



MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - FINAL

COMMUNITY SAFETY
JULY 2020

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	
Design	Operational Effectiveness
Moderate	Moderate

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DISTRIBUTION

Name	Job Title
Richard Holmes	Director of Service Delivery
Spencer Clarke	Public Protection Manager

REPORT STATUS LIST

Auditors:	Chris Andre
Dates work performed:	02 - 20 March 2020
Draft report issued:	27 March 2020
Final report issued:	9 July 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE: (SEE APPENDIX I FOR DEFINITIONS)

Design	Moderate	Generally, a sound system of internal control designed to achieve system objectives with some exceptions.
Effectiveness	Moderate	Evidence of non-compliance with some controls, which may put some of the system objectives at risk.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: (SEE APPENDIX I)

High	0
Medium	2
Low	0

TOTAL NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS: 3

BACKGROUND:

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act sets out the statutory requirements for responsible authorities to work together with other local agencies, organisations and people, to develop and deliver strategies to tackle crime and disorder and help create safer communities. These statutory partnerships are known as Community Safety Partnerships (CSP).

Within Maldon the partnership is made up of a number of local organisations including Maldon District Council, Essex Police, Essex County Council, NHS, Essex Probation, Essex Fire and Rescue Service and voluntary organisations including Neighbourhood Watch.

Each year the CSP must undertake a Strategic Assessment which includes data analysis of levels and patterns of crime and disorder and findings from a resident's survey. The results allow the CSP to set its priorities.

Priorities 2018/19

- Tackling Violent Crime
- Driving down Anti Social Behaviour in public spaces with an emphasis on youth nuisance
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable people
- Ensuring the implantation and delivery of the Essex Police Rural Crime Strategy
- Promoting road safety and challenging irresponsible driving

Maldon have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with Chelmsford Council to provide Maldon with, amongst other things, Strategic Community Safety Services. This takes the form of the Public Protection Manager who has run CSP for Maldon and Chelmsford for nine years. Despite this, they are two separate partnerships with individual assessments, priorities, action plans and reporting structures. Maldon CSP report to the Maldon Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) on a quarterly basis whose purpose is to formulate and implement the Strategic Assessment and is composed of Members and Officers, as well as individuals from Essex County Council, Essex Fire and Rescue and Mid Essex CCG.

The audit reviewed the governance of the CSP in relation to work carried out against the above priorities and utilisation of funding received, as well as completion of their statutory duties including development of the strategic assessment, oversight from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and production of action plans.

GOOD PRACTICE:

- A Strategic Assessment was undertaken for Maldon with five priorities identified and worked upon for 19/20
- An action plan is in place for each of the priorities and includes owners and timescales for the actions
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee) meet twice a year to review progress of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as is required as part of their statutory functions with regards to the CSP
- Monthly Tasking group is established, well attended and run predominantly by the Police
- Key roles and responsibilities are drawn up as part of the Strategic Assessment whilst a service level agreement is also in place due to the role of the Community Safety Partnership Manager working across two Councils

KEY FINDINGS:

- The monitoring and review of finances is not done in sufficient detail to ensure there is appropriate and fully informed oversight of the use of funding (Finding 1 - Medium)
- The Responsible Authority Group (RAG) does not meet with the required frequency as per its Terms of Reference - (Finding 1 - Medium)
- The action plan does not provide assurance over the likelihood of completion of the work and it does not appear to have been updated regularly (Finding 2 - Medium)

CONCLUSION:

Our review found that the Council has established reasonable processes and controls in place regarding the Community Safety Partnership with significant work undertaken against agreed priorities, however, monitoring and reporting of finance and progress via the action plan require improvement with insufficient detail provided to allow appropriate oversight of use of funding and progress. This has led to a final assessment of moderate assurance over the control design and moderate assurance over the control effectiveness.

DETAILED FINDINGS

RISK: THE PARTNERSHIP MAY NOT ENSURE THAT IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES ARE MET, OR THAT PERIODIC RESULTS ARE PUBLISHED (AND COMPARED TO TARGETS), TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE ASSURANCE THAT FUNDING IS BEING EFFECTIVELY UTILISED, AND THE PARTNERSHIP IS OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY

Ref	Significance	Finding
1	Medium	<p>We identified there is a lack of discussion at key oversight committees and groups regarding the financial status of the Community Safety Partnership and its use of funding provided to it.</p> <p>Annual funding is provided by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex with £12,527 given for 19/20. The Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) has a terms of reference (ToR) in place which states that one responsibility of the group is to ensure external and internal funds in the control of the Partnership are correctly managed. However, review of the last three sets of minutes provided for RAG did not appear to discuss funds and focused on work being completed. This was similarly the case for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The CSP is required to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a bi-annual basis. There was a significant amount of reporting completed with regards to what steps have been taken, what has been put in place as well as crime figures and updates from Police. However, there appears to be little discussion regarding financial performance and where they are against budget.</p> <p>It was also noted that the ToR for RAG states that it should meet at least once every three months, however, the last three meetings took place in February 2020, March 2019 and October 2018.</p> <p>Without more detailed budget monitoring and regular meetings there is an increased risk that funding is not being utilised effectively and there is insufficient oversight of this.</p>

RECOMMENDATION:

- A) RAG should meet on a quarterly basis in line with its ToR
- B) Appropriate budget monitoring should be established and updated monthly with quarterly reporting undertaken by CSP at RAG, as well as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a bi-annual basis, detailing budget vs actual and projected costs

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:

It is accepted that the Responsible Authorities Group (strategic) did not meet with the frequency identified within its formal terms of reference for the dates specified within the audit. This was due to a number of factors such as the restructure of Maldon District Council and the Chair of the RAG leaving for another police force. However, it should be noted that the Community Safety Hub was implemented in March 2019 which brought together key strategic and operational partners (Council and Essex Police) into one working space and therefore meet on a daily basis. Community Safety Hub Tasking meets on a monthly basis and reviews both real time crime and the action plan of the community safety partnership.

The meeting of the RAG in February 2020 agreed that the next step for the strategic group would be to migrate to a One Maldon District which would broaden the scope of the strategic group to include topics such as health and economy but to still meet its duty as a statutory community safety partnership. The progress on implementing One Maldon District has been hampered by the Covid-19 crisis and is currently awaiting Member decision for approval. In the interim, meetings will be arranged on MS Teams to ensure that the partnership meets on a regular basis in the interim.

It is noted that financial transparency is important in terms of partnership. Finance is generally discussed at the start of the financial year when agreeing strategic priorities. The funding provided by the Office of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner is relatively small in value and for the last three years this funding has been used to contribute towards the cost of the Community Safety Development Officer who has delivered community safety interventions using a Maldon District Council events budget. However, it is agreed that a funding paper shall be prepared for future meetings of the RAG and Overview & Scrutiny (sitting as Crime and Disorder Committee) which will include any reserves and spend/progress on the MDC events budgets and any other partnership contributions.

Responsible Officer: Spencer Clarke, Community Safety Manager

Implementation Date: 1 October 2020 (next O&S meeting)

RISK: THE PARTNERSHIP MAY NOT ENSURE THAT IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES ARE MET, OR THAT PERIODIC RESULTS ARE PUBLISHED (AND COMPARED TO TARGETS), TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE ASSURANCE THAT FUNDING IS BEING EFFECTIVELY UTILISED, AND THE PARTNERSHIP IS OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY

Ref	Significance	Finding
2	Medium	<p>Action plans have been developed which cover each of the five priorities identified and agreed as part of the strategic assessment completed annually. However, the plan is not detailed enough to provide an accurate reflection of the likelihood of completion of the work and does not appear to have been updated in all cases.</p> <p>Action plans include lead owners, timescales as well as comments, however, whilst it also includes a Status column this does not provide an accurate picture of whether they are on schedule or not. For example, two actions, one relating to the delivery of awareness raising sessions and the other to working in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University have a timescale of March 2020 (the month the action plan was received during the audit). However, one has a status of Ongoing, with the other stating Planning, and the latest comments refer to meetings scheduled to take place in October 2019.</p> <p>Additionally, one priority is to ensure the delivery of the Essex Police Rural Crime Strategy. This has one activity falling under it and that is to ensure the effective delivery of the Strategy. Actions are provided within the comments section yet due to the layout these do not have individual lead owners or timescales with current timescale for the activity recorded as Ongoing whilst the status is also Ongoing.</p> <p>Without appropriate action plans in place there is an increased risk that individuals are unaware of their responsibilities, likelihood of completion is unable to be gauged and actions are not completed resulting in priorities not being met.</p>

RECOMMENDATION:

- A) Layout of the action plan should be updated to ensure the overarching priorities have individual actions with lead owners and timescales for delivery recorded for each
- B) Include a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating against the actions, or against each priority, to provide a clear indication of progress when reported
- C) Update the RAG rating and comments on a monthly basis

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:

At present, an action plan is agreed at the start of the financial year once the strategic priorities have been agreed. This is reviewed on a monthly basis at community safety hub tasking. It is accepted that the recommendations identified in the audit will improve the current action plan and it will enable partners to monitor progress in an improved manner. It should be noted that tasks under each strategic priority may change throughout the year based on demand and types of intervention required, and inevitably situations outside our control, for example the Covid-19 crisis has prevented face to face interventions within

school settings and targeted interventions with the elderly community who have been effectively shielding since March 2020. All three recommendations are accepted and will be implemented.

Responsible Officer: Spencer Clarke, Community Safety Manager

Implementation Date: 1 October 2020 (next O&S meeting)

STAFF INTERVIEWED

BDO LLP APPRECIATES THE TIME PROVIDED BY ALL THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THIS REVIEW AND WOULD LIKE TO THANK THEM FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION.

Name	Job Title
Spencer Clarke	Public Protection Manager

APPENDIX I – DEFINITIONS				
LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	DESIGN OF INTERNAL CONTROL FRAMEWORK		OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS	
	FINDINGS FROM REVIEW	DESIGN OPINION	FINDINGS FROM REVIEW	EFFECTIVENESS OPINION
Substantial	Appropriate procedures and controls in place to mitigate the key risks.	There is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve system objectives.	No, or only minor, exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls.	The controls that are in place are being consistently applied.
Moderate	In the main there are appropriate procedures and controls in place to mitigate the key risks reviewed albeit with some that are not fully effective.	Generally a sound system of internal control designed to achieve system objectives with some exceptions.	A small number of exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls.	Evidence of non compliance with some controls, that may put some of the system objectives at risk.
Limited	A number of significant gaps identified in the procedures and controls in key areas. Where practical, efforts should be made to address in-year.	System of internal controls is weakened with system objectives at risk of not being achieved.	A number of reoccurring exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls. Where practical, efforts should be made to address in-year.	Non-compliance with key procedures and controls places the system objectives at risk.
No	For all risk areas there are significant gaps in the procedures and controls. Failure to address in-year affects the quality of the organisation's overall internal control framework.	Poor system of internal control.	Due to absence of effective controls and procedures, no reliance can be placed on their operation. Failure to address in-year affects the quality of the organisation's overall internal control framework.	Non compliance and/or compliance with inadequate controls.

RECOMMENDATION SIGNIFICANCE	
High	A weakness where there is substantial risk of loss, fraud, impropriety, poor value for money, or failure to achieve organisational objectives. Such risk could lead to an adverse impact on the business. Remedial action must be taken urgently.
Medium	A weakness in control which, although not fundamental, relates to shortcomings which expose individual business systems to a less immediate level of threatening risk or poor value for money. Such a risk could impact on operational objectives and should be of concern to senior management and requires prompt specific action.
Low	Areas that individually have no significant impact, but where management would benefit from improved controls and/or have the opportunity to achieve greater effectiveness and/or efficiency.

APPENDIX II - TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE OF REVIEW:

The purpose of the audit is to review the strategic framework, governance framework and financial framework relating to the council's community safety partnership service.

KEY RISKS:

Adequate and robust arrangements (including formal agreements, agreed priorities and oversight / monitoring) may not be in place to ensure that the Partnership complies with its statutory functions, which may result in adverse scrutiny, delivery failure, and/or loss of funding

Roles and responsibilities may not be established, to enable effective strategic and operational decision making, to determine how funding is used, and to agree and monitor service objectives. This may result in reputational damage to the Council and adverse external scrutiny

The Partnership may not ensure that identified priorities are met, or that periodic results are published (and compared to targets), to provide adequate assurance that funding is being effectively utilised, and the Partnership is operating successfully

The Council may be subject to adverse publicity, in the event that targets, and priorities are not achieved

Insufficient documentation may be retained as evidence to support priority completion, spend or outputs, and may not support evidence of achievement of objectives/priorities

SCOPE OF REVIEW:

The following areas will be covered as part of this review:

- Whether the Council's Community Safety Partnership is effectively discharging its statutory duties
- Whether all partners are appropriately engaged with in the development of the CSP strategic assessment
- Whether the strategic priorities arising from the strategic assessment have action plans in place
- Whether these action plans are delivered in line with identified timeframes and that they effectively align to the priorities of the CSP
- Governance arrangements in place for monitoring of the progress of the CSP activities are effective
- Funding provided by external parties for the effective discharge of the CSP activities is being used appropriately

However, Internal Audit will bring to the attention of management any points relating to other areas that come to their attention during the course of the audit. We assume for the purposes of estimating the number of days of audit work that there is one control environment, and that we will be providing assurance over controls in this environment. If this is not the case, our estimate of audit days may not be accurate.

APPROACH:

Our approach will be to conduct interviews to establish the controls in operation for each of our areas of audit work. We will then seek documentary evidence that these controls are designed as described. We will evaluate these controls to identify whether they adequately address the risks.

We will seek to gain evidence of the satisfactory operation of the controls to verify the effectiveness of the control through use of a range of tools and techniques.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during the course of our audit and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made. The report has been prepared solely for the management of the organisation and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. BDO LLP neither owes nor accepts any duty to any third party whether in contract or in tort and shall not be liable, in respect of any loss, damage or expense which is caused by their reliance on this report.

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