

# **Report to Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel**

**Date of meeting: 27 October 2009**

**Subject: Crime and Disorder Scrutiny**

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**Committee Secretary: A Hendry**

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## **CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY ROLE – POLICE & JUSTICE ACT 2006**

### Background

1. Crime is consistently one of the top concerns for communities everywhere, and this is clearly reflected in the recent “Place Survey”, where, despite reductions in crime levels overall, our residents remain concerned and fearful about crime in the district.

2. The role of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), known in Epping Forest District as the “Epping Forest District Safer Communities Partnership” (SCP) is to bring together the key partner organisations within the district to deal with residents’ concerns around crime and disorder and to make a real difference to levels of criminality and disorder within the district. The SCP in the district is currently made up as follows (\* denotes a statutory member):

Epping Forest District Council (\*)  
Essex County Council (\*)  
Essex Police Service (\*)  
Essex Police Authority (\*)  
Essex Fire & Rescue Service (\*)  
West Essex Primary Care Trust (\*)  
Voluntary Action Epping Forest  
Essex Probation Service (\*)

3. The SCP is managed via Strategy Panel which meets every quarter, and the Strategy Panel has established a number of key subsidiary groupings charged with the local delivery and monitoring of strategies and policies. The SCP is also a key member of “One Epping Forest”, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), where it has the responsibility for the delivery of one of the key themes of the LSP, “Safer & Stronger Communities”.

4. The SCP has been successful in the delivery of its key aims around crime reduction, managing anti-social behaviour, dealing with prolific offenders. In 2008/09 overall crime levels reduced by 8%, well ahead of the 5% target, although within that figure there remain some areas of concern such as burglary rates and levels of repeat domestic violence. The Partnership set itself a further challenging target for 2009/10 of a further reduction of 5% in overall crime. This target is proving difficult, given the effects of the recession etc. However, whilst at present we are not achieving the 5% overall reduction, crime levels in 2009/10 remain below those for the comparative period in 2008/09.

### The new scrutiny role

5. Scrutiny is a key role for non Executive members, enabling them to challenge the decisions of the Executive and to examine in detail their policies and strategies. However, the SCP effectively sits outside of the Executive as a partnership organisation, and therefore was not subject to the same scrutiny arrangements. Sections 19 and 20 of the Police & Justice

Act 2006 have given powers to local authorities to be able to scrutinise the work of CDRPs/SCPs in the same way as they can the Executive and CDRPs/SCPs are now required to invite this scrutiny at least once a year.

6. Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered how best to arrange this scrutiny role and concluded that it could best be discharged through the existing Safer, Cleaner, Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel. This Panel in turn decided that it would undertake this important role through allocating two special meetings, the first being in October 2009 (this meeting) and the next in February 2010. Furthermore, since this role was a new and untried one, the Panel decided that this first SCP scrutiny meeting should be restricted to topics raised by Members rather than inviting the public at large or other organisations to contribute. The meeting in February is however intended to involve a wider audience and in any event both meetings remain open to the public to attend.

7. The scrutiny role also includes dealing with "Councillor Calls for Action" (CCfA), where they are related to the CDRP function. CCfA is a means whereby a ward councillor, having exhausted all normal avenues in order to deal with an issue, has a means whereby that issue can be put into the scrutiny process. However, the operation of scrutiny within the Council is such that a Member can raise any issue for consideration, so it is likely that CCfA will not be required to any great degree.

#### Matters for potential scrutiny

8. In order to determine possible topics for discussion at this first scrutiny meeting, Members were requested, via the Members' Bulletin, to bring forward suggestions. Three issues arose from that exercise, namely:

- (i) cross border effects of anti-social behaviour and dispersal orders;
- (ii) crime/violence and licensed premises; and
- (iii) the protection of vulnerable individuals/families from targeted anti-social behaviour

9. All three are worthy topics for scrutiny, but time limitations preclude being able to deal with all at one meeting. Therefore, given the on-going issues around item (ii) above, only items (i) and (iii) will be dealt with at this meeting. Item (ii) can be considered again alongside any other topics for inclusion at future SCP scrutiny meetings.

- (i) Cross border effects of anti-social behaviour and dispersal orders

10. This matter was originally raised by Ongar ward members in respect of young people from the Brentwood area being transported into Ongar due to restrictions on their activity in Brentwood itself, and causing problems for local residents. There have subsequently been similar concerns raised involving Waltham Abbey and Nazeing, with young people coming into the district from Broxbourne. The members who raised this issue have been invited to attend the meeting to present their concerns and hear the SCP's response.

- (ii) The protection of vulnerable individuals/families from targeted anti-social behaviour

11. This concern was raised following the recent tragic case involving a mother and her daughter who died following a lengthy period of intimidation at their home and where the authorities have been judged to have failed in their duty to support and protect them. The Member who raised the issue has sought assurance from the SCP that should the need for such support/protection arise in this District, the SCP will be able to provide it. The Member been invited to attend the meeting to present their concerns and hear the SCP's response.

12. In order to ensure that Members receive a detailed response to the issues raised, all appropriate members of the SCP have been invited to attend the scrutiny meeting, along with relevant supporting officers.