



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CRIME AND DISORDER)**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Crime and Disorder) held on Monday, 17 May 2021 at 5.00 pm.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Crime and Disorder) Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor E Stephens
Councillor G Caple	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor A Cox	Councillor G Hughes

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance:-**

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

#### **1 Apology**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillors M Forey, L Walker and W Jones.

#### **2 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **3 Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair extended a welcome to everyone present including Inspector Michael Rudall and Inspector Benjamin Rowe from South Wales Police.

#### **4 To receive a report from the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services.**

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services presented her report which provided Committee with the opportunity to receive an update on

the current arrangements in place in Rhondda Cynon Taf to keep women and girls safe in public places which is a key priority for the Council.

The Director advised that in addition to the report, Officers of South Wales Police would provide an overview of current National and UK activity to strengthen strategic policy in this area and to present the local data for crimes such as stalking, harassment and violence against women and girls in the South Wales Police area.

Through their Power Point presentation, South Wales Police outlined the key headlines as follows:

- Headline Findings – Covid
- Concern at the Heart of Government
- Stalking - What is it?
- Stalking/Harassment Data
- Stalking & Harassment Offences – Strand Breakdown (Mid Glamorgan)
- National Trends – Stalking & Harassment
- Violence with Injury – Data
- Establishment RCT
- Crime Recording Vs Evidential Test
- CPS Violence against Women and Girls Strategy
- What's Next – More Broadly
- Initiatives
- Summary

In conclusion Committee was advised that South Wales Police are working in partnership with RCT on a number of initiatives to keep residents safe and build on measures already in place.

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services presented a number of key headings within her report all of which support the Police in keeping residents and communities safe such as the extensive CCTV network across RCT and the number of initiatives on the ground such as StoreNet and Pubwatch which involve the collaboration of a number of partners, the licensing trade, local businesses and the hospitality trade.

Committee was advised of the wider community initiatives which have been developed to tackle issues such as alcohol related anti-social behaviour through the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and prevention of alcohol harm to young people.

In conclusion, the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services acknowledged the importance of the whole education approach to promoting healthy relationships within schools to break cycles of behaviours and cultures in families and outlined how such sessions are delivered to schools. The Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) has also been instrumental in delivering activities to young people over the past few years to understand how safe they feel in their communities by means of youth forums and surveys. As a result, street-based youth work teams started being deployed across RCT from October 2020 in response to the needs of young people.

Following the presentations, members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee raised questions and concerns for the attention of the Council Officers and South Wales Police.

Members made comments and sought assurance on some issues that:

- There is enough CCTV in operation and coverage for 24hrs, given that 40% of young people want to see more CCTV cameras in place;
- There is consistency across all schools in respect of how the issues raised are being tackled and perhaps the Central South Consortium should be involved with a review to ensure this is the case;
- Local intelligence is critical yet underreported due to difficulties with the 101 number;
- There is a liaison with the University of South Wales;
- The healthier relationships arrangements should be a whole school cohort

Members noted that there is an extensive network of CCTV coverage across the county borough which has been updated and upgraded over the past 3 years and cameras are located in the most appropriate locations and are intelligence led. Re deployable and additional cameras are used and located to cover 'hot spots' as and when required, all cameras are recording, and the CCTV control room can respond to police requests on the ground. An intelligence led approach is used to ensure the most effective use of the cameras.

With regard to the level of prosecution for social media and malicious comments, South Wales Police confirmed that the level is approximately between 8-10% due to the numerous variants involved with any investigation and so much evidence to gather.

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services advised Committee that the Director of Education & Inclusion Services would provide a response in respect of the consistent message across all schools and this would be followed up after the meeting.

Members raised the following queries:

- Have the numerous reviews referred to during discussions happened prior to or following the tragic murder of Sarah Everard?
- Are areas staffed by South Wales Police based on a population or according to historical incidents?
- With reference to the CCTV case study within the report – is the CCTV system on the bus transportation linked to the main CCTV system?
- Safe Place initiative – which town centres would benefit from this initiative?
- The statement within the report on the 'Alternate part-night lighting provided in residential areas' -Is this statement reliable?
- SWP Northern DCU commendation was a positive achievement, was it reported to any committee of the local authority?
- Malicious communications which affects women on social media-Is there an advice sheet available to women and girls?
- The Healthy Relationship should be a whole school/cohort arrangement
- Mobile Youth Clubs – Why aren't the Hubs being used by YEPs
- Are the 'National Trends' English/Welsh references?

A Member asked if there is a policy in the Police Commissioners Plan relating to a strategy for women and girls to reclaim the streets and public spaces where women and girls in everyday life can exercise and walk their dogs or is it one of

the catch-up policies which caused the public outcry?

It was noted by Committee that a number of initiatives and proposals within the report have been in place over a number of years and are reflected in the Community Safety Delivery Plan. The Plan, which is due for renewal, will aim to include any new requirements or legislation from UK Government or from the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office with regards to the safety of women and girls.

A number of responses to queries were made:

- A whole population approach is undertaken across RCT concerning the safety of women and girls;
- There is no access to CCTV on buses unless it is requested in response to an incident;
- The scope of safe places – this is work in progress and reliant on businesses and organisations being willing to work with the LA to create a network of safe places – this is ongoing work and Members will be kept updated;
- Mobile Buses- the location of these is guided by the young people as not every young person wants to attend a fixed location and mobile buses can be targeted to hot spots as required.

A Member raised concern with regards to the under-reporting culture amongst women and girls which needs to be encouraged otherwise the data could escalate if incidents aren't reported and investigated.

A point was raised with regards to the importance of being able to measure the success and impact of the initiatives and work which has and is being undertaken now and whether prison and other forms of rehabilitation do influence men's behaviour.

South Wales Police concurred that addressing the under reporting of incidents is difficult to overcome and has been a focus particularly in the domestic violence arena for some time. One of the most successful ways to address this issue is to engage with third sector partnership work such as Women's Aid in Pontypridd or the MASH service. 'Live Fear Free' provides 24-hour advice and support for victims and provides a vast amount of information for victims and their families.

Processes to report crimes have been refined and processes have been made easier. Hate crime is being addressed within school through the school's liaison officers which is having an impact. 'DRIVE' is a perpetrator programme and is a key aspect of changing behaviours of perpetrators from rehabilitation centres.

Further questions were raised in respect of the increased use of bail conditions in respect of domestic violence and what the increase looks like?

A Member reported that data from the 2020 YouGov study suggests that 86% of 18-24-year-old women have experienced harassment in public, 96% of those did not report it. What it demonstrates is that there are unsafe places, it is not uncommon to be harassed and women modify their behaviours to deal with the fact that harassment is likely. The Member asked for clarification in respect of the prosecution rates. Is there further work that can be done to assess the effectiveness of the strategies of the education in schools

Further queries were raised in respect of:

- How many Youth Workers do we have now, compared to 5 years/10 years ago;
- What is the budget of YEPS now, 5 years/10 years ago; data which may show that this service area has experienced major cuts and how we resource these services
- What can we do in terms of a more general approach to our citizens to ensure they get the message that the streets are safe, what can we do as a council to reclaim the streets?

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services acknowledged that how the council measures the success of the work that is being and has been undertaken is important and how the council can reclaim the streets for its residents relates to how far the public understands the processes/initiatives in place. The Director suggested that there is a public messaging action for the local authority to consider.

Data requested in respect of the YEPS services would be provided and circulated to all members following the meeting.

The number of bail cases was reported as follows (although it was stressed that the pandemic has influenced the data):

Feb 2021 – 245 bail cases Feb 2020 – 308

Jan 2021 287 bail cases Jan 2020 – 316

It was advised that as we come out of the pandemic bail cases will increase but bail conditions are being looked at and focussed on and two domestic abuse defender managers have been appointed. How the bail conditions are enforced is being considered. In the next 6 months the data will provide further clarity.

In response to a concern raised concerning anti-social behaviour on public transport, South Wales Police encouraged individuals to report incidents around transport hubs and clarified.

The Co-Opted Member suggested that the huge societal issues under discussion should be addressed by the local authority and should start with education. He was pleased to hear that many issues would be discussed with the Director of Education & Inclusion. In the short term he supported any work that this committee and the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee can undertake as a piece of joint working.

A question was raised around the stalking figure for 2021 and whether they are individual cases or accumulative occurrences where the same case has arisen on several occasions? Some of the data will apply to the same crime and there is a mixture captured within the figures.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee summarised the key points raised from the discussions and suggested the Committee convenes in 6 months' time to consider the data following the move out of lockdown with the attendance of the Community Safety Partnership and the Director of Education & Inclusion Services.

County Borough Councillors P Jarman and A Cox wished to have their names recorded that they voted in favour of the lost motion as follows:

'It's clear that this committee is not content that following the scrutiny of all that is in front of us this evening that women and girls are as safe as they could be in RCT. I move that we make representation to the Community Safety Partnership to strengthen initiatives to keep women and girls safe in the community and to bring the report back to us in 6 months'

**RESOLVED:**

1. That further initiatives are investigated that encourage women and young girls to report crimes (in towns and villages);
2. To present the most recent data, following the move out of lockdown, relating to the safety of women and girls in RCT;
3. That a further report in respect of investigating ways to enhance the existing network of CCTV is presented to Committee in 6 months;
4. That liaison is established between RCT Council and the University of South Wales around the issues of safety of women and girls in RCT; and
5. That the Community Safety Partnership in conjunction with South Wales Police and the Council's Director of Education & Inclusion Services are in attendance at the next meeting of the Crime & Disorder Committee (6 months) to further discuss the issues raised (including the importance of a whole education approach).

**This meeting closed at 7.20 pm**

**CLLR M. ADAMS  
CHAIR.**