

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 26 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and Mason Humberstone

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.03pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members, Councillor Leanne Brady and Jade Woods.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 5 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 CRIME & DISORDER COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed Inspector Will Rogers-Overy from the Stevenage Neighbourhood Police Team, who presented the Committee with Crime and Disorder Data for the past 12 months.

It was noted that the Hertfordshire Constabulary underwent a Police Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection between 2023-2025, during which only 82.6% of reported crime was recorded. In response to the PEEL inspection there had been a renewed effort locally to improve their performance of recording crime, this will in turn result in higher crime figures across all metrics.

Key Crime Statistics for Stevenage (in the last 12 months):

- 7,233 crimes were recorded, representing an 8.7% increase from the previous year.
- Reductions were seen in specific crime categories including:
 - o Shopping-related crime: 8% decrease
 - o Residential burglary: 11.2% decrease
 - o Vehicle crime: 36.9% decrease

- Violence Against the Person (including stalking and harassment) increased by 20%.
- Public Order Offences rose by 38.3%.
- Eight Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) were issued.

A question was raised regarding the age profile of offenders, and the Inspector confirmed that this information would be sought and provided to the Committee at a later date.

Further questions were raised about the high levels of domestic abuse. The increase in reported incidents was considered a positive outcome of efforts to raise awareness and encourage victims to come forward. Police officers had received specialist training to recognise signs of domestic violence. The Head of Community Advice and Support noted that incidents of domestic abuse had not decreased since the COVID-19 lockdown and highlighted the expansion of Safe Spaces from two to 38 locations, all operating at full capacity.

In response to a question regarding accurate reporting, the Committee and public were encouraged to report incidents to facilitate data collection. It was agreed that further clarification would be sought regarding the percentage of unreported crimes.

The Committee was informed about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) levels from January 2024 to March 2025. A total of 1,908 incidents were recorded, representing a 15% decrease compared to the previous year. It was noted that these figures only accounted for formally reported incidents, and public perceptions of ASB could differ.

Peak reporting times for ASB were identified as:

- Monday to Friday: 2 – 6pm
- Saturday: 4 – 11pm
- Sunday: 6 – 9pm

The Herts Connected System was highlighted as an essential community engagement platform that provided crime prevention advice and gathered input from the community. It was noted that 2,648 users, including businesses and schools, were registered.

The Committee raised concerns about nuisance driving in Stevenage, such as loud exhausts, speeding and heavily tinted windows. Residents often expressed frustration over the lack of visible policing. It was explained that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras were used to monitor vehicles, however enforcement required officers to be present at the time of the offenses.

The Committee was presented with the Neighbourhood Policing Team's community engagement initiatives which included:

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Ward Surgeries | - Street Meets |
| - Door to Door Engagements | - Community Involvement Day |
| - Coffee with a Cop | - Crucial Crew |
| - Mini Police | - Sporting Events |

A question was raised regarding the nature of community engagements and the types of interactions involved. It was noted that demographic data was collected to understand which parts of the community were being reached and to identify areas requiring additional engagement.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team conducted 73 school engagements over the past year, covering topics such as ASB, E-Scooter use and road safety.

At this juncture, an explanation of Cuckooing was provided, highlighting indicators such as increased vehicle activity, particularly involving taxis or hire cars, and signs of drug use. Four tagged cuckooing investigations were identified in Stevenage in the past year, and it was suggested that taxi drivers could receive additional training to recognise and report these signs.

Further discussion focused on drug possession and trafficking, with 186 reports of drug possession and 39 reports of drug trafficking over the past year.

The Committee commented on the positive impact of the Police reports shared on social media.

The Committee were updated on the progress from the Build a Better Bedwell Project:

- 53 arrests were made.
- Nine local drug lines were disrupted.
- One organised crime group dismantled.
- £30,000 was seized.
- Seven machetes were seized.
- A total of 41 years in sentencing.
- Two house closures were completed.
- Violent crime in Quarter 3 2023/24 decreased by 47% (alcohol/weapons related).
- A multi-agency delivery group and enhanced partnership working group were established.
- Target hardening was implemented on tower blocks, including door entry and CCTV.

It was noted that funding for the project had been secured through the Safer Streets Fund, enabling additional wardens and external partners to operate outside of standard hours. Clear Hold Build training was provided to staff, equipping them with the skills needed to support the scheme.

The Committee received an overview of the Stevenage Neighbourhood Policing Team's structure, which consisted of an Inspector, three Sergeants (North/Central/South), 14 Constables, and nine PCSOs. The team also included a Community Safety Unit Sergeant, an ASB officer, a Licencing Officer and a Hate Crime Officer.

Inspector Will Rogers-Overy stated that the Police very much appreciated the support from SBC Members and from officers and the joint working they carried out together.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Inspector and Officers for their contributions to the meeting.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR