

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD**

**21 July 2020**

**Report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

**This report will provide an update of some of the recent work of the Community Safety Partnership.**

**1.1 Impact of COVID-19 on the work of the Community Safety Partnership**

- 1.1.1 The COVID-19 epidemic has obviously had a major impact on the lives of everyone in the UK and it has also had an impact on crime levels both nationally and within the Borough. Crime data to the end of May 2020 (the latest data available) shows that there was a reduction of 5.3% in victim based crime, compared to the same period last year. As you might expect there has also been reductions in burglary (-6.9%), vehicle crime (-11.5%) and theft (-6.4%).
- 1.1.2 During lockdown there has also been a slight decrease in the number of people reporting domestic abuse. This was to be expected as those experiencing domestic abuse would find it difficult to be able to contact services for help. Those that were able to call to help are reporting more high risk, complex needs and domestic abuse services are expecting that as lockdown is further eased that reports to their services will increase.
- 1.1.3 The Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer has also seen an increase in the reporting of anti-social behaviour and this appears to be linked to more people being at home and increased complaints of noise, neighbour disputes etc. As he has been unable to visit people during this time, resolving the issues have proved to be more challenging but we have been able to use the Mediation services (who are continuing to work, albeit using online technology) and by asking our partners who are still visiting (e.g. the Police/PCSOs) to undertake visits on our behalf. We are hoping that as lockdown eases he can start to visit complainants again (if required and safe to do so) and this will also help to resolve issues.
- 1.1.4 There were also concerns that the COVID-19 epidemic would have an impact on a number of others crimes/issues such as the increase in county lines (the trafficking of drugs into rural areas and smaller towns, away from major cities), the

impact on mental health issues and an increase in online/internet issues (such as grooming).

- 1.1.5 So far the CSP hasn't seen any data around these topics to suggest that they are major issues for our borough, however it is something that we will be monitoring in the coming months and will be linking in with our partners to ensure that we can share information around how to tackle these issues if they do become a concern for us.

## **1.2 Cuckooing campaign**

- 1.2.1 At the beginning of June the Community Safety Partnership was involved in a county wide campaign around 'cuckooing'. Cuckooing is where a drug dealer or group of drug dealers takes over the premises of a vulnerable person either by friendship, force or a combination of both, before turning it into a base to deal drugs from. Cuckooing is not a group of drug users moving in with a fellow user and then all of them using drugs together and causing anti-social behaviour in the vicinity.
- 1.2.2 It is common for gangs to have access to several addresses. They move quickly between vulnerable people's homes for just a few hours, a couple of days or sometimes longer. This helps gangs evade detection.
- 1.2.3 Cuckooing can take on many forms. For example an older person who may live alone and have no family or friends or support network. They feel lonely and look for friendships in any form, becoming targets to those that have picked up on their vulnerability. They believe they have gained a friend allowing the person to stay with them at their home without realising they are being taken advantage of.
- 1.2.4 The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of this issue by both professionals and by members of the public and to help identify potential signs which could indicate that someone is vulnerable to being 'cuckooed'. Signs could include someone who has a lack of a stable home environment, someone who is economically vulnerable or has substance misuse issues.
- 1.2.5 Any concerns regarding cuckooing should be raised and then appropriate investigations and referrals can be made. If Members have concerns about someone being cuckooed they can raise this through the Community Safety Unit on [csp@tmbs.gov.uk](mailto:csp@tmbs.gov.uk).

## **1.3 Police Closure Order in Snodland**

- 1.3.1 A Snodland property associated with persistent drug activity and anti-social behaviour has been issued with a closure order. Kent Police applied for the order at Maidstone Magistrates' Court following concerns raised by residents about an address in Constitution Hill. The closure order, using powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, will last three months – from 19 June until 19 September 2020.

1.3.2 This makes it an offence for anyone to enter the property during this time and penalties for breaching the order include a fine and up to 51 weeks in prison. Local officers have ensured the privately-owned property was vacated by its residents and secured it against any unauthorised entry.

1.3.3 The Police worked on gathering evidence with partner agencies and with information from residents and we are very pleased that the Closure Order was granted which shows to residents that we can take firm actions if anti-social behaviour does continue.

## **1.4 Contextual Safeguarding**

1.4.1 Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

1.4.2 Therefore, children's social care practitioners, child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors.

1.4.3 Within Tonbridge & Malling we will be setting up a District Contextual Safeguarding meeting (DCSM), led by KCC Early Help. This meeting will be held monthly and will look to share data about 'hotspot' locations, identify trends across the district and region and ensure that front line practitioners and strategic managers are well informed about risks in their communities. We hope that by taking this approach we can ensure that young people within our Borough can be safer.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

1.5.1 None.

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 Any funding requirements are provided through the Community Safety Partnership.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 All risk assessments are under taken as appropriate.

## **1.8 Policy Considerations**

Community Safety.

Background papers:

Nil

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