

MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

COMMUNITY SAFETY
FEBRUARY 2023

Design Opinion	● Substantial
Design Effectiveness	● Moderate

IDEAS | PEOPLE | TRUST



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DISTRIBUTION

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Spencer Clarke	Community Safety Manager

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.

REPORT STATUS

Auditors:	Nadine Turner
Dates work performed:	January 2023 - February 2023
Draft report issued:	9 February 2023
Final report issued:	15 February 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BAF REFERENCE:

Design Opinion



Substantial

Design Effectiveness



Moderate

Recommendations



SCOPE

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.
- ▶ Improvements have been seen over the last few years. The policing precept has increased annually, bringing policing levels back to where they are expected to be whilst communications have also improved through the Maldon Dispatch Twitter account whereby weekly updates are tweeted to improve engagement and awareness.

AREAS REVIEWED

- ▶ We reviewed the Community Safety plan, strategic assessments and source data/information used to establish priorities.
- ▶ We reviewed progress reports and terms of reference for the Responsible Authorities Group which acts as the forum for the CSP, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- ▶ We interviewed the Community Safety Manager to obtain an understanding of the processes and governance structures in place.



AREAS OF STRENGTH

- ▶ There is a Maldon District Council Community Safety plan 2022/23 in place, which clearly shows the key priorities. Work towards the 2023/24 plan is underway.
- ▶ Comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken and show trend data year-on-year.
- ▶ The CSP report into the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, which forms part of the Council's governance structure. At each meeting a Maldon District CSP update is given and the committee frequently noted the continued good work of the CSP and the liaison it had with Essex Police and other statutory partners; and have also commented on informative presentations.
- ▶ The Maldon Community Safety Manager has a good network of contacts, and therefore a broad source of information/data. This enables him to have a wider understanding of the safety concerns in Essex and what

specifically applies to Maldon. It also enables him to establish how Maldon benchmarks against other areas of Essex.

- ▶ There is good engagement with the public. An annual public facing meeting is held compered by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex. In addition, engagement events for emergency services, Maldon District Council, Community Safety Partnerships and other partners, known as ‘999 Community days’ have been held. Initiatives include drama based live performance and interactive workshops for Maldon’s year 6 pupils; bike security marking events; and a senior safety & silver Sunday event was held to share community safety information and to engage with older persons to address social isolation in rural areas.



AREAS OF CONCERN


- ▶ The CSP is operational in the form of a Responsible Authority Group. The group meets on a quarterly basis and has a good coverage of topics/updates on the standard agenda. We found that there was not full representation of the members at all meetings; which meant updates were not always provided (Finding 1 - Medium).
- ▶ The Responsible Authority Group terms of reference was last reviewed in June 2016. The terms of reference defines the membership, purpose, responsibilities, and authority of the group; and should be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain ‘fit for purpose’. We found that a quorum was not defined in the terms of reference (Finding 2 - Low).



CONCLUSION

There is a good understanding of the requirements of The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act with safety concerns known, and horizon scanning conducted. There is a dedicated Community Safety Manager who works well with other authorities, agencies, and organisations to develop and deliver strategies to tackle crime and disorder and help create a safer community in Maldon. Additionally, we confirmed that the Responsible Authority Group (RAG) is operational and meets on a regular basis however, operational effectiveness could be improved with regular attendance and updates. Therefore, we have concluded substantial assurance for control design and moderate assurance for the operational effectiveness.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY GROUP (RAG) - MEMBERSHIP AND UPDATES	
TOR Risk:	The CSP does not meet regularly and attendance from the Council is insufficient resulting in a lack of engagement.
Significance	 Medium



FINDING

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) meets quarterly as the Responsible Authority Group (RAG). The purpose of the group is to formulate and implement a Strategic Assessment for the reduction of crime and disorder in the Maldon District as per their statutory duty described in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Reform). This group has a terms of reference in place, membership shown below, which were last reviewed in June 2016.

The terms of reference define the membership:

- *Chief Executive - Maldon District Council; District Commander - Essex Police; Senior Nominee - Essex County Council; Senior Nominee of Essex Fire and Rescue Service; Senior Nominee of Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group; Senior Nominee of Essex Rehabilitation Company; a nominated District Council Elected Member; Essex Fire Authority; and Senior Nominee of National Probation Service.*
- *Additional full members may be added by requirements of legislation or by unanimous agreement by members of the Responsible Authorities Group - Strategy (RAGS).*
- *Each member is allowed to bring one other member of their organisation plus the Partnership Manager - Community Safety as non-voting members.*

The following RAG meeting notes were reviewed for membership attendance and we identified that there was not a full representation of members at all meetings reviewed:

- 17.03.2022 - 6/8 members present
- 16.06.2022 - 5/8 members present
- 08.09.2022 - 8/8 members present

There is a standard agenda item for 'reporting back & feedback from Partnership meetings' this gives the members an opportunity to update the RAG at each meeting (see below) :

- Report of the Community Safety Partnership Manager
- Essex Police Update
- Police, Fire & Crime Panel Update
- Probation Update
- ECC Update
- Essex Fire & Rescue Update
- Mid Essex Alliance Update
- ECC Youth Service and Youth Strategy Group Update

We reviewed the same RAG meeting notes for updated submissions and, similarly, we identified that updates are not always provided, this usually occurred if members sent apologies:

- 17.03.2022 - no Probation update provided

- 16.06.2022 - no Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue, and Mid Essex Alliance updates provided
- 08.09.2022 - no Police, Fire & Crime Panel update provided

The risk of members not attending and updates not being provided could lead to insufficient supporting information/challenge available to make informed decisions.



RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that all members provide regular updates to the meeting. If they are unable to attend to either:

- a) send a written update for the meeting,
- b) or, send a representative to provide a verbal update on their behalf.



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The Community Safety Manager supports this proposed recommendation. Whilst attendance at meetings has been good in recent years, and the quality of data provided to partners has improved, full attendance or a substitute enables partners to understand the strategic direction of each body and put action plans in place to mitigate risks and prevent duplication. Written updates will suffice in the event of no substitute being available. However, it is recognised that on occasions urgent operational demands can impact on attendance at short notice.


Responsible Officer:

Spencer Clarke, Community Safety Manager

Implementation Date:

15th June 2023

2 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

TOR Risk:	The CSP does not meet regularly and attendance from the Council is insufficient resulting in a lack of engagement.
Significance	 Low

FINDING

The Responsible Authority Group terms of reference was last reviewed in June 2016. The terms of reference defines the membership, purpose, responsibilities and authority of the group and should be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain 'fit for purpose'.

As identified above, not all members are present at every meeting, therefore it would be beneficial to include a quorum in the terms of reference stating the minimum number of members that must be present for the meeting to be valid.

Section 12 states:

To adopt a rota system for appointing a new Chairman and Vice Chairman every 12 months and ensure that the Chairman and Vice Chairman are aware of their responsibilities.

From the evidence reviewed the current Chair has been in position for at least 11 months, and no Vice Chairman is identified in the terms of reference or in the meeting notes.

Without a regular review process there is a risk of the group not complying with its defined purpose and responsibilities, as outlined in the terms of reference. This may potentially lead to a misalignment with statutory requirements, and the group not achieving its purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Responsible Authority Group (RAG) terms of reference are reviewed on a regular basis:

- a) A quorum to be added, stating the minimum number of members that must be present for the meeting to be valid.
- b) Section 12 to be reviewed and the requirement to rotate the Chair discussed. The change of Chair should be agreed at the meeting and clearly documented.
- c) A Vice Chair to be identified and the role documented in the meeting notes.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The Community Safety Manager supports this proposed recommendation. It is good practice to review terms of reference on a regular basis to ensure that the partnership addresses any new statutory duties and remains fit for purpose. Horizon scanning is completed during the strategic assessment process.

The partnership is now better established with experienced key partners attending each meeting following the pandemic so the process to address recommendations a, b, and c should be straightforward.

Responsible Officer:	Spencer Clarke, Community Safety Manager
Implementation Date:	15 th June 2023

OBSERVATIONS

MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL WEBSITE

COMMUNITY SAFETY PAGES

The Maldon District Council website pages inform the public about the Community Safety Partnership and its priorities.

The Community Safety page is showing the 2021/22 priorities (see below).

What is the Community Safety Partnership?

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.

The Maldon District Council Community Safety Partnership (MDCSP) Priorities for 2021/22 are:



Priority 1

- Tackling Crime & Reducing Reoffending, with an emphasis on violent crime, gangs, and drug trafficking.

Priority 2

- Driving Down ASB in Public Places, with an emphasis on youth nuisance and improving partnership visibility.

Priority 3

We appreciate that the priorities did not change for 2022/23, however, the date should have been changed so site visitors could see they were viewing the current priorities.

As the 2023/24 priorities are being reviewed/refreshed there is no value in updating the 2022/23 priorities at this time, it will be beneficial to update the website pages once the Community Safety plan 2023/24 has been formally approved.

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



KEY RISKS

Based upon the risk assessment undertaken during the development of the internal audit operational plan, through discussions with management, and our collective audit knowledge and understanding the potential key risks associated with the area under review are:

- ▶ The strategic assessment has not been completed for 22/23 with the Community Safety plan, and its respective priorities, not being identified resulting in a lack of action being taken to improve community safety
- ▶ The CSP does not meet regularly and attendance from the Council is insufficient resulting in a lack of engagement
- ▶ Reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not occur as required, in contravention of their statutory requirements
- ▶ There is a lack of engagement with the public with insufficient steps taken to respond to identify and respond to specific incidents.



SCOPE & APPROACH

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

- ▶ There is sufficient documentation and evidence that the strategic needs assessment was undertaken to identify key priorities for the CSP
- ▶ Attendance from Council representatives is sufficient at the CSP and its Responsible Authorities Group (RAG)
- ▶ Reporting on progress against the Plan is completed as required to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ▶ Steps have been taken to engage with the public at all levels and, where incidents have occurred (such as a hate crime) steps have been taken to educate and reduce the risk of similar incidents happening again.

The scope of the review is limited to the areas documented under the scope and approach. All other areas are considered outside of the scope of this review. 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.

It is intended that this audit will be completed through a combination of remote working and onsite meetings and testing, based upon the most effective way of carrying out the work.

In delivering this review BDO may need to observe and test confidential or personal identifiable data to ascertain the effective operation of controls in place. The organisation shall only provide the Shared Personal Data to BDO using secure methods as agreed between the parties. BDO will utilise the data in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 1998, and shall only share Personal Data on an anonymised basis and only where necessary.

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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