

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 30 April 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, G Berry, C Evans, M Evans, C Ferris, Y Forsey, P Hourahine and J Hughes

Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Rhys Thomas (Regulatory Services Manager – Environment and Community) and Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 February 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising:

Members commented that they wanted to receive the draft minutes within a week of the meeting. The Scrutiny Adviser confirmed to the Members that this would be done for the future meetings.

3 **Pill PSPO - 2021-2024 (Public Spaces Protection Order) Post Consultation**

Invitees:

- Rhys Thomas (Regulatory Services Manager)
- Gareth Price (Head of Law and Regulation)
- Councillor Ray Truman (Cabinet Member for Licensing and Regulation)
- Sergeant Mervyn Priest (Gwent Police)
- Councillor Tracey Holyoake (Pillgwenlly Ward Councillor – Newport City Council)

The Regulatory Services Manager presented the report for the Public Places Protection Order (PSPO). This report is a conclusion to the consultation that was undertaken as a result of the report presented to the committee 2 months ago. The consultation process then proceeded as agreed to. Over 150 responses were received from this consultation. The overwhelming view from the consultation was that there is widespread support for the PSPO restrictions.

Members asked the following:

- Members asked if the report could be updated to reflect the actual numbers of participants in favour or opposed to the items, rather than just percentages.

The Regulatory Services Manager replied that this could be included into the report.

- Members asked for a summary of these results from the public engagement survey.

The Regulatory Services Manager replied that the report outlines some of the recurring themes raised by the respondents, for example, littering was identified in a number of comments. The macro and micro view is that there is widespread support for this PSPO. The majority of respondents accepted the restriction area, and the majority of respondents were residents of Pill or businesses in Pill.

- Members asked if there a response from the Ward Councillors.

Councillor Holyoake explained that she was given regular updates relating to the PSPO, and that she was pushing for it to go through, due to a large increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB) over time. Previously, the town centre had been targeted by a PSPO which has increased ASB in Pill. It was also important to be conscious of the upcoming warm weather, which is where problems escalate. The Councillor confirmed that she has been involved with conversations constantly, and that the PSPO has the full support of the Ward councillors.

- Members commented that the percentages on the graphs had two decimal places, and that this was perhaps too much.

Sergeant Mervyn Priest, a representative from the Newport West Neighbourhood team in Gwent Police also gave an update. He remarked that the positive feedback from communities had been recorded, and that is clearly very important to the Pill community to have this in place. There have been a number of conversations with the public, businesses, and faith groups in the area. This order is not an opportunity to dispense fixed penalty notices (FPNs); it is about educating the community and making the expectations for acceptable behaviour clear. However, it is also recognised that this does give the Police a tool to deal with people who do not change their behaviour. This area is in desperate need of an order like this, not just for the police but for safety wardens too. The aim is to make life better for the residents of Pill to live in a safer community.

- The Chair commented that she was pleased to see that the remarks in the order about solicitation and curb-crawling have been requested to be removed by the police.

Sergeant Priest explained that asking it to be removed is not saying that it isn't happening. A lot of work is ongoing regarding the safeguarding of sexually exploited people in the neighbourhood. To issue a ticket against someone soliciting appears to go against the good work being done. The work with these exploited people will continue alongside the introduction of this PSPO.

Councillor Holyoake wanted to emphasise that Pill has amazing residents, who have become very tolerant of what they are witnessing, but they shouldn't have to get used to this kind of behaviour. The PSPO has begun to become a joke within the community. Since that time there have been additional police personnel assigned to the area who want to make a difference. It is only by being given a PSPO that these police officers can make a difference. The residents really need this to benefit from some peace in their area. This is having a detrimental impact on the lives of people in the community. The Ward Councillors fully back this PSPO.

- A member commented that it is good that the targeting of those soliciting has been removed, and the Police were thanked for removing that. Comment was then made that there is still a concern that targeting the curb-crawlers will move this problem underground. The Member requested that the police would continue to be sensitive towards the community and the people who have complex problems. The problems in Pill are from decades of containment.

Sergeant Priest responded by wanting to assure the committee. This PSPO is about having another string to the bow for the police to use. The teams have developed strong relationships with partners in this area. People who are committing this ASB need support and education for how they should be behaving.

The Member advised they believe in a progressive approach, and removing the problem at the surface doesn't necessarily solve people's drug habits.

- Members commented that the residents in Pill have overwhelming support for the PSPO. No one should have to go out in fear and intimidation. It is unreasonable for the residents of Pill to have to endure that throughout the day. During community litter picks, there is open drug and alcohol use in the middle of the day which children shouldn't be seeing. If the Council are not providing public toilets, then it is hard to rule out public defecating in the bill, otherwise we don't have a response to this. This will create additional problem which can be solved relatively easily.

Members then remarked that there are best practice examples in other areas, for example in Stokes Croft in Bristol. It would be useful to consider these examples and decide whether we could implement the same thing in Pill.

- Members wanted to acknowledge the partnership work that has gone in with this piece of work. It is important to acknowledge the work that the Police have done in responding and listening to the comments of the committee. We don't want to see this as a way of punishing people who are already struggling. This is more about public safety and improving the environment in which people live. This needs to be a sensible way of allowing people to live safely.
- Members recognised that Ward councillors and residents are 100% behind this. This is a method of trying to stop problematic behaviour. The people living there shouldn't have to put up with things like this. Pill is not a straightforward ward. This is not an isolated bill, this has to be associated with other multi-agency approaches, and that is the guarantee that this problem will not just be pushed elsewhere underground. These problems are always a symptom of something else. As a council we need to be addressing these deeply entrenched issues. This issue needs to be seen as a human issue and not a punishment issue.
- Members commented that in the report there is a response from the Wallich, but this is the only group who has responded formally. However, it was suggested that we would also consult with other groups.

The Regulatory Services Manager explained that the link was sent to all the groups who may have been able to fill this in. They were told about the consultation and provided with the link for the questionnaire. Only the Wallich provided a bespoke response, but other groups could have if they wanted to.

- Members asked what other work is going on to try to address some of the issues in the area, so they aren't just pushed elsewhere.

Sergeant Priest explained that Gwent Police operates problem orientated policing. Within Pill there are a number of topics to focus on, and officers will develop a plan to understand the problem, and then work with partners to solve this. Members of the

team will be given these issues to work on and deal with as a team. It is important to identify areas where partners can assist in solving the problems to work in a joined up way.

- With regards to the issue of sexually exploited people, specifically what work is happening to support these people?

Sergeant Priest explained that partners will attempt to engage with these groups. The team know the exploited adults very well, and speak to them on daily basis. The approach is about building safeguarding pathways. It will also be important to deal with the persons attending the area (i.e. soliciting sex services) to prevent the use of these services. Members then asked if the teams are seeing progress and if this approach is working. Sergeant Priest replied that the teams are definitely making progress in how we work with our partners. We are in a far better place in knowing the people who are being exploited.

- The issue of having public toilets available was raised. The Head of Law and Regulation replied that there is a public toilet strategy in place.
- Members expressed that by the time someone is out on the streets the problem has gone too far, we need to intervene sooner.

Sergeant Priest wanted to emphasise that there are four areas of problem oriented policing in Pill. We need to recognise that these are interlinked as part of organised crime.

- The Ward Councillor for Pill wanted to thank Cllr Truman and the Safer Pill partnership group for all their hard work. This is primarily about education and safeguarding.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

The Committee then moved to vote. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Council considers and adopt this PSPO at its next meeting in June 2021. The Committee also wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet Member:

- The Committee wanted to acknowledge the partnership work that has gone in with this piece of work, including the work that the Police have done in responding and listening to the comments of the committee. The Committee were also pleased to see that the provisions in the order about solicitation and kerb-crawling had been removed.
- Members made comment that the lack of public toilets in the area would make it difficult to enforce the prohibition on urinating and defecating in public. Members ~~the~~ remarked that there are best practice examples in other areas where portable toilets had been provided, for example in Stokes Croft in Bristol. It would be useful to consider these examples and decide whether we could implement the same thing in Pill.
- Members made comment that work should continue to address the underlying issues. This PSPO is a reactive strategy, and we need to look carefully at what the root of this behaviour is. Members also expressed a desire to focus on reducing the drug problem. Members also expressed that by the time someone is out on the streets the problem has gone too far, so we need to intervene sooner.

- Members asked if the report could be updated to reflect the actual numbers of participants in favour or opposed to the items, rather than just percentages.

4 **Draft Annual Forward Work Programme 2021/22**

Attendee:

- Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Draft Annual Forward Work Programme for 2021-22 and outlined the draft topics for the year. Members' attention was drawn to the proposed schedule of meetings for the year.

Members asked the following:

- Members queried why there were two meetings scheduled in September. The Scrutiny Adviser replied that as the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order also needs to come to the Committee in September, a single meeting with three large topics could be too lengthy. As a result, with permission from the Chair, it was agreed that the meeting would be split into two separate meetings.
- Members asked whether there is a reference document indicating which services are covered by which committees. The Scrutiny Adviser replied to say that he would send over the Terms of Reference for each committee.

Agreed:

The Committee **approved** the Annual Forward Work Programme and the schedule of meetings for 2021-22.

The meeting terminated at 10.51 am