



**To/  
Jane Whitmore, Swansea Council &  
Superintendent Mark Kavanagh,  
South Wales Police**

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

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

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SPC/2023-24/16

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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 16 April 2024. It is about Crime & Disorder and 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 / Mark,

### **Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Session – 16 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 (SSP), with our views, reflecting on information presented, questions, and discussion. This follows on from our previous session in April 2023.

We thank you for attending the meeting and appreciated the written report and various papers reflecting on the performance of the SSP provided by attendees in support of the discussion, which also addressed the issues arising from last year's session. You provided a comprehensive Safer Swansea Annual Partnership Review 2023 Report; a progress report on Learning from the Mayhill Disturbance, and actions in response to the Independent Learning Review recommendations and the findings of the internal Police Review; examples of the Partnership's approach to Co-production; and an evaluation of Operation Viscaria, a response to incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime within the City Centre.

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**

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Together with contributions from Swansea Council Cabinet Members and Paul Thomas, the Council's Community Integration Partnership Manager, and from South Wales Police, also represented by Chief Superintendent Chris Truscott, Chief Inspector James Ratti, and Jessica Williams, Community Safety Manager, the Committee was able to discuss the partnership working and activities, progress / achievements against priorities and objectives, challenges over the past year, and focus for the future. We appreciate all the work being done. It was another engaging and useful Scrutiny session, helping to ensure understanding, and to drive improvement and development. We noted there have been some changes in personnel in terms of leadership of the SSP but were assured about everybody's commitment to an effective SSP.

The Safer Swansea Partnership Six Priorities:

- 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
- Safeguarding those at risk of Violence & Exploitation

Key outcome linked to all priorities: Improve public confidence & trust to feel safe

We noted that the Crime & Disorder Statistics provided, in relation to demand and occurrences / incidents relevant to SSP priorities, compared 2023 performance data against the 2019/20 financial year, rather than 2022. It was explained to the Committee that for more reliable comparison purposes it was deemed appropriate to compare performance data with the year prior to lockdown as data obtained during the period of COVID will have been unusual.

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

### **Reducing Neighbourhood Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour**

#### Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Inquiry

Our meeting was timely as Cabinet was meeting on 18 April to agree its response to the Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Inquiry report after the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel had completed a detailed inquiry. We appreciate your participation in that Inquiry. We are happy to see that Cabinet has agreed almost all of the recommendations made and you reported that the SSP will be taking action on two key areas:

- undertake a feasibility study to identify a space and explore the benefits to co-location of statutory partners (Council Community Safety and South Wales Police in the first instance)
- review of the current membership and purpose of the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership to ensure we are all clear on the function, the right people are around the table and that the governance arrangements of all the groups that feed into the Community Safety Partnership are fit for purpose, current and relevant.

The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel will be following up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and assessing the impact of its work during the next year.

### 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 to address areas for improvement and ensure operational learning from the experience, to prevent this sort of disorder happening again. As well as, making sure recommendations from the Independent Learning Review (published in January 2022) have improved partnership arrangements, multi-agency working, and community engagement.

You reported that following the publication of the external independent learning review South Wales Police commissioned Operation Kendall Phase 2, to undertake a detailed review of the issues and identify lessons as well as any successes of the response and management of the incident. The purpose was to identify areas of learning or issues that could be addressed with the intention of implementing recommendations that would inform a response to similar incidents that may occur in the future. The findings of this Stage 2 review have received scrutiny and oversight by the College of Policing (the professional body for policing in England and Wales whose role is to support improvement and drive change across the service). In total, 44 actions were identified (covering aspects including: Training, Resource Management, Equipment, Force Control Room, and Command & Control) to be progressed and we were told that nearly all of these have now been completed.

Assurances were provided regarding the deployment of resources should a similar situation arise in the future. We heard that there have been a number of testing incidents and experiences gained, not least from the disorder in Ely, Cardiff in 2023, which demonstrated the progress, learning and improvement that has been made in the planning for, mobilisation of resources, and response to major and critical incidents. You assured the Committee that whilst South Wales Police were now far better prepared and were satisfied with the procedures in place, they were not complacent and were working with communities to manage tensions.

## Crime & Disorder Statistics

The statistics provided showed a significant drop (52%) in the number of burglary offences. The Committee was interested in what was behind this, e.g. whether we are seeing less burglary or are there issues around reporting. You provided us with an overview of the process for dealing with a burglary in progress and burglaries subsequently discovered and reported. We noted that a joint scientific unit had been developed with detectives assigned to both types of incidents, and South Wales Police were ranked third nationally in securing prosecutions, detecting 17.3% of burglary (compared with around 7% in 2020), helped by the forensic capability within the Force. We noted a concerted effort to improve the Police response to dwelling burglaries and a partnership emphasis on crime prevention, with leaflet drops, door-to-door campaigns, with advice to households about home security, etc.

We noted that whilst car crimes had significantly decreased in Swansea (including theft from motor vehicles), a dedicated team had been established to manage an increase in theft of motorcycles, with a range of tactics employed to tackle this.

We noted however, there has been a significant nationwide increase in both shoplifting and on-line crimes.

## Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

The Committee was concerned about implications on local Crime & Disorder from announced cuts to PCSO budgets / workforce, given their work in communities and support to neighbourhood policing. As well as dealing with issues such as Anti-Social Behaviour, we know that PCSOs have played an important role in schools and asked how this will be affected.

You shared our concerns, acknowledging PCSOs (numbering around 130 in the local area) as a valuable resource, and the effect any loss may have on neighbourhood policing. We noted that a detailed analysis of ward data was being undertaken around the impact. You told us that PCSO cuts will be modest and less impactful than originally feared. We heard that it was not envisaged that there would be redundancies however it was acknowledged that any PCSO's leaving their posts would be difficult to replace, but the situation will be under review to ensure good visibility and coverage across Swansea.

The service provided by PCSO's to schools as part of an all Wales Schools Programme was invaluable however funding had now ceased but we were told that staff would continue their roles until the conclusion of the academic year. We noted there were 5 officers across the BCU whose work focused on delivery of the Schools Programme. You told us that the issue was being discussed with other Welsh forces in terms of a way forward, in conjunction with the Partnership, to find some way of continuing this valuable work.

## Relationship Between Neighbourhood Policing, 101, and 999

We discussed concerns around the inter-connectivity between the different forms of reporting and Councillors not being kept in the loop on issues affecting their areas / residents. There was also concern that there may be reporting gaps between each service leading to some issues not being investigated. Councillors were encouraged to raise any concerns about the reporting system directly with you so that these can be addressed, particularly any issues that suggest there has been blockages in the flow of information and intelligence between Councillors, the Control Room, and neighbourhood policing. Some Committee Members reflected positively on their current relationship, communication and engagement with local Police officers, which they felt has improved over the last few years.

The Committee heard about the Force Control Room, and that significant improvements have been made with 92% of calls being answered with the average waiting time of 2.5 minutes. By way of comparison we were told that 3 years ago around 30% of calls were being lost due to capacity issues. An online live chat facility was also available. It is good that there are now different ways in which the public can contact the Police. We felt it was important for the Police to have a good social media presence, which can enable faster reporting and can help engagement with young people, and commended efforts. We noted that up to 2500 calls are received each day, which are then risk assessed / prioritised to determine the appropriate response. The process for dealing with calls, and range of responses was outlined. Even if no Police deployment is the outcome, we noted that there would be contact by the Control Room with neighbourhood policing teams to share any information / intelligence gained from the call, as appropriate, for them to review and take any local action, as necessary.

An invitation was extended to the Committee to visit the control room in Bridgend, where both 101 and 999 calls are handled, which we were happy to take up. A small group of Committee Members were pleased to be able to visit on 1 July, and we thank the Police colleagues for showing us how things work in practice and enabling us to better understand processes.

## Off Road Bikes

You reported that Operation Greyla was launched in March 2023 to tackle the illegal use of off road motorcycles and e-bikes, which has been an issue of community concern. We noted that this operation will continue throughout 2024 and asked whether this would focus on particular areas. You welcomed Councillor intelligence on the hotspots that will guide the use of resources to help deal with this problem.

As part of the partnership approach, we noted that the SSP have been looking at viable options to provide diversional activities to encourage the use of organised off road vehicle sites across Swansea.

## Tackling Hate Crime, Community Tensions & Extremism

There was a discussion about efforts to tackle hate crime and extremism, and develop community cohesion, including:

- activities during Hate Crime Awareness Week
- Islamophobia Awareness Month
- proactive work in relation to tension monitoring, e.g., when far-right / extremist groups rally in the area
- work with the Evolve Youth Service and schools, delivering engagement events to work with young people and families
- Flip the Streets Project (led by Swansea University with the support of Swansea Council) - removing graffiti and stickering with extremist language as part of a 'Positive Messages Project' and placing positive counter-narrative messages in areas of heavy footfall across Swansea, designed to be uplifting and create unity and engagement

The Partnership was commended for its proactive work, which has generated positive feedback. There was, however, some concern at the numbers who have engaged with some of the awareness activities and discussion around the challenge of improving engagement with various communities and groups and growing community cohesion.

Your report stated that between the April 2023 and March 2024 Swansea had 571 hate crimes reported, however the reality was that it was probably larger due to under reporting, and we should focus on providing confidence to people to come forward. We noted that discrimination based on race accounted for over half of the reported hate crimes. We noted that the number of hate crimes reported was an 11% increase, largely due to increased tensions from the Israel / Palestine conflict. We were told that the Partnership was aware of the challenge, and has been working to understand and break down the barriers to reporting, that can include language and trust, and working with communities to improve things. This included a new multi-agency project on St. Helen's Road to look at this and change the mindset. Your report stated that the Community Safety Hate Crime and Cohesion Team is currently in the process of finalising a pilot for a third-party Reporting Scheme to help increase hate crime reporting across Swansea. The aim was to place a trusted person in each corner of the community and train them to assist in the reporting process, e.g. for incidents such as verbal abuse, damage, graffiti, neighbour issues etc. The objective being to provide an approachable and accessible source for members of the community to report hate crimes and/or incidents. **The Committee will be keen to ask about progress on this at the next session.**

We discussed PREVENT and CHANNEL referrals in Swansea, part of the UK Government's Prevent Strategy and multi-agency approach to identify and support individuals at risk of radicalisation and extremism. You reported that there were 17 referrals in Swansea between April 2023 and February 2024. We noted that there was a Partnership focus on children and seeking to increase the number of Prevent Referrals through education and training. We also heard that the Cohesion Team have commissioned Small Steps to deliver a series of training sessions across the region. We noted that Small Steps is at the forefront of using education, engagement, mentoring and grassroots activity to combat the ideology, activity, and influence of the extreme right-wing, and a strong advocate of developing local answers and upskilling local people to be able to challenge the influence and activity of extreme right-wing organisations and their operations. Staff and key partners have benefited from these sessions. Overall, you assured the Committee that the Partnership was well sighted on the issues and had good systems in place to reduce the threat and manage the risk, and get the right interventions in place. It was pleasing to hear that Swansea has been held up as an area of good practice by the Home Office, dealing with what is a very difficult and challenging issue. We need to remain vigilant to radicalisation.

### **Challenging Substance Use**

Substance Misuse remains a big ongoing challenge with resources struggling to cope with the demand, and issues including long waiting lists to get into Drug Rehabilitation Programmes. The Committee heard about ongoing efforts to disrupt the large supply of drugs in the area, and you talked about the Force's Organised Crime Team which you felt was punching above their weight, in view of resources, to disrupt organised County Lines gangs with a high success rate. There was also a good awareness of trends that may affect the city. However, there was some concern amongst the Committee about the severity of the problem in Swansea. You acknowledged the importance of whole system approach, looking at the root causes of drug use, but lamented the sufficiency of current resources and investment. One of the issues is the availability of support at the time people need it, outside of criminal justice system. You acknowledged that when people leave prison it also leads to support going and people can fall off the edge. Nevertheless you told the Committee that the Police would be robust with drug dealers and will support users, who are often themselves the victims, to help them address their drug use, and communities. We heard that substance use issues are identified and challenged early through strong partnership working and information sharing.

**We noted that an independent Drugs Commission, set up by the Western Bay Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse, to explore the high number of drug-related deaths in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot is expected to report later this year with recommendations for action and improvement.** We noted that the Safer Swansea Partnership have participated in the Western Bay Drug Commission consultation / evidence gathering. **We would be grateful if the report of the Drugs Commission could be shared with the Committee when available.**

Last year we discussed substance misuse initiatives and in particular the impact that Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement & Recovery) has had, and how funding has been used. We noted that Project ADDER was now in its final year of a 4-year programme, with funding due to end in March 2025. We noted your concern about this and your efforts to lobby for a continuation of Home Office funding.

**We felt that there is a public perception that nothing is being done about drugs and the Police and/or the wider Partnership should do more to put into the public consciousness the work that is being done, whether through social media or other means, to make what you are doing more visible and promote successes, etc. You undertook to review this. There is also more that can be done to educate young people about the dangers of drug use.**

## **Reducing Reoffending & Tackling the Drivers of Crime**

### Mental Health

We asked about the local response where there is a mental health issue evident, in light of press reporting that the Police no longer engage and expect a health service response. We were curious whether this had anything to do with the reported 17.8% drop in offences recorded. We were told this data related to the S.136 Mental Health Act powers – removal of persons to a place of safety. It was stated that the reduction was part of efforts to exhaust all avenues of support that are more appropriate than the use of policing powers.

You provided an overview regarding the approach and process for prioritising and managing calls relating to mental health. We noted that all calls into the Police Control Room were triaged, and you assured the Committee that any immediate threats to life / critical mental health incidents will always be attended by the Police but may also involve signposting or referral to the right services. The Police had employed mental health professionals in the past but now mental health care would need to be provided by the Health Service. We are aware that there is a dedicated '111 option 2' service in Wales to connect to a mental health profession. **We heard that a new system will also be in place by February 2025 which will connect people to the correct services as early as possible to improve outcomes and an update can**



**be provided to the Committee in due course on the impact.** It was recognised that services for mental health remained a challenge.

There was also a discussion around joint working with agencies to manage mental health links with substance misuse, and access to support.

### **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)**

The statistics showed a 21.6% increase in the number of rape and other serious sexual offences. The Committee has previously expressed concern about the relative low number of convictions. With the increase in the number of offences we asked whether we were seeing a proportionate increase in the number of charges being brought against offenders and prosecutions.

Whilst recognising there are challenges you have told us that work is in progress to improve this, changing the way the Police investigates rape, with new approaches which has included a dedicated Rape Investigation Team being set up, and other additional resources for victim support, increasing access points, encouraging victims to come forward, and following up. Also, a 'One Stop Shop', which involved joint working with third sector organisations, has helped to try to make things easier for victims. You told us that South Wales Police had the highest number of charges being brought against offenders and prosecutions in Wales and the second best performance across the UK. You felt this was a result of proactive efforts to find perpetrators. We noted that there have also been improvements in the detection of sexual offences in the online space. We were told that decision-making on cases following investigations is reviewed and checked robustly to ensure the right outcomes, and whether any lessons that can be learned. Last year we heard there has been an improvement within Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot BCU, with 12.5% of complaints leading to charges. We noted that positive outcome / detection rates for rape were low, around 3% in 2021, but currently figures were around 11%. The figure for serious sexual offences has seen a slight improvement but remain around 9%.

It was recognised that there were still lots to do and this area of work required continual progression and development. The Committee felt it was important to improve the victim experience so that victims have the confidence to come forward and part of that was around the Police and SSP identifying and removing any barriers to that, and have the necessary support through what would be a difficult process. Whilst performance locally may compare well with other areas, there remains a worrying picture for the UK as a whole.

## **Safeguarding those at risk of Violence & Exploitation**

We discussed the ongoing challenges in the High Street area along with the investment in the area. It was noted that a recent news article had reported historic issues associated with the area and was not a reflection of the current situation and ongoing transformation of the area, both in terms of the look of the place and people's experience. We acknowledged that it has been a priority area for the Safer Swansea Partnership to tackle issues around crime, County Lines / drugs and sexual exploitation in that location, working with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector, which has led to improvements, to protect vulnerable women and lift people out of the crime and drugs circle. The City Centre Rangers have been working with the Police to ensure there is a visible presence in the area and we were told that new CCTV was going live there soon to assist with crime detection and prevention.

### **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.

**We would appreciate sight of the report of the Western Bay Drugs Commission as soon as available.**

We expect that our next Crime & Disorder Scrutiny session will take place on 15 April 2025, but will be in touch with you about this in due course. Currently the Committee looks at the performance of the Safer Swansea Partnership on an annual basis, however we will keep this under review to ensure arrangements are effective.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK**

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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