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East Sussex Assembly 2017

7 November 2017, International Lawn Tennis Centre, Eastbourne

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The ESSP is recommended to:**

1. **Note the content of the presentations given to the Assembly;**
2. **Note the pledges made by organisations and individuals that attended the Assembly; and**
3. **Note the feedback and suggestions for next year’s Assembly theme.**

**BACKGROUND**

The East Sussex Assembly meets once a year and focuses on a topic that is of interest to Assembly members and wider partners. This year around 45 delegates attended from organisations across the public and voluntary and community sectors to discuss the topic of community confidence. The theme of community confidence was selected from a list of recommendations made by Assembly members at last year’s conference and subsequent discussions at the East Sussex Strategic Partnership meetings throughout the year.

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**S1. INTRODUCTION**

The East Sussex Strategic Partnership’s (ESSP) Pride of Placestrategy includes the priorities to ‘ensure people and communities are safe and secure and to ‘create strong communities and community leadership’.

One of the key tasks set out to deliver this priority is to: ‘Plan a response in case of emergencies, reducing risk and informing the public’

The Assembly considered the particular challenges facing each sector, examples of successful community engagement and how working in partnerships to maintain communities’ confidence is vital.

**S2. ASSEMBLY ITEMS**

**2.1** **Introduction**

Nazeya Hussain, Director of Regeneration & Planning at Eastbourne and Lewes Councils, opened the Assembly by welcoming attendees to the International Tennis Centre and gave a definition of community confidence as being a combination of;

* The amount people **trust** an organisation
* The  **faith** people have that an organisation will deliver
* The level of **expectation** people have of an organisation

Nazeya spoke and about the Councils experience of merging two councils whilst ensuring communities in both areas are:

* **engaged regularly**, not just when the Councils want something
* showing the communities that they are **listened** to and **learned** from
* allowing those **affected** by decisions to **inform** them
* **sharing** both the **achievements** and the **challenges**

(Selena McLachlan, Thought Exchange, 2014)

ESSP Chair Steve Manwaring then welcomed everyone to the Assembly and explained why ‘Community Confidence’ had been chosen as this year’s topic, Steve mentioned that recent national events, including terror attacks in London and Manchester and the fire at Grenfell Tower, have highlighted the challenges that all organisations that deliver services to the public face in anticipating and responding to emergencies and managing and meeting communities’ expectations. From delivering day-to-day services and support to undertaking emergency planning, public facing organisations in all sectors are expected to undertake a wide-range of established duties, anticipate and plan for eventualities, and be visible and maintain 24 hour communications with reducing resources. This was an opportunity to hear about some of the preventative work both during and outside an incident whether this related to terror incidents, increases in organised crime; or environmental emergencies that also test partnership working.

For further information about the East Sussex Strategic Partnership please access the website at <http://www.essp.org.uk/>

**2.2.1 Counter Terrorism Policing - South East Unit**

DI Pete Dommett, for the Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) – South East Unit, followed Steve Manwaring with a presentation on the changes in threats to the UK and the difference between extremists and activists. The presentation outlined the potential threats and how communities can be alert for the planning of extremist attacks. The presentation also covered other activities that may link to extremists particularly in relation to people trafficking.

The national counter terrorism policing network stretches across the UK and sees specialist officers and staff working with MI5 and other partners to find information and evidence to thwart terrorist planning and help bring perpetrators to justice.

The counter terrorism policing network is working on hundreds of live cases at any one time, involving hundreds more individuals. These investigations involve a range of activities, including attack planning, fundraising, online radicalisation and accessing illegal weapons.

The CTP play a big role in stopping people getting drawn into all forms of terrorism and violent extremism. This includes prosecuting, disrupting and deterring extremists and working with communities to safeguard vulnerable people so they are prevented from committing acts of violence.

As well as hunting down terrorists and preventing radicalisation the police service carries out daily activities to help increase the protection and security of the public, public institutions, critical infrastructure, and businesses and places, including those that are potential terrorist targets.

The first part of the presentation outlined what changes there have been to the threats in the UK, where there were well-defined terror networks previously and ‘terror cells’ carrying out attacks instigated from the al-Qaeda leadership. Today the inspiration seems mainly to come from Islamic State and it looks as if ‘terror cells’ are smaller and any networks have more or less disappeared.

Choices of weapons had changed, because a bomb attack requires explosives training and making bombs is very hazardous and complicated work, whereas wielding a knife or a gun is much more basic. Social media has also changed the face of terrorism, new technologies have not only made it possible to produce propaganda with ease, they have also made it far easier to disseminate films and images and messages of hate.

The second part of the presentation considered how we can work in partnership with other organisations to recognise a potential threat and how being aware of what’s going on in communities is very important. It was emphasised that noticing unfamiliar activities can often help in countering terrorism. Frequent damage to the same property and unusual rubbish can suggest activities that the Counter Terrorism Police would be interested in knowing about. Partners can encourage their communities to come forward with information or can be directed to the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321. The CTP are reliant on information from the public to keep themselves, their neighbours and communities safe by looking out for suspicious activity and reporting it.

Attendees were reminded that if they or someone they come into contact with sees unusual or suspicious behaviour or activity, to go with their instincts and act. If they think someone is vulnerable to being radicalised, act. Even if they are unsure what to do in an emergency, act.

Further information about CTP’s go to <http://www.npcc.police.uk/CounterTerrorism/Communitiesdefeatterrorism.aspx>

**2.2.2 Local Policing in Sussex - Organised Crime Groups (OCG)**

David Padwick from Sussex Police gave a presentation on local policing in Sussex, describing the local policing model and the core of local policing being, prevention, response and investigation. Davie pointed out that with shrinking resources it was more important than ever to show community presence to help reassure the public that the police were still able to deal with crime in their area. David Padwick gave a definition of organised crime as being:

* Serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis.
* Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain.
* Organised criminals working together for a particular criminal activity or activities are called an organised crime group.
* Estimated 39,000 people are involved in 5000 groups across the UK.

The presentation showed how organised crime can have a profound impact on an individual, family, business or community, particularly where there is vulnerability in individuals, families and communities. Organised crime is controlled and led by organised crime groups (OCGs) who use intimidation tactics and corruption for unlawful gain. These types of criminals often prey on vulnerable communities and individuals to profit financially or otherwise. They supply and distribute illegal drugs, firearms and counterfeit goods; commit fraud, tax evasion and facilitate human trafficking and child sexual exploitation (CSE). Children and vulnerable adults can be groomed into criminal gangs, sometimes being promised or ‘rewarded’ with gifts for carrying out criminal tasks.

David went on to describe how participation in serious and organised crime is often catalysed or motivated by personal vulnerabilities. These can take many forms including addiction, growing up as part of a dysfunctional or abusive family, becoming disenfranchised with society or living in deprivation. It has been identified a growing body of intelligence that vulnerable young people are being exploited in order to facilitate the running of street level drug dealing within ‘county lines’, particularly from London into the South East.

County lines were defined to describe a situation where an individual, or more frequently a group, establishes and operates a telephone number in an area outside of their normal locality in order to sell drugs directly to users at street level. This generally involves a group from an urban area expanding their operations by crossing one or more police force boundaries to more rural areas, setting up a secure base and using runners to conduct day to day dealing. A ‘county lines’ enterprise almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable persons; this can involve both children and adults who require safeguarding.

Children can be recruited in both home and county forces and can be used to run the operations on the ground. This can include delivering drugs and money between locations (often via trains), staying in safe houses to look after the drugs and money or in some cases selling drugs to local users. Children are believed to be used as they are inexpensive, easily controlled and less likely to be detected by the police.

Boys aged 14-17 are the most often targeted, however girls can also be exploited

David Padwick used a real life example to show the workings of an organised crime group and how a criminal gang targeted the home of a vulnerable family to be used for drug dealing – a process known as “cuckooing” (after the bird that invades nests) and victims are often left with little choice but to cooperate.

A gang member approached a vulnerable person and embarked on a false relationship with the person, providing gadgets for the children in the house. These criminals are selective about who they target, a lot of the time victims are lonely, isolated, frequently drug users themselves and are already known to the police.

“Cuckooing” means the criminals can operate from a property rather than the street, which is out of sight from the police making it an attractive option. They can then use the premises to deal drugs from which is difficult for the police to monitor and they often will only stay for a short period of time. Often the person being cuckooed will be reluctant to raise concerns as this would impact on their availability of free drugs, which is an attractive offer for those struggling with addiction and may prevent them from having to commit other crime in order to find the funds to maintain their habit.

People will also be fearful of going to the police for being suspected of involvement in drug dealing or being identified as a member of the group, which could result in being arrested themselves and this could lead to them losing their tenancy.

Cuckooing itself is not a criminal offence but it is anti-social. Sussex Police are working with partners including the Safer East Sussex Team, District and Borough housing departments, the local drug and alcohol services, housing support services and local day centres to ensure that a sensitive approach to this activity is taken, and acknowledge the impact this has on the person being cuckooed.

Victims can now report this activity to their housing provider/landlord/support worker. Sussex Police will treat any information provided confidentially and their identity will be protected.

The end of the presentation showed how each of the gang members was apprehended and the sentences they received and how the vulnerable person was supported to move on with their life. David then briefly spoke about the

**2.2.3 Environment Agency**

David Bonner from the Environment Agency gave a presentation on the work of the environment agency in maintaining community confidence. The question used for awareness raising before, during and after a flooding incident is ‘Do you know what to do?’

David explained how the Environment Agency provides a free flood warning service for people who are at risk of flooding and that anyone can check their flood risk and sign up to flood warnings online at <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk> or they can call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Advice is given on a tiered scale depending on the threat level of the flood risk. For people living in a flood risk area advice is given on how to prepare in advance:

* Fill in the Environment Agency personal flood plan template to have all the useful information in one place
* Create an emergency waterproof grab-bag of things to take if an incidence occurs
* Check whether insurance covers flood damages
* If at risk, consider whether property level resilience measures would benefit. Speak to the National Flood Forum to get advice about this.
* If your property is next to a watercourse, for example a river, culvert, brook or mill stream, you must: maintain river beds and banks, and not obstruct the water flow.

David explained that although the Environment Agency are aware of issues within communities that people generally know their local environment best and they encourage communities to let them know if there is:

* damage or danger to the natural environment
* pollution to water or land
* poaching or illegal fishing
* dead fish or fish gasping for air
* watercourses blocked by a vehicle or fallen tree causing risk of flooding
* flooding from main rivers or the sea
* incidents at Environment Agency-regulated waste sites
* illegal removals from watercourses
* unusual changes in river flow
* collapsed or badly damaged river or canal banks

David spoke about the importance of environmental volunteers and how volunteers add value to flood risk management activities by building community resilience and preparedness that helps to make communities more self-reliant. Use of volunteers brings benefits to the Environment Agency, its partner organisations, local communities and the volunteers themselves.

**2.3 Table Top Exercise**

Following the break and networking opportunity, attendees took part in a table-top exercise. The exercises involved attendees reading one of three scenarios and then answering questions during the subsequent discussion.

Each table considered one of the following scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** *A social housing tenant, who is a recovering addict, has allowed a friend released from prison on probation to stay with her until he finds a place to live. A few days later she tells her recovery support worker that she had lapsed because of the influence of her friend. Her Housing Officer calls soon following up on a neighbour’s report of an argument. The Housing Officer is not let in but tries again, unsuccessfully, when the rent payment which had been regular is missed. Meanwhile a police officer has arrested the friend for shop-lifting and a search of the house reveals stolen goods and drugs paraphernalia. Following complaints of nuisance noise from neighbours about all day parties, a local Councillor writes to the Housing Association asking what is being done to address it. The Housing officer meets the tenant in the office and is concerned because she has facial bruises but does not disclose anything to the* officer. *The Housing Manager tells the Housing Officer their rent performance and ASB complaints need to improve.*

*The roles: tenant, friend, neighbours, housing officer, housing manager, police officer, support worker, shop owner, councillor, and probation officer.*

This group was asked to lay out all the roles on post-it notes and put those with the most influence at the top and those with the least at the bottom. They were then asked whether this was a good arrangement and what could be done to improve the arrangement. They were then asked to think about what the best outcome would be for the tenant.

**Scenario 2:** *The following roles were distributed to the group: young person, parent, neighbour, business owner, youth worker, police officer, police inspector, youth service manager, councillor*.

*After each of the following statements, each member of the group shows how this situation empowers them: vote with a ‘thumbs up cheer’, a ‘thumbs down boo’, or a silent shrug and have a brief discussion as to why.*

1. *A community survey that shows fear of crime among Older People has risen*
2. *The local youth club session is closing due to funding problems*
3. *Business are complaining about threatening young people gathering in the town centre in the early evening*
4. *Neighbours have written to the Councillor about anti-social behaviour*
5. *Police Officer tells the Inspector the youth club closure seems to be having an impact on perception but not in incidents. Inspector tells the Officer to organise a public meeting and to incite the youth service and councillor.*
6. *Youth Worker meets with the Police Officer and they see that reported crime against young people in on the rise. They find out about funding for areas where this is the case. Young people need to be involved if the bid is successful.*

*The public meeting then goes ahead and the group were invited to discuss:*

* *How would you like to be invited? What would make you come to the meeting? What would you call it?*
* *What would you like to happen at the meeting? What would you not want to happen?*
* *Would you want to be in the audience or have a speaker/panel role?*
* *Where do resources fit into this?*

**Scenario 3:** *The group were each given a card with a role. The roles were: young person, parent, attendance officer, head teacher, school governor, parenting support, and community member and youth worker. They were asked to consider a new initiative to tackle truancy.*

*The group were asked to consider inclusion, scope and influence how their role would relate to the truancy project. Thinking about the following questions:*

*So you think people would be involved in the best way?*

*How does this relate to how their own organisation uses community participation?*

*What are the implications for resources?*

**2.4 Top 10 Tips to maintain or build community confidence.**

After the table top exercise Steve summed up the event and some guidance was circulated on how to manage a social media crisis. Steve then asked the Assembly to come up with a top ten tips for maintaining community confidence. These were:

1. Draw up a definition of engagement alongside those you wish to engage.
2. Draw up a definition of consultation alongside those you wish to consult.
3. Joint consultation exercises and sharing insights with partners.
4. Use the ‘Restorative Approach’ when issues arise to ask questions about what happened, how people felt and what could be done differently in future.
5. If you ask a question, listen to the answer and act on it.
6. Become better at reaching out to other people for views so that you don’t always ask the same people.
7. Give people multiple ways of feeding back, some creative ways can often reveal more insight.
8. Invest in workforce skills to be able to engage in meaningful ways.
9. Celebrate successes - get the message to the communities that you are making a difference.
10. Hear all sides – don’t assume the loudest voice is the most affected.

**S3. FEEDBACK**

At the end of the conference all delegates were provided with an event feedback form. The following results are based on the 32 completed forms returned by attendees at the Assembly.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Did the conference meet your expectations?** | 100% | - |
| **Was the content appropriate?** | 100% | - |

Attendees were asked which part of the Assembly they found most useful. Most participants found the opportunity to network particularly useful, especially the opportunity to learn from other providers, consider partnership working in practice and and gain a list of contacts. Others said they found the crime and terrorism presentations informative as they do not get the opportunity to hear about these things in their areas of work.

Attendees were also asked which part of the conference they found least useful. The majority of respondents found the whole Assembly useful, while others gave the following suggestions for improvement:

* Shorter, less detailed presentations
* More time for networking
* More opportunities to interact with speakers

Overall, the evaluation forms found that attendees regarded the content of the event appropriate, informative, and useful. We will continue to ensure that content is relevant to organisations invited to future events. Attendees’ suggestions for next year’s focus will be considered when planning the 2018 Assembly. The suggestions were:

* Equality and Diversity
* Third Sector Strategy
* Partnership working to provide services and meet public expectations
* The work on the top ten tips
* Disruptive technology – how will the future look
* Maintaining community resilience
* Health and Wellbeing
* Joint working strategies
* Making use of resources

**S4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Note the content of the presentations given to the Assembly;**
2. **Note the Top 10 Tips for maintaining/building community confidence made by organisations that attended the Assembly; and**
3. **Note the feedback and suggestions for next year’s Assembly theme.**

**Guidance for social media crisis management**

Why do we communicate in emergencies?

* To ensure the safety and security of the public
* To provide reassurance
* To manage reputation
* To display visible leadership
* Because it’s a legal requirement for Category 1 and 2 Responders under Civil Contingencies Act 2004
* To warn and inform

**Be prepared**

From negative comments to natural disasters, it’s important to have a proper response plan for your social media channels. Capture this in a social media crisis management document.

**Scenarios**

What are your likely scenarios in East Sussex?

Suggestions:

* Terrorist attacks on a major transport hub
* A leaked report spreads anger about one of your organisation’s policies
* Reports of data breach – customer’s personal data in public domain
* Virulent illness forces relocation of your staff to alternative premises
* Military aircraft crash in East Sussex
* Multiple deaths and injury in coastal waters of East Sussex

Simulate key moments in the scenario – for example around a breaking broadcast media story – where large volumes of posts on social media appear at once, for the exercise participants to triage and respond to.

**Timeline for working through scenarios**

**Monitor the conversations happening online**

* First tweets from the public up in minutes
* Twitter drives the story forward
* Residents have in the past used social media to alert friends and family, or pool knowledge.

**Response**

e.g. Twitter

* Speed essential: train operations staff
* Agree hashtags (check these are included in multi-agency plans)
* Adapt tone of voice
* Links – can link to more info than you can include in a tweet

**Developing your core message**

* **Short**
  + and therefore memorable
* **Clear**
  + avoid jargon
* **Positive**
  + focus on I am doing, not what I can’t
* **Credible**
  + believable and achievable

**“Who’s to blame?”**

A legitimate question, but not one you’ll want to answer today. As stated above, focus on the positive, what you are doing. That question should be addressed by a spokesperson at a later date.

**Goals**

The goals for social media in crisis response are specific to your organisation but could include the following:

* improving knowledge transfer among crisis responders
* improving communication/knowledge transfer with customers and/or victims
* improved crisis response times
* improved decision making
* reduced technology purchase/maintenance costs

**Crisis over: now what?**

A full debrief shortly after the crisis has concluded. Ideally this takes place no longer than one to two days after the event.

A debrief includes:

* Analysis of volume, tone, response times and messaging within the platform
* Discussion of other emergency service use of social media in comparable scenarios
* Suggestions for improved use of technology and capabilities
* Provision of a number of case studies related to the exercise

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