



**To/
Jane Whitmore, Swansea Council &
Superintendent Eve Davis, South
Wales Police**

**Joint Chairs of Safer Swansea
Community Safety Partnership
BY EMAIL**

cc: Cllrs. Andrea Lewis, Alyson Pugh
& Hayley Gwilliam

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2022-23/14

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Joint Chairs of the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership following the meeting of the Committee on 18 April 2023. It is about the performance of the Safer Swansea Partnership. A formal written response is not required however issues raised and recommendations made will be followed up by the Committee.

Dear Jane / Eve,

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Session – 18 April

As the Council's designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee, we are writing to you following our recent session, looking at the performance of the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership, with our views, reflecting on information presented, questions, and discussion. This follows on from our previous session in February 2022.

We thank you for attending the meeting and appreciated the written report and various papers provided by attendees in support of the discussion, including: a comprehensive Annual Review report highlighting how local agencies and partners have worked well together to make Swansea safer and reduce the fear of crime during 2022; and Draft Partnership priorities for 2023-26. Together with contributions from Swansea Council Cabinet Members and Paul Thomas, the Council's Community Integration Partnership Manager, and from the Police, represented by Chief Superintendent Trudi Meyrick, Superintendent Mark Brier, Chief Inspector James Ratti, and Jessica Williams, Community Safety Manager, the Committee was able to discuss

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and understand the partnership working and activities, progress / achievements against priorities and objectives, challenges over the past year, and focus for the future. It was another engaging and useful Scrutiny session, helping to ensure understanding, and helping to drive improvement.

Through questioning we were able to explore several issues including the following:

Governance

We asked about the current chairing arrangements for the Safer Swansea Partnership Steering Group which provides the leadership and management of the Safer Swansea Partnership (SSP), as we understand there have been changes in personnel. We know from previous discussions that there has been a long-standing Joint Chairing arrangement between the Council and the Police, of the Steering Group, taking key decisions, and monitoring performance against priorities, as well as reporting up to the Public Services Board. It was clarified to the Committee that this arrangement continues, with yourselves now acting as Council and Police leads respectively and chairing the Steering Group together.

We noted there have been organisational changes within the Council over the last year, with the Council's Community Integration Team now sitting within the Social Services Directorate which is headed by Dave Howes. The lead Director previously involved in the SSP was the Director of Resources / Deputy Chief Executive.

Resources

We asked about resources and spending in relation to the operation of the SSP, and whether that could be quantified, to get a better understanding of what partner organisations are putting into it, and value for money. We were told that this is difficult to quantify. Whilst the SSP is a statutory partnership we understood that there was no pooled funding or discrete partnership budget, however both the Council and the Police have resources focussed on the Partnership, working together to deliver a safer Swansea.

As well as officer time, we established that the Council makes a core financial contribution to the SSP, and there is also £120k funding from the Police & Crime Commissioner into Swansea. The SSP also takes advantage of grant funding opportunities for specific work, e.g., Community Cohesion, Contextualised Safeguarding, Anti-social Behaviour, although some of this would cover the Western Bay region, not just Swansea. Most of the spending is on officer salaries who work together daily in relation to SSP activities. From the Police side, we acknowledged developments over the past year with a new Community Safety Manager in post, embedded within the Partnership. We noted that some Economic Recovery Fund monies enabled the SSP to

deliver several 'community engagement days' which has helped to get community feedback on SSP priorities.

'Evening & Night-Time Economy' Partnership Priority

The Committee noted that Swansea has continued to maintain Purple Flag status, which reflects good standards in managing the City Centre at night. In support of SSP evening and night-time economy priorities we asked about the extent to which the SSP involves and engages with Swansea Business Improvement District in efforts to improve safety, and support / assist City Centre businesses and traders, and looked for examples of this partnership working.

It was clear from the response that the BID is a key partner and there are strong links with BID being a regular contributor, along with the City Centre Manager, in helping to tackle city centre issues – day and night-time – with businesses sharing intelligence. This has involved dealing with issues around Public Space Protection Orders, Anti-social Behaviour, and Street Vulnerability. There has been vulnerability training for night-time door staff. We also heard about joint work carried out during the pandemic which had been vital to City Centre safety. Another example given was of the 'Help Point' which is a specialist treatment facility within the City Centre, providing care to vulnerable people who require treatment because of accidents, injuries, or violent attacks - often as a consequence of excessive alcohol consumption, reducing pressure on Police and NHS Emergency Service Resources. We noted that this is staffed mostly by volunteers, and the 'Help Point' is one of the reasons why Swansea maintains its Purple Flag status.

We understand there is a promotional video made by the SSP which showcases the work and contribution of partners to making the City Centre a safe place to live, work and enjoy, highlighting the strength of the partnership. We would welcome a chance to see this – please send to scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk.

Anti-social Behaviour

Being mindful that we currently have an Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Inquiry in progress and avoiding duplication, we raised concerns about the nuisance of off-road bikes / quad bikes around Swansea, not to mention damage to open spaces, impacting on numerous communities where it continues to be a problem. We asked about activities to prevent / deal with this, and what has been achieved. We can see that this is included within SSP priorities for 2023-26, to mitigate the effects and consequences of off-road biking, and reduce the number of incidents. We asked whether there were any new ideas / approaches within the Partnership on this, e.g., use of technology such as drones to track and follow perpetrators.

We understood that the Police have a specialist, albeit small, Unit dealing with this and were reassured that the Force considers it as a key area of Anti-social Behaviour affecting the quality of people's lives that needs to be tackled, both on-road and off-road. It was recognised as a high-profile but challenging issue. We noted that the team is deployed across Swansea where needed, based on reported incidents. 4 key areas of work, that were all important in dealing with this, were mentioned. As well as enforcement, the importance of messaging and education; creating safe spaces for this type of activity (we noted some promising developments on that front), and community involvement in gathering intelligence, were highlighted. One of the problems raised by the Committee was around the lack of controls in the supply and selling of these bikes. Councillors felt this was the real issue and needed to see visible action on the ground such as more confiscations. They commented that despite reporting incidents the situation has not appeared to improve. We were told that there is also close working with Housing as well to identify perpetrators and apply pressure via tenancies, though is a difficult one to crack.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

At the last session in February 2022, we discussed concerns around a worryingly low rate of complaints that are received by the Police in relation to sexual offences, particularly rape, leading to charges being brought against alleged offenders. Whilst recognising there are challenges, we were told last year that South Wales Police was one of seven pilot forces that are changing the way we look to investigate rape, and heard that work is in progress to improve things including: greater focus on perpetrators and perpetrator behaviour, with support to the victim to get the best outcome which may not necessarily be an outcome through the courts; better connectivity with the CPS on the scrutiny of complaints with regular meetings; and a dedicated Rape Investigation Team being set up as it is a complex crime to investigate, very resource-intensive, and requires joined-up working with others.

We asked what has changed over the last 14 months, initiatives, and achievements. We heard that the latest data for Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot BCU showed an improvement, with 12.5% of complaints leading to charges, which is good news. We were told about the new approaches which aim to transform the whole system, including additional resources going into rape investigations, and victim support and safeguarding which aims to get a better understanding of the victim experience to improve things. It was again highlighted, however, that many complaints are subsequently dropped where complainants disengage with the criminal justice process, contributing to the low rate. We were told the decision-making on cases following investigations is reviewed and checked robustly to ensure the right outcomes.

Learning from the Mayhill disturbance

The Committee was keen to gain a detailed understanding of the policing response to the public disorder which took place in May 2021. You told us in February 2022 that an independent / internal Police review was going to be carried out. It was reported to the Committee that the review is yet to be finalised, but South Wales Police will shortly provide to the College of Policing a report summarising its recommendations from the review undertaken together with a tactical plan which details the recommendations to be addressed and the proposed action to be taken. These findings will be compiled primarily into a detailed timeline of events accompanied by an evaluation and summary report. The College of Policing will review and feedback on the contents of the same by way of a report (and copies of any knowledge or learning that may assist South Wales Police) with a view to informing the Force's response to any future incidents of spontaneous urban public disorder. We heard that at this moment in time the above process has not been fully completed and no formal findings have been published into the public domain however this is imminent. When these matters are finalised, they will be circulated with the generic recommendations. It was clarified to us that whilst the report will not be released in full, as it will contain confidential / sensitive data, a public version will be prepared and issued in due course.

The Committee looks forward to the findings and recommendations being published to see how it addresses the issues raised and ensures operational learning from the experience, to prevent this happening anywhere else in Swansea. This is, of course, in addition to the Independent Learning Review that was carried out, with findings published in January 2022 which included recommendations in relation to improvements necessary to partnership arrangements, multi-agency working, and community engagement.

We welcome the fact that a number of offenders involved in the disturbance have now been brought to justice, and thankfully there has been no disorder since this incident.

Substance Misuse

We asked about substance misuse initiatives and in particular the impact that Project ADDER has had, and how funding has been used. We thank the Chief Superintendent for sharing with the Committee following the meeting information which provided an update on Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement & Recovery). We noted that Project ADDER is now at the start of Year 3 of a 4-Year programme, with funding due to end in March 2025.

The information provided shows that during Year 2 (2022/23) an additional £700,000 ADDER funding was received, and was being used to support several developments including:

- Specialist equipment to support enforcement colleagues.
- Specialist stimulant service (12-month pilot)
- Enhanced outreach provision
- Trauma informed practitioner to support the Rapid Access Prescribing Service
- Resources to support service user involvement.

It also confirmed that the Year 3 (2023/24) delivery plan to the Home Office was approved with an allocated budget of £650,000, and that there is continuing focus on:

- Early ADDER successes / learning
- ADDER priorities and risks for 2023–2025
- Implementing Year 3 (2023/24) delivery plan
- Exploring an academic study related to stigma.

At the meeting the Committee noted that the CID continue to investigate a number of unexplained / drug related deaths which are resource intensive, these are being managed in conjunction with Operation Adder to provide additional resilience to disrupt and dismantle those involved in the supply of controlled drugs. The opportunity to capitalise on the advent of Project ADDER and additional Home Office funding across Swansea Bay provides a significant opportunity to support a reduction in Drug and Alcohol use.

It was highlighted that there is much more going on as well as ADDER, with work to support groups like WCADA (Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction), and focus on Harm Reduction, and needle exchange service. You reported that one of the key pieces of work agreed in 2022 was the establishment of a Western Bay Substance Use Truth Commission that will review the system and improve the way people can access services.

Substance Misuse remains a big issue and whilst additional funding helps, resources are struggling to cope with the demand, for example long waiting lists to get into Drug Rehabilitation Programmes. We recognise the challenges faced by the Partnership to try to tackle misuse on the ground and support the most vulnerable people, as well as the effects of drug abuse including anti-social behaviour. You spoke about the Street Vulnerability MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which has supported individuals who have issues with substance use.

Hate Crime

We heard that the SSP remains committed to tackling hate crime in all its forms and will continue to ensure Swansea as a place that stands against intolerance, hatred, and extremism. We discussed the extent and nature of Hate Crime in Swansea. We looked at the data provided within the SSP Annual Review Report, and commented on difficulties in drawing assumptions from the two sets of data showing reported cases and any trends, because of the difference in time period measured. We felt it may have been more useful

to show data from the whole of 2021 compared to the whole of 2022, to show more accurately what has happened over time and any issues of concern.

The commentary in the report stated that race related hate crime continues to be the predominant focus. We noted that there has been a slight rise in Transphobic incidents being reported, though overall numbers are low, however this was due to a real focus of hate-crime teams in their engagement with these communities to encourage the reporting of these incidents and this can be tracked from when the teams put a focus on this area. We would welcome updated hate crime figures, if now available, for 2022-23. These can also be sent to scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk.

We noted various proactive initiatives to tackle hate crime and multi-agency support to victims. The impact of Displaced Persons from Ukraine was also flagged up to the Committee, necessitating additional plans to assist community cohesion and pre-empt any issues. It was reported that a number of hotels are still the provision of temporary accommodation to house displaced persons throughout the area. All appropriate sectors are aware and engagement and patrol strategies in place.

The Committee was also interested in the extent to which cases are not reported and whether this under-reporting was consistent across all categories / protected characteristics. One contributor that the SSP could address is where people do not know how to report in issues or are not aware of the support available. In the case of displaced persons, you provided example of the information that is given out to ensure they fully understand routes to reporting, and are doing everything to encourage people to speak up about whatever the incident. We also noted proactive work to gather intelligence and mitigate tensions, e.g., when far-right / extremist groups rally in the area.

Community Cohesion / Integration

We thank contributors for also providing examples of work to support Community Cohesion and Integration, key themes, and achievements. This included work across Western Bay and Carmarthenshire involving training on the use of the Telegram App, now used by officers for tension monitoring purposes, specifically for far-right group activity across the region. As a result of this training, the Cohesion Team will be establishing a Cohesion Tension Monitoring/Information Sharing Teams Group, in partnership with Swansea University and academics from nearby regions. The Community Cohesion Team have also arranged training around online hate and creating safe spaces online for online group administrators.

There has also been a focus on removing graffiti and stickering with extremist language, as part of a 'Positive Messages Project' with efforts to map / track incidents and identify hot spots where community cohesion resources can be targeted to address issues. We noted that positive counter-narrative messages were placed in areas of heavy footfall across Swansea, designed to be uplifting and create unity and engagement. They were displayed on digital screens in bus stations and shelters, as well as on the side of vehicles.

Other work has brought together faith groups to support community integration, and also on breaking down barriers between people in respect of the LGBTQ community. The Committee welcomed greater visibility of Community Cohesion activity in the work of the Partnership, within annual reporting.

Community Engagement

There were many references in the reports provided to the Committee on 'community engagement' and some about 'consultation'. There was also reference to 'Co-production', mainly within the draft Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and ensuring the voice of the service user is heard and listened to. Considering the work of the SSP as a whole, we asked to what extent Co-production was helping it to influence the SSP and improve community safety, or whether the work of the SSP was mainly about information and raising awareness, when we see reference to 'community engagement'. Essentially, we felt that it was an important question for the SSP to reflect on, whether our approach is one of service users and the public needing the SSP, or whether it is equally a case of the SSP needing service users and the public, to help deliver a safer Swansea.

You told the Committee that Co-production goes beyond consultation and other forms of engagement and we welcomed that the Partnership will be focussing on Co-production over the next 12 months to develop community involvement and working together in problem solving and designing solutions. You recognised that 'engagement' is a rather loose term and can be misinterpreted and accepted the need for the Partnership to be clear what is doing with the public and stakeholders and its purpose in specific instances, along the spectrum of participation, e.g., information giving, consultation and engagement, and Co-production, etc. One area of activity that may be appropriate to co-produce would be the Partnership's Community Engagement Days. In developing Co-production within the Partnership, it should of course learn from examples elsewhere, such as the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission.

New Safer Swansea Community Safety Strategic Priorities

We noted the Community Safety Priorities for 2023 to 2026, under the umbrella of a shared partnership aim and strategic intention of 'Working together to make Swansea a Safer, more Cohesive and Vibrant Place to Live, Work and to Visit'. We heard that the six priorities reflect continued challenges but also the changing community safety landscape, and acknowledge that the nature of crime is changing, and sets out the approach to address hidden harm crimes such as domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and serious organised crime and serious violence. The Committee was told that work is ongoing on individual action plans for each of the priorities, and that progress in the delivery of objectives will be monitored on quarterly basis by the SSP Steering Group.

The Six Priorities for 2023-26:

- Reducing Neighbourhood Crime & Anti-social Behaviour
- Tackling Hate Crime, Community Tensions & Extremism
- Challenging Substance Use
- Reducing Reoffending & Tackling the Drivers of Crime
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Violence reduction: Safeguarding those at risk of Violence & Exploitation

Key outcome linked to all priorities:

Improve public confidence & trust to feel safe

Scrutiny Views

Summarising from our discussion, the Committee would highlight the following in terms of providing 'critical-friend' challenge to the Safer Swansea Partnership in dealing with crime and disorder.

- Community Cohesion – the Committee would welcome greater visibility of Community Cohesion activity in the work of the SSP, within annual reporting or otherwise documented elsewhere.
- Co-production – The SSP should reflect on its Public Participation Strategy and develop its approach to Co-production. At the next session we will be interesting in hearing about progress and examples.

Please also action the following:

- Work & Contribution of Partners – please share with the Committee the promotional video made by the SSP which showcases the work and contribution of partners to making the city centre a safe place to live, work and enjoy, highlighting the strength of the partnership.

- Hate Crime – please provide the Committee with updated hate crime figures, if now available, for 2022-23.
- Learning from Mayhill Disturbance – please publish and circulate as soon as available findings and recommendations from the Internal Police Review. The Committee will then follow up on this, as well as the Independent Learning Review that published findings in January 2022 (which included recommendations in relation to improvements necessary to partnership arrangements, multi-agency working, and community engagement) at our next Crime & Disorder Scrutiny session.

Finally, the Committee supported the new SSP Community Safety Priorities showing the focus for the next three years. The Committee agreed that these priorities reflected the main issues and concerns, and we look forward to hearing about progress in next year's session.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter useful and would welcome any comments, however we do not expect you to provide a formal response. However, we do expect our views to be considered by the Partnership and the Committee will follow up on progress in addressing these issues.

Our next Crime & Disorder Scrutiny session will take place in the new municipal year, probably in April 2024, but arrangements will be communicated in due course. Currently the Committee looks at the performance of the Safer Swansea Partnership on an annual basis, however, will review this as we develop the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 and beyond to ensure arrangements are effective.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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