

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Corporate Manager – Safe Communities	Report Number: R62
To: Strategy Committee	Date of meeting: 12 November 2015

MERGING THE BABERGH AND WESTERN SUFFOLK COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the reasons for merging the Babergh and Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnerships.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That approval be given to merging the Babergh and Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnerships.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 Community Safety Partnerships were set up by the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, merging 2 Community Safety Partnerships will be finalised by a decision from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

4.2 Risks

If the Babergh Community Safety Partnership does not combine with the Western Community Safety Partnership the risks are:

- The Babergh CSP will have to be re-established as it is currently operating as part of the Western CSP.
- It would be isolated from the wider partnership.
- It would lack empowerment.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 There have been wide discussions of this issue at the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). Jan Osborne is the Babergh representative on the RAG.

6. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

6.1 The Community Safety Partnership consists of a wide range of partners including:

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
- Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury District Councils
- Suffolk County Council
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- Suffolk Constabulary
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
- Norfolk and Suffolk Rehabilitation Company Limited (Probation)
- Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group
- West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group

All partners are in favour of the merger.

7. Key Information

7.1 Community Safety Partnerships in Suffolk:

In Suffolk there are currently 5 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs):-

- Ipswich
- Suffolk Coastal
- Waveney
- Babergh
- Western CSP (Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and Mid Suffolk)

However, in effect they operate in 3 groups as Suffolk Coastal and Waveney operate together (although they are not officially merged) and Babergh operates as part of the Western CSP.

7.2 The reasons for merging

Up to 2012 CSPs had a clear focus to bring partners together to promote community safety and reduce crime. The Home Office directly funded the CSPs from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Grant and projects were commissioned in response to local need.

In November 2012 a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was elected for Suffolk and a 5 year Police and Crime Plan (PCP) is now in operation setting out clear objectives for the police and partners to achieve.

Following the appointment of the PCC the Home Office funding, which had previously gone directly to the CSPs, was channelled through the office of the PCC. In the financial year 2013/14 the PCC did devolve the budget to the CSPs so that projects could continue to be commissioned to meet the priorities of the CSPs and the PCP. However, from 2014/15 the Crime and Disorder Reduction Grant has been devolved to the Suffolk Foundation as the Safer Suffolk Fund. Bids to this fund can be made by community and voluntary organisations but not by statutory bodies.

This means that CSPs no longer have the resources to directly commission local projects and must work with non-statutory partners instead.

7.3 The Response

In response to these financial and organisational pressures the CSPs in West Suffolk (i.e. the Western CSP and Babergh) agreed to work collaboratively prior to applying for a formal merger. This collaborative working included pooling resources and expertise in order to continue to deliver community safety in the most efficient and effective way across all 4 districts while still retaining a local focus.

7.4 Governance

For the past 2 years the Western CSP and the Babergh CSP have operated as a combined Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). This group meets quarterly and oversees the strategic direction of community safety in the West. The RAG has discussed the benefits of the Western CSP merging with the Babergh CSP and has agreed to start this process.

8. Conclusion

Community Safety Partnerships are statutory bodies set up by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Act of 1998. They have some specific responsibilities such as conducting a Domestic Homicide Review in circumstances where a death has occurred as a result of domestic violence.

Over the past 3 years the role of the Western CSP has changed significantly. When the Crime and Disorder Reduction Grant was paid directly to the Western CSP then the partnership had a clear commissioning purpose. Since the office of the PCC was created and funding has been diverted to the Suffolk Foundation this role has been lost.

However, all CSPs have a duty to work together to tackle crime and disorder. The 4 districts are already integrated as pairs (Mid Suffolk and Babergh – Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury) so working together as a Western CSP makes it more likely that the current status of safe districts with falling crime levels is maintained.

In September 2015 the first meeting of a new group called the Strong and Safe Communities Group took place to set up to develop a county wide overview of community safety reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The membership of the group includes District Councils and it is envisaged that the group will engage with local Community Safety Partnerships as the work progresses. This is an opportunity for the Western CSP to redefine its own aims and purpose within the framework of new Suffolk wide outcomes.

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