

SAFER COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT PROCESS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report brings to Members' attention recent guidance issued by the Home Office relating to the Crime and Disorder Reduction agenda, partnership working and also the Local Area Agreement process. It outlines the implications for the Council, not just in terms of community safety, but also in terms of partnership and governance issues.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following on from the Police and Justice Act 2006, the Home Office has now produced new regulations in connection with the community safety agenda and new guidance covering a variety of aspects relating to the operation of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. The content of the guidance is such that it has implications for the wider partnership agenda and governance issues around the Local Area Agreement process.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

Current Operational Arrangements and Responsibilities

- 3.1 Details of the current operational arrangements, and membership around the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) are outlined in Appendix 1. In particular, the CDRP is well attended by a variety of organisations, including the Town/Parish Councils, and based on the 2006/2007 figures, is the best performing CDRP in the Eastern Region in terms of achievements against the targets set. The CDRP was responsible locally for the production of the Rochford Crime and Disorder Strategy 2005-2008 and the delivery of targets, which were agreed with the Home Office, in the accompanying action plan. These targets contribute to the County-wide targets as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) covering Essex. Our member representative on the CDRP is Cllr. Gordon, as Executive Board member with community responsibilities.
- 3.2 As part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) structure, the chairman of the local CDRP, who is currently Chief Inspector John Walker, sits on the local LSP Executive Board, to ensure appropriate linkages between the CDRP and the LSP. Information sharing and exchange across the key partners within the local CDRP is currently governed by protocols agreed and established Essex-wide which have been operational for a number of years.

Details of the New Guidance and its implications locally

- 3.3 Under the new guidance, which has now been released, each local CDRP must establish a "strategic partnership group". This could be the

“Responsible Authority Group” (RAG), one of the groups under the current structure, but needn’t be so. It is for the local CDRP to decide on its establishment. However, in the Rochford context, given that we currently share a RAG with Castle Point, it is likely to prove difficult to utilise the RAG as the “strategic partnership group”. Some other group will need to be identified.

3.4 The CDRP will not have to produce a 3 year Crime and Reduction Reduction Strategy any more. Instead, it will be the responsibility of the “strategic partnership group” to produce a strategic assessment and partnership plan. Further guidance is anticipated on the form and content of such an assessment and plan.

3.5 The guidance advises that the assessment will need to include:-

- An analysis of the level and patterns of crime, disorder and substance misuse
- Changes in the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and substance misuse
- Analysis around why the changes have occurred
- Assessment as to effectiveness of last year’s plan and its implementation (once up and running)

In preparing the strategic assessment, community views on matters to be taken into account and prioritised will need to be incorporated.

3.6 Part of the assessment will be against particularly “family” (other District Council area) groupings, as identified by the Home Office. The Assessment will need to be done annually.

3.7 The Plan element will be for a three year period, revised annually and should incorporate the priorities outlined in the strategic assessment. The roles and responsibilities of each partner and the resourcing elements need to be clearly identified in the plan, as will details around the performance management structure and community engagement.

3.8 Given that the Council has been a key driver in the production of the current local Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, that role is likely to remain in terms of the production and review of both the new strategic assessment and partnership plan, although the level of partner commitment and input in terms of the information required, public engagement and producing the various drafts required, will need to increase.

3.9 Despite the role around assessment and plan production now falling to a “strategic partnership group”, it is important that the CDRP remains engaged, involved in the process and contributes to both the production of the documents required and the actions identified.

- 3.10 The new guidance is prescriptive in terms of membership of the “strategic partnership group”. Each of the five responsible authorities must be represented on the group – that is the District Council, the Police, the Police Authority, the Fire Authority and the Primary Care Trust. At least one of the representatives from each of the five responsible authorities must hold a senior position in their organisation. Where there is an elected member with responsibility for community safety on the District Council, that member must be on the group. At least once per year, the group needs to formally review the CDRP to ensure it has the necessary skills and knowledge to meet its statutory requirements. The group also needs to hold at least one public meeting per year.
- 3.11 Whilst it will be for the CDRP to determine the exact structure and reporting lines for the “strategic partnership group”, it is apparent that the group will need commitments from both the member and officer structure at Rochford, with involvement from the Executive Board member for community or another member, with specific responsibility for community safety. In terms of the need for public meetings, the Area Committees could provide useful in this respect.
- 3.12 In two tier areas such as Essex, a county-wide “Strategy Group” will also need to be established, to coordinate the work of the District groups and link into the Local Area Agreement process. The chairman of the District “strategy partnership group” will automatically become a member of the County group. Whilst this is to be determined within the local CDRP, again there are likely to be resource implications for the District Council, if only in terms of officer time.
- 3.13 The new guidance also specifies six “hallmarks” around effective partnerships. These hallmarks are:-
- Empowered and Effective leadership
 - Intelligence-led business processes
 - Effective and responsive delivery structures
 - Engaged Communities
 - Visible and Constructive accountability
 - Appropriate Skills and Knowledge
- 3.14 The Home Office advises that it is introducing these hallmarks to:-
- ensure that all partnerships are functioning to an acceptable level of performance
 - embed an intelligence-led way of doing partnership business

- enable communities to see the difference that effective partnerships can have in their area
- ensure that local communities are involved in shaping local priorities
- support the development of skills and knowledge across all partnerships
- increase partnership accountability in addressing crime and disorder matters

3.15 Although the guidance has been written from a community safety standpoint, it is clear that these hallmarks have a wider application in terms of the partnership agenda and how partnerships operate. The Council agreed partnership guidance over a year ago (min no 235/2006). It is now using that guidance to review the main partnerships in which the Authority is involved on a rolling programme basis. The outcome of those reviews are reported into Audit Committee. In the light of the publication of the "hallmarks", it is recommended that the current partnership Guidance is reviewed to take into account the latest advice. Any changes will be reported through to Audit Committee for approval given their responsibilities in terms of overseeing the effectiveness of partnership working.

3.16 Lastly, the guidance sets out specific requirements in terms of the data sharing responsibilities of each of the main partners, including local Councils, and clearly, the current data sharing protocols will need to be examined in the context of the guidance.

3.17 In summary, therefore, it is clear that as a result of the new legislation, changes will be required in the operation and composition of the structures of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. These in turn will impact on Rochford District Council. Similarly, the future outputs required, in terms of strategic assessments and planning, will have implications for the Council in the way that it contributes as a partner to the Community Safety agenda.

3.18 Our own guidance in terms of partnerships will need to be reviewed, as will the performance management structures across the various key partnerships operating locally. Data sharing arrangements will also need to be reviewed.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

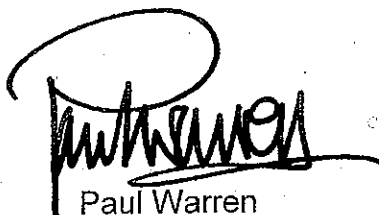
4.1 It is clear that the new guidance and its implementation will place a reputational risk on the workings of the local Crime and Disorder Partnership, and by implication, the District Council, if the changes as set out are not implemented efficiently and effectively. Also, the guidance and its interpretation has wider implications in terms of future CPA and longer term Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspections and needs to be viewed in that light.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The key resource implications will be in terms of Member and officer time and the costs around that as the detail of the regulations and guidance is implemented.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Executive Board RESOLVES
- (1) to note the changes to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership structure, functions and operation as set out in the regulations and guidance, and the wider implications of those changes;
 - (2) to recognise the member and officer commitments and inputs that will be required in terms of the changes outlined;
 - (3) to agree to a review of the Council's Partnership Guidance, with any amendments being reported back into Audit Committee for approval.



Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

None

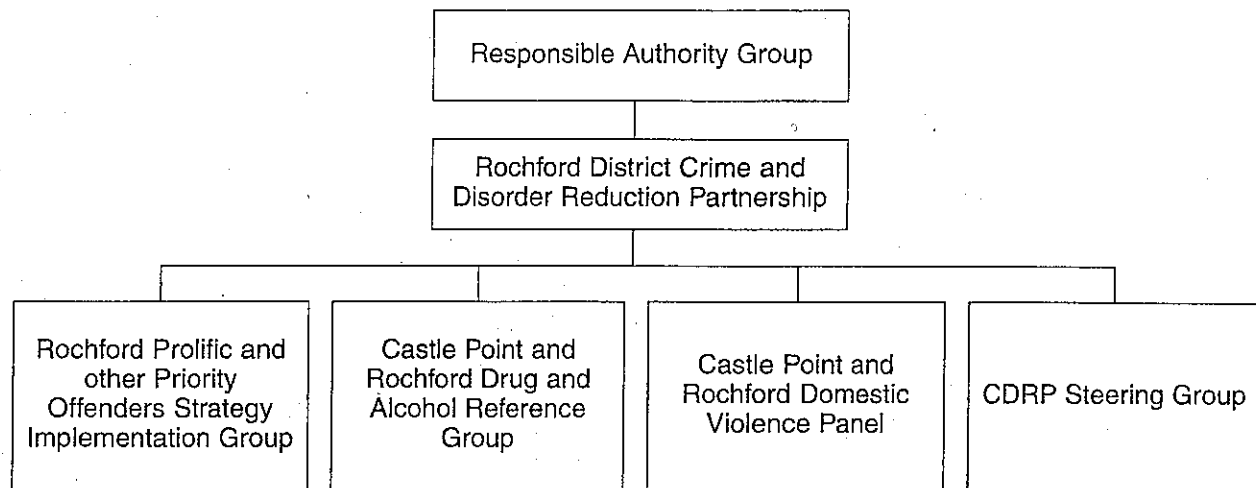
For further information please contact Paul Warren on:-

Tel:- 01702 318199

E-Mail:- paul.warren@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

THE CRIME AND DISORDER STRUCTURE IN ROCHFORD



Other Strategic Partnerships with links to CDRP

The Local Strategic Partnership

The Essex Drug and Alcohol Action Team

The Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership

Responsible Authority Group (RAG) ■ ■ ■

A joint strategic group that covers Rochford District and the Borough of Castle Point. Representation is at executive level from each Responsible Authority. The group is chaired on an alternating basis by the Chief Executive of each local authority and the Rayleigh Police Divisional Commander. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships for both districts work on actions and issues within each area under the overall strategic guidance provided by the RAG, which monitors delivery of the respective Strategies and gives advice and guidance as and when necessary. The RAG also has responsibility for approval of the Home Office spending allocations.

Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) ■ ■ ■

The CDRP is the group that collectively delivers the Strategy, assisted by Home Office funding. It comprises of representatives from each of the statutory agencies, namely:

- Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust
- Essex County Council
- Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- Essex Police
- Essex Police Authority
- National Probation Service – Essex Area
- Rochford District Council

together with members from non-statutory agencies and the voluntary sector. In addition to progressing the published programme of work the CDRP constantly considers new ideas and initiatives that will enhance the Strategy, increase the likelihood of success and bring greater benefits to the community.

CDRP Steering Group ■ ■ ■

This is a sub-group of the CDRP, formed during 2004; it convenes more frequently, often at short notice, to ensure that the CDRP is able to meet not only the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, but also an increasing variety of obligations to central government, particularly in respect of Home Office funding. However, it should be noted that this Steering Group is responsible to the CDRP for all its work. Each of the statutory agencies is represented on the group.



**Rochford Prolific & Other Priority Offenders Strategy
Implementation Group ■ ■ ■**

The government has tasked all CDRPs with progressing a national strategy to reduce crime by targeting prolific offenders. This has necessitated the formation of a group from both the CDRP and criminal justice agencies to ensure that the three strands of the Strategy – Catch and Convict, Prevent and Deter and Rehabilitate and Resettle – are progressed against timescales set by central government.

**Castle Point and Rochford Drug and Alcohol Reference
Group (DARG) ■ ■ ■**

Comprising crime and disorder, health and criminal justice professionals, along with local authority elected Members and representatives from the voluntary sector, this group addresses a wide variety of drugs and alcohol issues on behalf of the CDRP, under the auspices of the Essex Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). The DARG is instrumental in delivering activities to achieve the drug and alcohol related objectives within the Strategy.

Castle Point and Rochford Domestic Violence Panel ■ ■ ■

This group, whose membership includes representatives from the police, social services, health, local authority community safety team and the voluntary sector, has lead responsibility for delivering the programme of work under each CDRP's domestic violence primary objective.

