

Report to: Cabinet.

Date: 20 March 2025

Title: Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership – Annual Report (Lewes)

Report of: Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning

Cabinet member: Councillor Christine Robinson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To enable Cabinet to consider the 2024/25 performance of the Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership (E&L CSP).

Decision type: Non-key

Officer recommendation(s): That Cabinet note the achievements and activities of the E&L CSP in 2024/25.

Reasons for recommendations: For Cabinet to consider progress on delivery of the current Community Safety Plan.

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1. Introduction.

- 1.1. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which set out a statutory requirement for specified public service authorities to meet regularly to discuss ways of reducing crime and disorder, address incidences of anti-social behaviour, and minimise re-offending in their local area.
- 1.2. Key members of the Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership (E&L CSP) include Sussex Police; East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority; The Probation Service; Lewes District Council; and East Sussex County Council. Membership can be extended to other key local and voluntary partners as appropriate, and ESCC Drug Commissioning Services, Crimestoppers and the Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner are all regular attendees at meetings. Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils play a key role in supporting the work of the CSP, by acting as the secretariat, co-ordinating agreed strategic plans, and reporting performance. The respective portfolio holders from each Council co-chair Partnership meetings.

- 1.3. Lewes & Eastbourne CSPs have worked on a joint basis since their merger was formally ratified by the Police & Crime Commissioner in 2019, although scope is left within the business priorities to reflect the issues of concern in each Council area, such as road safety in Lewes and supporting the street community in Eastbourne. A budget allocated by the Sussex Police Crime Commissioner remains ring fenced for use across the District.
- 1.4. A strategic planning meeting of the E&L CSP takes place every quarter, whilst the Lewes Joint Action Group (LJAG) meets monthly to identify local issues and risks across the District. Portfolio holders and senior Council officers routinely attend the County level community safety forum (the East Sussex Safer Communities Board), and relevant meetings led by Sussex Police, to address issues such as domestic abuse, organised crime, and county lines, at a strategic level.

2. Annual Plan 2024/25.

- 2.1 CSPs have a statutory duty to set out a plan and monitor progress. The latest plan was approved by the Partnership in July 2024, following a review that considered recent crime and anti-social behaviour trends, residents views, and issues of national concern, such as increased community tensions and the ongoing cost of living crisis, may have on patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour. It also considered the wider strategic priorities of the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Safer East Sussex Team, who support the work of the County Council.
- 2.2 The review recommended that the headline priorities of the plan were unchanged, as they remained well placed to tackle the District's current challenges. As a result, the five priorities addressed by the Partnership in 2024/25 remained as follows:
 - Promoting safe & welcoming spaces to reduce the incidence of crime & ASB.
 - Reducing the incidence of serious violence & knife crime.
 - Addressing the impact of organised crime on local communities.
 - Tackling the incidence of hate crime, domestic & sexual abuse.
 - Lowering levels of anti-social driving on the District's roads.

Activities within the headline priorities were adjusted to meet local concerns, for example through setting out plans to offer more support to local mediation services and new processes to enable local resident to report hate incidents directly into the Council.

- 2.3. CSPs are awarded an annual grant by the PCC, based on a formula that takes account of population density and an analysis of local levels of crime. A review of funding was last carried out by the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner in 2019, resulting in a funding allocation of £34,829. Since then, the level of funding received each financial year has remained unchanged.

3. Crime and incident trends.

- 3.1. In the year to December 2024 a total of 5,922 crimes were reported across Sussex Police's Lewes District, a small increase of 1.7% on the number reported the previous year (5,822). A summary of reported crimes by type is set out in appendix 1. It should be noted that reported crime categories are not mutually exclusive and that some crimes will be marked against more than one category. As such, the individual figures do not tally up to the total.
- 3.2. Beyond this headline figure there were some increases in reported levels of some categories of crime, most notably reports of shoplifting (791 crime reports, ↑90%), fraud (1,386 crime reports, ↑23%), and drug offences (148 crime reports, ↑17%). The impact of the cost of living is one factor likely to be driving increases in levels of shoplifting, but the rise is also a result of specific operations conducted by Sussex Police that have supported retailers and targeted prolific offenders. This focus is supported by the introduction of the *Disc* reporting system across the District, a tool which makes it much easier for retailers to report crimes and incidents. Meanwhile, focussed campaigns, delivered through Op Signature, have encouraged the public to report more fraud, whilst the increased resourcing of operations to tackle drug supply and drug possession have had a positive impact on related detection rates.
- 3.3. Although offences relating to violence against the person in a public place increased slightly (808 crime reports, ↑4%), reports for public order offences (572 crimes, ↓12%) and robbery (25 crimes, ↓41%) both fell. Levels of serious violence (52 crime reports) and knife crime (22 reports) remain relatively low and fell compared to the previous year, which is encouraging.
- 3.4. Levels of anti-social behaviour remained steady overall, although the number of reported incidents was relatively high (1,116 reports). Race continued to be the most common driver of reported hate crimes and incidents, with 93 reports received across the year. Levels of religious related hate crimes and incidents showed a marked increase (33%), a trend which is consistent with other force areas across the country, following the rise in community tensions witnessed last summer. The number of reports however (14 reports), remains relatively low.
- 3.5. Levels of reported domestic abuse (crime & incidents) remained relatively high (1,491 reports) and were consistent with figures reported a year earlier, whilst the number of reported sexual offences was also in line with those previously reported (280 crime reports). Reports of stalking and harassment fell, ↓22%.
- 3.6. Overall, the District continues to be a relatively low crime area. The most recent figures from the Government's benchmark 'Most Similar [Crime] Group'¹, which compares Lewes District with fourteen other local authority areas (March 2024) shows that with a rate of 57 crimes per 1000 people, it is one of the two lowest. This level is below the group average of 67 crimes per 1000 people. Details of the benchmarks are set out in appendix 2.

¹ 'Most Similar Groups' are districts / boroughs that have been found to be leading comparators based on an analysis of those demographic, social and economic characteristics which most relate to crime.

- 3.7. These trends have set the tone for the work of the partnership across the last year, which has supported a range of initiatives that have helped; address anti-social behaviour; support organisations tackling domestic abuse; respond to increasing levels of shoplifting; and address safety on local roads. Key highlights, activities and achievements across these priorities are set out below.

Priority 1. Promoting safe & welcoming spaces to help reduce the incidence of crime & ASB - through:

- Addressing local concerns about the rise in shoplifting across the District, by funding the implementation of the *Disc* reporting systems. *Disc*, an established reporting platform already in use across the rest of East Sussex, provides retailers with a simpler and speedier reporting mechanism, allows them to share information about offenders in real time, and provides local policing teams with intelligence about offenders and business crime trends. The funding covered set up costs and membership fees for participating retailers for the first three years. The launch has been successful, with over fifty local retailers signing up to the system since the launch last November.
- Providing funding to cover the cost of sixteen referrals to local mediation services. Operated by Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service, the scheme opens up free access to private sector residents, providing them with free access to mediation services designed to prevent escalation and promote early resolution to disputes. Being able to offer such a scheme provides private sector resident in Lewes with similar services available in other Council areas, and can reduce the numbers, and costs associated with cases that require intervention from the team in Regulatory Services.
- Funding Safety in Action, a series of workshops in local schools, delivered by East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, targeted at year 6 (aged 10-11) children. Each event includes a series of 10-minute interactive scenarios, providing age appropriate advice about fire risks, road safety, water safety, emergency first aid, and personal / street safety. The workshops are being delivered to 600 children across the District.
- Supporting the Council's Neighbourhood & Environment First team's work to keep public spaces across the District clean, tidy, and free from rubbish. In the year to date (April to December) the teams dealt with over 350 reports of fly-tipping, graffiti, rubbish, and abandoned vehicles. The teams employ a range of monitoring and enforcement activities, including warnings, fixed penalty notices, and prosecutions.

Priority 2. Reducing the incidence of serious violence - through:

- Supporting activities to reduce knife crime, which include Sussex Police's *Operation Safety*, that drives a range of local awareness and enforcement activities targeted at keeping residents safe from knife-related harm. These include incident led patrols, social media campaigns, community engagement, knife sweeps, test purchasing, and much more.

- The delivery of schemes funded by an additional grant approved directly from Lewes District Council, which by the end of March will have secured over 1,500 spaces for young people to attend a range of schemes and activity programmes. The range of supported schemes are designed to meet the sporting, artistic and wellbeing needs of the children, and have included:
 - ▀ Beach clean and craft activities.
 - ▀ Free places at local boxercise classes and & boxing gym sessions.
 - ▀ Drama based therapy sessions at existing youth groups.
 - ▀ Free football coaching sessions at Newhaven Football Club.
 - ▀ Free spaces at local gym / swim centres.

The funding is also being used to support new weekly 'youth drop in' session at a centre in Ringmer. The sessions began in February and are a great addition to the established youth outreach work in the local area.

- Participating in *place-based-initiatives* funded through the Sussex Police's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), a task force co-ordinating a strategic approach to tackling serious violence. The initiatives, first trialled in Eastbourne, were extended County wide last spring and focussed locally on serious crime hotspots identified in Newhaven. The VRU commissioned a local community interest company to help profile victims and offenders, engage local residents and organisations, and map local community assets. A key outcome is the establishment of a local forum of representatives youth organisations that will meet regularly to identify local issues and co-ordinate activities, starting this March.

Priority 3. Addressing the impact of organised crime on local communities - through:

- Contributing to the *Serious & Organised Crime Partnership*, a police-led collaboration, set up to tackle serious crimes being systematically carried out by organised groups. The partnership has an operational focus, identifying specific crimes that present a high level of harm to local residents, then sharing information and intelligence to help disrupt criminal activity.
- Directly funding organisations that deliver programmes engaging and supporting young people. This year these included providing funding to support workshops delivering targeted interventions to a group of young men identified as being involved in anti-social behaviour, and at risk of exploitation by organised crime groups. The sessions, delivered in partnership with ESCC's Youth Services Team, provide a mix of activities and coaching at weekly sessions attended by 30 participants every week.
- Supporting the work of Sussex Police's *Discovery* team, who co-ordinate operations that tackle modern slavery, exploitation, and human trafficking. Partners, including the Council's Homes First, licencing, benefits and democratic services teams, routinely work with *Discovery* to source information on residents and businesses, verify intelligence, and on some occasions accompany visits.

Priority 4. Tackling hate crime, domestic & sexual abuse - through:

- Directly funding a new young women's advocacy and campaigning group, which will provide a safe, empowering space for young women to make their voices heard, share experiences, and influence local community safety priorities. The project, delivered by a local community interest company, Project 1-54, was initiated in response to concerns about sexual harassment and gender based violence, articulated by local young women during interviews conducted as part of the place-based work carried out in Newhaven over the past year.
- Continuing to drive forward best practice by renewing the strategic and operational framework through which domestic abuse is addressed across the Council. This is led by Homes First's work to adopt an approach that aligns with the DAHA (Domestic Abuse & Housing Alliance) accreditation scheme, which places the interests of victims at the centre of case management. The accreditation visit has now taken place, and the Council is awaiting the outcome of feedback, which will be used to further improve the effectiveness of services.
- Taking part in strategic initiatives to address the incidence of domestic abuse. This work involves contributing to the development of joint needs assessments and implementing items across two key action plans that set out to improve support services and increase the availability of specialist accommodation into which those experiencing abuse can be re-housed.
- Contributing to a fund that pays the cost of Domestic Homicide Reviews in East Sussex. These reviews undertake detailed assessments of the circumstances surrounding individual cases, then apply insights and key learning points to the processes and practices of the relevant agencies involved, to help reduce future risk.

Priority 5 - Lowering levels of anti-social driving - through:

- Working with the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership and Sussex Police to support local residents wishing to set up community Speedwatch groups, through the distribution of equipment kits and the provision of training. Representatives of the Safer Roads Partnership attend local Joint Action Group meetings to listen to local concerns and invite feedback on initiatives, such as the siting of camera vans at sites prone to speeding and accidents.

3.8. A summary of the annual income and expenditure for the Partnership's budget is set out in appendix 3. At the end of quarter 3, 84% of the available grant (£34,829), had been allocated to support projects, campaigns and events operated by community groups, voluntary organisations, and statutory agencies. Where possible opportunities have been taken to draw in match funding to help optimise the impact of grants made. A small pipeline of projects is in place which should ensure that the budget majority of the budget is utilised by the end of this financial year. An unspent balance of £12,293, carried over from 2023/24 will be placed into reserves at year-end. Pending the funding announcement from the Police & Crime Commissioner, which is yet to be confirmed, this reserve can be available to fund projects in 2025/26.

4. Consultation.

- 4.1. An ongoing process of engagement is in place to help assess and evaluate the success of projects and other measures supported by the Partnership. Over the past year this has involved key operational representatives, including those from Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire & Rescue, and the Safer East Sussex team. They meet regularly to consider the implications of issues raised by the Lewes Joint Action Group, analyse crime trends, and respond to emerging risks.

5. Corporate Plan & Council Policies.

- 5.1. The objectives of the E&L CSP continue to be in line with those set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, which commits to delivering resilient, healthy, and engaged communities, by employing strategies to help reduce the incidence and fear of crime, tackle anti-social behaviour, and minimise re-offending. Measures taken to reduce environmental crime and improve road safety raise the quality of the local area for all local residents, visitors, and businesses.

6. Business case.

- 6.1. The annual CSP plan sets out the approach that the Council, along with other partners, will take to reduce crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, and re-offending across their local area. The current plan identifies five clear priorities, agreed with partners, that will help address local issues. The next plan is due to be approved by the Partnership in Spring 2025.

7. Financial appraisal.

- 7.1. As the partnership is wholly grant funded there are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the activities set out in this report. However, a summary of the current income and expenditure account, managed by the Council on behalf of the Partnership is provided in Appendix 3. *Interim Deputy Chief Finance Office consulted 11/02/2025.*

8. Legal implications.

- 8.1. This report sets out how the Council has complied, and will continue to comply with, its duties under section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007. *Lawyer consulted 11/02/2025 - Legal ref: 13785-JOINT-OD.*

9. Risk management implications.

- 9.1 The annual Community Safety Plan incorporates a review of high level risks associated with the delivery of CSP activities. These include risks relating to, maintaining adherence to the statutory duties set out in the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, partner attendance, and funding. It also looks at how current issues, such as the cost of living crisis, might impact crime trends. The risk review provides an assessment of the likelihood, impact and severity of each risk and assigns ratings accordingly, alongside accompanying mitigations.

10. Equality analysis.

- 10.1. This report provides an update on progress in meeting the objectives set out in the current Community Safety Plan and, as such, does not contain specific proposals or recommendations that have direct equalities impacts on the public or employees. However, the work of E&LCSP does have a positive impact on local communities, in particular for those young people, women and those experiencing hate crimes, who benefit from those projects that the Partnership funds.

11. Environmental impact analysis.

- 11.1. There are no direct environmental impact implications for the Council arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

12. Appendices.

- 12.1. Appendix 1 – Lewes CSP - Income & Expenditure 2024/25.
Appendix 2 – Most Similar Crime Group' benchmark Data, March 2024.
Appendix 3 - Lewes CSP – Income & Expenditure 2024/25.

13. Background papers.

- 13.1. The following background paper is associated with this report - Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Plan.

Appendix 1 – Crime reports, twelve months to December 2024.

Crime category*	Year to Dec 23	Year to Dec 24	Change	% change
Total crimes & incidents	7205	7539	334	4.6%
Total Crimes	5822	5922	100	1.7%
Burglary - business & community	83	68	-15	-18.1%
Burglary - residential	153	160	7	4.6%
Crime subgroup - Theft from the person	25	27	2	8.0%
Theft - from a shop	415	791	376	90.6%
Serious organised acquisitive crime (fraud)	1127	1386	259	23.0%
Theft - of a vehicle	98	112	14	14.3%
Theft - from a vehicle	114	88	-26	-22.8%
Aggravated vehicle taking	5	3	-2	-40.0%
Total vehicle crime	217	203	-14	-6.5%
Violence against the person in public place	775	808	33	4.3%
Public order	646	572	-74	-11.5%
Robbery	42	25	-17	-40.5%
Serious violent crime	59	52	-7	-11.9%
Knife crime	24	22	-2	-8.3%
Gun crime	0	0	0	n/a
Homicide	2	0	-2	-100.0%
Trafficking of drugs	30	34	4	13.3%
Possession of drugs	97	114	17	17.5%
Drug offences	127	148	21	16.5%
Arson	47	50	3	6.4%
Criminal damage	692	559	-133	-19.2%
Total criminal damage	739	609	-130	-17.6%
ASB - Personal	141	128	-13	-9.2%
ASB - Nuisance	923	944	21	2.3%
ASB - Environmental	39	44	5	12.8%
Total ASB	1103	1116	13	1.2%
Rape & sexual offences	280	281	1	0.4%
Domestic violence crimes	938	892	-46	-4.9%
Domestic violence incidents	563	599	36	6.4%
Total domestic violence	1501	1491	-10	-0.7%
Stalking and harassment	727	596	-131	-18.0%
Modern slavery	3	6	3	100.0%
Hate reports - sexuality	41	27	-14	-34.1%
Hate reports - gender	12	8	-4	-33.3%
Hate reports - other	14	14	0	0.0%
Hate reports - religion	7	14	7	100.0%
Hate reports - disability	19	37	18	94.7%
Hate reports - race	94	93	-1	-1.1%
All hate reports	187	193	6	3.2%

Appendix 2 – ‘Most Similar Crime Group’ benchmark Data, June 2024.

Community Safety Partnership Area	Crimes / 1000 residents Year to March 2024
Ashford	79
North Somerset	74
North West Leicestershire	74
Epping Forest	73
Cheshire East	70
Cheshire West and Chester	70
Arun	69
South Worcester	68
North Worcestershire	67
Hinckley and Bosworth	65
Wyre	63
Rugby	60
South Ribble	60
Lewes	57
South Nottinghamshire	52
Group average	67

Appendix 3 - Lewes CSP – Income & Expenditure 2024/25.

Income

PCC Grant	£34,829.03
C/O from 2023/24	£12,293.52
Total	£34,829.03

Expenditure

Quarter	£ Amount	Name of activity	Name of organisation
Quarter 3	£1,990.00	Boys club - diversionary activities for young men	ESCC Youth Services
Quarter 4	£3,500.00	Basketball hoop - Walmer recreation ground.	Walmer Road RA & LDC
Quarter 1	£2,302.50	Prison release support scheme	Warming Up The Homeless
Quarter 1	£400.00	Advertising CSP grant avail.	Seahaven FM
Quarter 1	£8,000.00	Mediation services for private residents	B&H Indep. Mediation Serv.
Quarter 1	£851.24	Contribution to DHRs	ESCC
Quarter 3	£400.00	Advertising CSP grant avail.	Seahaven FM
Quarter 1	-£174.00	Additional funding	Rebate from 2023_24
Quarter 3	£7,960.00	Rollout of DISC across Lewes District	LDC / Sussex Police
Quarter 3	£2,400.00	I'm Speaking - young women's group	Project 54
Quarter 4	£1,550.00	Safety in Action - schools safety workshops	ESFRS
Total	£29,179.74		
Remaining	£5,649.29		
Perc. Spent (24/25 fund)	84%		

Pipeline

Quarter	£ Amount	Name of activity	Name of organisation
Quarter 4	£500.00	PSPO replacement signage	LDC
Quarter 4	£700.00	Data recorder for tackling noise nuisance	LDC / Sussex Police
Total	£1,200.00		
Total inc. pipe.	£30,379.74		
Reminder inc. pipe.	£4,449.29		
Perc inc. pipe.	87%		

Reserve

Carried over from 2023/24	£12,293.32
Place in reserve at YE	£12,293.32
Balance	£0.00