4 complaints being considered with 10 findings, with 5 of those being considered maladministration. However, it was also noted that there were some positive findings contained within the report.

Officers advised that a query had been raised with the Ombudsman, as there were some queries regarding the data leading to some difficulty in reconciling the complaints. There was also a difference in the data between the Ombudsman report and the letter sent to the council.

The query was raised as to whether complaints arise as a result of a tenant's expectations. Officers confirmed there are a range of reasons for complaints. The Committee were informed that a review of the complaints policy had taken place in the last year, and the Council is committed to ensuring that complaints are properly followed up.

In response to a question regarding how much compensation is given, Members were informed that the ombudsman assesses and decides how much is paid depending on the inconvenience and stress caused. In addition, it was noted that the ombudsman can request policy changes if they are required.

The Assistant Director for Housing Management said that the culture of how the Council deals with complaints is taken very seriously. Officers now contact people either by phone or face to face to discuss stage 1 or 2 complaints to help resolve the issues and get a full understanding of tenant's expectations. Complaints are analysed to understand any trends of changes required.

Members queried how the public will be informed about the report and were informed that the report will be published with all the figures to provide context.

Following a question on whether the ombudsman takes into consideration factors such as sickness or the behaviour of the contractors It was stated that as the Council are the landlord, it is the Councils responsibility to keep tenants informed and to effectively manage contractors.

A Member noted that a review of complaints more generally may be a topic of interest for the scrutiny committee in the future.

The meeting closed at: 8.25 pm

