

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 March 2021
Title:	Annual report of the Rother Community Safety Partnership
Report of:	Head of Service - Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To provide an annual Report on the work of the Safer Rother Partnership to address issues of Anti-Social Behaviour, crime and Community Safety across Rother

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make any recommendations arising from the report to the Chair of the Safer Rother Partnership for consideration;
- 2) the Council's work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety be noted; and
- 3) the Council's and partners' roles in dealing with resource intensive crime and ASB issues connected to COVID restrictions, lockdown and the return of traditional crime types be noted and planned for in 2021/22.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this annual report is to provide information on the work of the Rother Community Safety Partnership [known as the Safer Rother Partnership (SRP)] for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review, scrutinise and make reports or recommendations to the responsible authorities of the SRP in-line with the Council's statutory responsibilities, under sections 19-21 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee when fulfilling this role. The report also includes information about the Council's own responsibilities and actions with regard to community safety and anti-social behaviour (ASB).
2. The Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) responsible authorities are; Rother District Council (RDC), Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Probation Service and Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group.
3. Councillor Brian Drayson is Rother District Council's nominated representative, Chair of the SRP, Co-Chair of the Joint Community Safety Partnership Board with Hastings and the Council's representative on the Board of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Performance of the Safer Rother Partnership 2020/21

4. During 2020/21, the Safer Hastings and Rother Partnership Board's joint priorities were:
 - a) Street and community related anti-social behaviour, which are usually fuelled either by drug and alcohol misuse or youth related ASB e.g. criminal damage or anti-social driving of vehicles. Both cause fear, alarm and distress within the community.

Tackling this behaviour involves the partner agencies working with the whole community. If this behaviour continues, then action is taken using ASB tools and powers with the assistance of the police etc.

All Medium and High Risk victims continue to be supported through the multi-agency Hate ASB Risk Assessment Conference process (HASBRAC) process, which provides an effective process for agencies to work together to reduce the risk to victims and the community.
 - b) Violent Crime (especially Domestic Abuse) – violence, either in public or at home is unacceptable. The Safer Hastings and Rother Partnership has a specific Domestic Abuse Group which delivers a range of initiatives and provides a strategic overview of issues in Rother. There is also a pan East Sussex Violent Crime Group which the Council is represented on.
 - c) Youth Crime and vulnerable young people – by working in partnership to reduce the occurrence and impact of young people involved in crime and ASB and as victims.
 - d) Road Safety - the Safer Hastings and Rother Roads Partnership group delivers a range of campaigns and actions needed to reduce injury and make road use safer.
 - e) Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking – this hidden issue can be found in a variety of circumstances from caring and domestic services, farming, hand car washes to nail bars and take-aways and also the trafficking of UK residents across the country.

The joint Board meets quarterly to identify changes in crime and ASB of strategic significance to both areas, wider trends and review the work delivered against these priorities. The Board is co-chaired by Councillor Brian Drayson and his Hastings Borough Council counterpart (Councillor Paul Barnett).

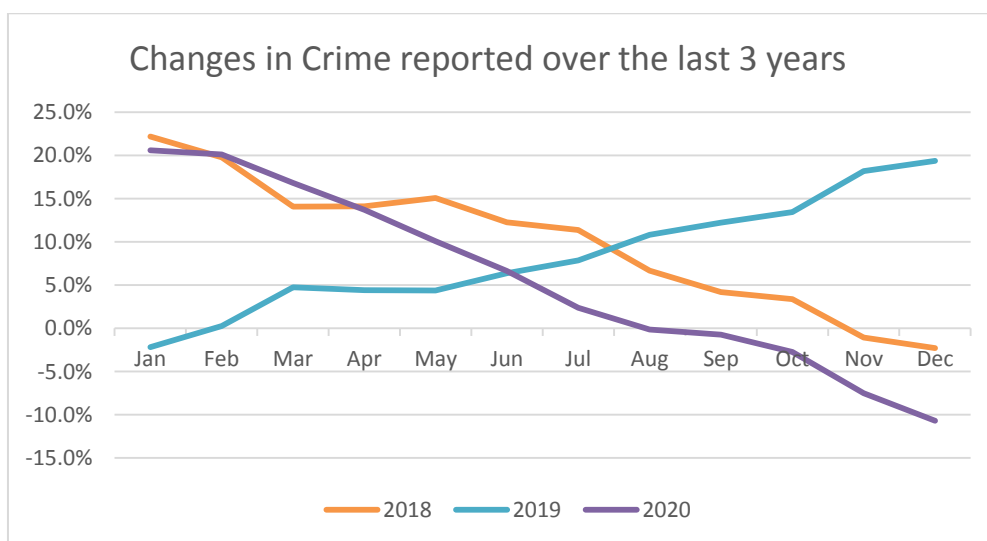
5. The Rother Joint Action Group (an Officer group) meets monthly to oversee the delivery of the local priorities for Rother which in 2020/21 were:
 - a) ASB and Youth Crime (see above).
 - b) Rural Crime, including theft of farm and large plant machinery and cross border crime.
 - c) County Lines - drug supply and the impact on the local community.
 - d) Acquisitive crime within retail, which has been stalled because of the closure of businesses under the COVID restrictions and the associated reductions in this type of crime (29% reduction in business crime and a 36% reduction in theft from a shop).
6. There were 5,376 crimes in Rother reported to Sussex Police during the 12 months to the end of December 2020, which is 644 fewer than in the previous year. There have been delays in receiving data since COVID working practices

came into place, which means we receive data at least three weeks since the end of the month, although we expect this pattern to continue.

TOTAL CRIME ACROSS EAST SUSSEX	% DECREASE
Eastbourne	- 4.5
Hastings	- 11.5
Lewes	- 13.0
Rother	- 10.7
Wealden	- 11.1
East Sussex	- 9.9
Force	- 9.8

Since March 2020, we have seen reductions in reported crime which matches the patterns across most of Sussex. This report last year saw increased crime by 20.6%, but by August 2020 there were nine fewer reported crimes and a 0.2% reduction in crime. Further reductions in crime have been reported monthly, raising to -10.7% by the end of December 2020, 644 fewer reports. The table above shows the figures for Rother are in line with most districts and boroughs and across both East Sussex and Sussex.

Over the last three years we have seen changes to the levels of total crime reported to Sussex Police, which were similar to the countywide picture.



In Rother, the largest % reduction was in December 2020, the reductions started in March 2020 and by August 2020 there were nine fewer crimes compared to the previous year. This is a pattern that reflects the impact of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns and restrictions on crime.

7. Most crime types have seen decreases in the 12 months to the end of December 2020. However, the following have seen increases:

- Criminal Damage to a Dwelling (an increase of 12 to 187).
- Racist Incidents (an increase of 7 to 14).
- Racist Crime (an increase of 14 to 72).
- Domestic Abuse Incidents (an increase of 82 reports).

However, the number of Domestic Abuse Crimes reported started falling in April and by December 2020 there were 939, a reduction of 60. This follows the national and local picture. Police, housing providers and support organisations predict these figures will rise as:

- victims feel safe to leave their homes after the end of lockdown;
- when they perceive they will be able to access services; and
- have a reason to leave the home for a period of time e.g. to take children to school, go to work, attend the GP surgery etc.

This situation is being monitored and planned for by the members of the Safer Hastings and Rother Domestic Abuse Group. The Partnership also carried out a successful Social Media campaign for White Ribbon 2020 to promote reporting, knowledge of services and Clare's Law – the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

- Homophobic Crime (an increase of 7 to 21).
- Drug Possession rises in reports with the highest in June, August September and October 2020. This also follows a pattern seen during the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions where fewer people are about and drug dealing is more noticeable.

8. Reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) across Rother have also reflected the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown. Across East Sussex, all districts and boroughs have seen percentage increases in reports of ASB, with the highest being in Wealden. All agencies working in this field e.g. social housing, Police, Environmental Health, have received more complaints of ASB, particularly in relation to neighbour disputes, which has reflected the increases in the number of people at home whose tolerance reduces as they experience more incidents. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of complex cases reported. Rother had, and continues to have, excellent working relationships with the key agencies and resilient and resourceful staff and structures, e.g. the monthly multi-agency ASB and Hate risk assessment group and case reviews have enabled complex cases to continue to be dealt with effectively. This has not been the case across all Community Safety Partnerships.

- ASB Personal – 228 cases, an increase of 15.2%
- ASB Nuisance – 2,055 cases, an increase of 43%
- ASB Environmental – 111 cases, an increase of 16.8%

9. The Safer Rother Partnership delivered numerous key initiatives in 2020/21 to reduce crime and the impact of crime and ASB:

a) Officers facilitate, organise and participate in a range of multi-agency meetings and structures to push forward the delivery of the partnership priorities:

- Domestic Abuse
- Road Safety
- Cuckooing
- Hate and ASB

- Youth Crime and ASB
- Safeguarding/Case reviews
- Joint Action Group
- Joint Partnership Board

This has enabled Rother agencies to continue to work together when other areas stalled during lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions.

- b) Supported Seaview to work with rough sleepers and members of the street community across Rother. This includes a process for facilitating engagement with housing, rough sleeper projects, substance misuse and other support services. Where there is failure to engage and members of the street community have caused significant ASB, harassment, alarm and distress, the partnership has worked with police and the Council to take action using the ASB tools and powers and the Public Space Protection Order in place. Funding has also been made available to gate alleyways. One of the successful initiatives was carried out in Bexhill Town centre and provided respite to residents, businesses and visitors.
- c) Operation Thornhill, a multi-agency process involving social housing, youth offending services, police and the Council has delivered both preventative interventions to reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in crime and ASB, alongside actions to curb the impact of young people actively committing crime within their communities.
- d) Environmental Services and Licensing staff, the police and other agencies continue to carry out successful operational and education initiatives across Rother and Wealden to address e.g.:
 - Modern Slavery through project Discovery.
 - ASB, neighbour disputes and High and Medium risk cases are managed through the monthly Hate and ASB Case Review meeting.
 - Licensing and ASB issues in both public houses and businesses.
 - Community safety issues arising at beaches across Rother, including illegal immigration, protest groups, sleeping in vehicles, noise nuisance, ASB and specific summer operations in Camber and at Herbrand Walk.
 - Safeguarding of both adults and children through case reviews and multi-agency work and to fulfil the Council's duty and responsibilities.
 - COVID-19 compliance and multi-agency responses to related issues.
- e) Provided funding for inter-generational mediation and support services for victims of ASB and Hate Crime.
- f) The partnership has also funded crime reduction equipment where local areas have been impacted by youth related ASB and criminal damage. This works as a deterrent, captures evidence for the police and partner agencies and reduces fear for those using public spaces.
- g) The partnership assisted the police in dealing with high value thefts in rural areas and the work of the Joint Action Group monitors at monthly meetings the trends or significant issues that require a partnership approach to resolve; this could be deliberate fires, ASB in disused building, high risk ASB cases,

road safety issues or crime series that are impacting on Rother residents and businesses.

Rother priorities for 2021/22

10. 2020/21 has been an unusual year in which partner agencies have coped well with the restrictions, changes in work practices, the additional work required to produce an effective and speedy response and has continued to deliver key projects and initiatives. There have been technical problems with the use of computer systems, virtual meetings, reductions in staff at times due to other priorities, Social Isolating and illness. But the strength of commitment by all partner agencies to address and mitigate crime and ASB and the impact of the behaviour of a few on the communities in Rother has been amazing. Working relationships across agencies have been cemented during the last year and, through hard work, better partnership has developed, better engagement and more effective working practices. This work will continue in 2021.
11. There have been delays to some areas of work, because of the current circumstances, e.g. acquisitive crime within retail, which will be progressed when possible. Work to address Rural Crime and County Lines drug supply and cuckooing is continuing.
12. The Safer Rother Partnership Joint Action Group will consider priorities for 2021/22 at its March meeting and will be using a new analytical product provided by the police to focus resources on those crimes and victims that have the highest risk, or behaviours that have the biggest impact on the community of Rother.
13. The Domestic Abuse Bill currently being considered by the House of Lords will require a review of Council and partner agencies responses and further work is required continue to develop Council duties and practices for safeguarding adults and children in line with legislation and good practice.

Conclusion

14. The Safer Rother Partnership continues to deliver a wide range of interventions to deal with crime and ASB that impact on the quality of life for those living, working and visiting Rother.
15. The strength of the Safer Rother Partnership working relationship and commitment has enabled a Rother response to both “business as usual”, changes related to COVID-19 and responses carried out in a timely manner to new threats during 2020/21. This has not been the case for all Community Safety Partnership areas, and the SRP has received requests to advise on our working arrangements.
16. Local Authorities and partner agencies will have new responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Bill, which may impact on work in 2020/21. In addition, there is a need to focus on the impact and behaviours of serial perpetrators, as well as victims.

17. The new and existing challenges are likely to continue in 2021/22 and prioritisation of resources based on need and risk is essential across all agencies.
18. OSC is recommended:
- (a) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make any recommendations arising from the report to the Chair of the Safer Rother Partnership for consideration;
 - (b) the Council's work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety be noted; and
 - (c) The Council and partners role in dealing with resource intensive crime and ASB issues connected to COVID restrictions, lockdown and the return of traditional crime types is noted and planned for in 2021/22.

Crime and Disorder Implications

19. Under s17 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities, amongst others have a duty to exercise their functions with 'due regard' to the need to prevent crime and disorder in their area.
20. Within this work there are duties and roles for the Council and partners under other legislation, including that for anti-social behaviour, safeguarding adults and children, domestic abuse, licensing modern slavery and reflect the work of many Council departments e.g. Environmental Health and Licensing, Housing, Customer Services, Planning Enforcement.
21. "Crime and disorder scrutiny functions", in relation to a council, means functions that are, or, but for would be, exercisable by the crime and disorder committee of the Council under sections 19, 20 and schedule 8 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and section 21 Local Government Act 2000.
22. The report highlights the work of the Safer Rother Partnership, and Council officers prevent crime and disorder, reduce the impact of antisocial behaviour and crime and mitigate the negative impact on the quality of life of local residents, businesses and visitors.

Environmental Implications

23. It is well documented that crime and anti-social behaviour have a negative impact on the quality of life and residents' perception of the area they live in. There are also environmental implications in connection to e.g. fly tipping, graffiti, misuse of land under planning regulations, drug supply, cultivation or manufacture and paraphernalia, derelict and dangerous buildings.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

Head of Service:	Richard Parker-Harding
Report Contact Officer:	Carol Studley
e-mail address:	Carol.studley@rother.gov.uk
