

Runnymede Borough CouncilCRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE4 February 2021 at 7.30.p.m. via MS Teams

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J Furey (Chairman), T Gracey (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, J Broadhead, S Dennett, R Edis and L Gillham.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors M Brierley and S Mackay.

Councillors J Olorenshaw and N Prescott also attended.

424 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record. As the meeting was being held remotely using MS Teams, the Chairman would sign these minutes when this was physically possible.

It was agreed that an email advising the Committee on the latest position on various issues arising from the last meeting would be circulated to the Committee again.

425 RUNNYMEDE POLICING UPDATE

The Committee received an update on policing in Runnymede from Inspector Pinkerton, the Borough Inspector.

Since Inspector Pinkerton's last report to the Committee in October 2020, there had been a 10.3% increase in calls on police resources as a result of the Covid pandemic. The pandemic had created a new type of demand. The initial tracing and visiting of vulnerable people who the NHS could not contact had been completed. There remained, however, concerns for safety and vulnerable adults and mental health incidents linked to the effects of lockdown on individuals. Often, the police were their first port of call.

The emergence of a new strain of the coronavirus had resulted in more of the police's employees currently off sick and at home self-isolating. Staines custody centre had to be closed for 12 days in January and assistance had to be asked from Hampshire police during one shift at the end of December. The current community tension level across Runnymede continued to be low. There had been no significant protest regarding either the change to Christmas regulations on coronavirus which had reduced the number of days when greater contact was allowed or the introduction of the latest lockdown.

In enforcing the Covid legislation, the police followed the 4Es approach (i.e. engage, explain, encourage, enforce). Where there were clear breaches of the law on Covid, they would enforce and issue fines. The number of Covid incidents attended by the police had climbed steadily since the Autumn to about 50 incidents a month. These were largely quarantine checks and reports of breaches of regulations by neighbours. The police had made over 500 safeguarding visits to people's homes and dealt with 547 Coronavirus incidents or intelligence submissions.

In the last two weeks, Surrey Police had issued one Fixed Penalty Notice (at Kingswood) for a gathering which involved over 30 vehicles and one summons for holding a gathering of 30 people or more (at Cobham). Surrey Police had now issued a total of 572 Fixed Penalty Notices between the start of the lockdown on 23 March 2020 and 5 January 2021 for contravention of lockdown regulations. In Runnymede, (to 18 January 2021), the police had issued 37 Fixed Penalty Notices which was 28% of all such notices issued on the Northern

Policing Division (consisting of the Elmbridge, Runnymede and Spelthorne local authority areas).

There had been a 7.4% decrease in crime in Runnymede which had the fifth highest level of reported crime in Surrey to date this financial year with the nearest equivalent Surrey district being Woking. However, in terms of crime per 1,000 population Runnymede had the highest rate of crime in Surrey just ahead of Spelthorne. There had been significant reductions in theft offences (down 21%) and vehicle crime (down 27%). A shoplifter was the subject of a Criminal Behaviour Order under which if they entered any shops again they would receive a fine and 5 year prison sentence. Local shops had been given details of the Order and the individual concerned and would contact the police if this individual entered a shop.

Violence offences had increased by 15.2% which was not due to fighting in public or similar such incidents. These had actually declined in number (by 8 offences). It was accounted for by offences which had not caused physical injury. This did not mean that they were necessarily minor as the category included causing harassment and distress and threats to harm including those made on social media.

There had also been a rise in keyless theft of high-value vehicles and theft of catalytic converters (due to a substantial price increase of the metals inside these car parts). Numbers of these offences were highest along the border with London Boroughs and in dense residential areas, and public car parks such as hospitals, supermarkets and leisure centres. The police were working with the Crown Estate and St Peter's Hospital to reduce the opportunity for thieves to operate in their car parks.

A Member referred to vehicles continuing to travel at excess speed in Ruxbury Road, Chertsey and asked whether the police could keep an eye on vehicles parked on the highway at the end of St. Ann's Road Chertsey which he reported were preventing emergency vehicles passing. Inspector Pinkerton advised that the police could train members of the public to undertake speed enforcement. It was noted that the police received statistical data on speeding and prioritised hotspots which were above a particular quartile.

The police continued to work with hospitals to reduce the number of unnecessary calls for police attendance. The number of calls to St Peter's Hospital and the Abraham Cowley Unit were down by 23% for the last twelve months and 42% in the last quarter to December. The police did attend when necessary. Recently, a man who had persistently disrupted staff in accident and emergency had been arrested and then sentenced to 12 weeks in prison for causing a nuisance on NHS premises. A member of hospital staff had emailed the police to express their appreciation of the action taken.

The number of drug offences had increased as the result of a passive drugs dog lead operation at Thorpe Park during Fright Nights. The police had been more successful in lockdown in pursuing drug offences through checks made on cars. Successful prosecutions could lead to Proceeds of Crime Act Orders and a third of the money recovered from these Orders went to Surrey Police. A number of High Schools in North Surrey had been known to have dealers loitering outside selling drugs to children. At present there were three County Lines (illegal drugs networks) operating regularly in Runnymede. In all there had been 36 County Lines recorded in North Surrey over the past 12 months. The main drugs sold by County Lines in North Surrey were crack cocaine and heroin.

In the last financial year (2019-20) there were 160 more residential burglaries in Runnymede than in the previous financial year – an increase of 51%. For the financial year to date (4 January 2021) there had been 180 Residential Burglaries in Runnymede compared to 339 in the same period last year. There was a significant reduction in offences during the first lockdown. In April 2020, there were only 5 offences (compared to 23 in the same period last year) which was undoubtedly due to the Coronavirus Regulations of 23 March 2020. Addlestone, Chertsey, and Egham had the highest number of offences

accounting for 59% of all the burglaries in Runnymede. Shed break-ins were twice as frequent as the equivalent period for last year and the increasing targeting of sheds and garages could be attributed to more people being at home. Bicycles and tools had been stolen and a similar pattern was apparent in Elmbridge. Since 1 April 2020, the balance across the Borough was 52% of residential burglaries south of the M3 and 48% north of the M3.

Residential burglary remained a police priority and their dedicated operation against residential burglary had continued throughout the pandemic. They had looked at their data to see where the highest rates of increase in the winter months occurred. In the Stepgates area of Chertsey all of the residents had been sent letters providing specific information on the vulnerabilities specifically exploited by burglars during the winter months. Along with this the police had provided targeted patrol activity by the Neighbourhood and Specialist Teams to deter and detect burglars which changed frequently to avoid burglars anticipating where they would be. Two residential burglary criminal gangs had been identified operating regularly in Runnymede. Proximity to London meant offenders often travelled to North Surrey to commit offences. There were fewer reports from Asian households of high-value family gold being stolen as a result of police action to deter criminals from carrying out this crime.

The police had also been successful in applying for funds from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Fund for crime prevention materials (property marking kits using Liquid DNA) as part of their campaign against residential burglary. A Member enquired whether there was any information on whether the property marking kits had resulted in stolen items being returned to owners. Inspector Pinkerton advised that data on this subject was anonymised and confidential and not available to the police. However, he did advise that the kits were effective. Provided that the resident registered with the necessary database their stolen goods would be traced back to them. However, the liquid DNA did start to fade after about 5 years and should therefore be replaced every 5 years.

There had been a 55% rise in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Spelthorne had had a 62% rise and Elmbridge had had a 76% rise. Nearly three quarters of reports fell into one of two categories. 55% of all anti-social behaviour was in the rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour category. The next largest category was vehicle nuisance at 16%. Currently, 25% of the ASB reported in Runnymede was related to Covid issues. Egham Town had the highest Covid related percentage (31%). Covid related issues accounted for 37% of all reports for rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour.

Half of all ASB in Runnymede occurred in three policing areas - Chertsey Meads and St Ann's, Addlestone Town and Thorpe and Hythe. It was noted that the level of ASB in Thorpe was low. The only issue that had been a recurring problem in Thorpe was the use of drugs cannisters in the Frank Muir Memorial Field and the police would continue to patrol this area periodically. There was no significant ASB overspill from Thorpe Park into Thorpe village.

Multi-agency meetings between Runnymede Borough Council and the police had been held and support given to Primary Victims and Secondary Offenders to build relationships and develop intelligence regarding ASB and criminal behaviour by youths in central Addlestone. Information had been shared regularly and widely through a newly formed task force of police and partners. Covert operations had been launched to increase intelligence. Primary Offenders had been targeted criminally with the innovative use of tools like Child Abduction Warning Notices. Secondary Offenders faced enforcement and tailored use of ASB legislation to both restrict criminal activity and actively safeguard against Child Criminal Exploitation. Arrests had also been used as an opportunity to support and encourage disclosures.

An ASB car staffed with Police Community Support Officers had been introduced to attend incidents quickly and provide advice and reassurance to victims. This provided a consistent

approach to dealing with ASB which prevented chronic issues developing and therefore reduced future demand.

Public Space Protection Orders were in place in central Addlestone and Englefield Green which allowed officers to disperse unruly persons who would be subject to a penalty if they returned. Every month on Facebook and through Crimestoppers "In the Know" portal the police had published details of their activities over the preceding month. This was read by about 8,000 people.

At present there were no Organised Crime Groups based in Runnymede. The current UK serious organised crime threat level remained severe which meant that an attack was highly likely. The police used Prevent (part of the Government's counter terrorism strategy) to try to stop vulnerable people from being radicalised by terrorists or extremists and made regular contact with schools and community and religious groups across Runnymede.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Inspector Pinkerton for providing clear, concise and detailed information on police work in Runnymede.

(The meeting ended at 8.15.p.m.)

Chairman