



ST ALBANS COMMUNITY SAFETY CONSULTATION FORUM

7.00pm, Thursday 20 October 2005

Council Chamber, St Albans Civic Centre

MINUTES

Present:

Mrs Sheila Bond

Cllr David Clarke

Dennis Cooper

Janice Crombie

Laura Cronshaw

Robert Fox

Cllr Henry Jones

Cllr Brian Lee

Cllr Brian Peyton (in the Chair)

Cllr Philip Rosen

Rick Taylor

C.Cllr Chris White

Sheila Whitehouse

C.Cllr Allan Witherick

HACRO

Colney Heath Parish Council

NHW Coordinator

Neighbourhood Watch

Council for Voluntary Service, St Albans

Crime Prevention Panel

London Colney Parish Council

Herts County Council

St Albans City and District Council

Redbourn Parish Council

NHW Coordinator

Herts County Council

Herts County Council

Herts County Council

Officers:

Inspector Mike Hanson

Chief Inspector Mark Hunter

Sally Patient

Christine Roach

Chief Supt Alison Roome-Gifford

Nick Smith

Steve Welch

Philip Winter

Hertfordshire Constabulary

Hertfordshire Constabulary

Hertfordshire Police Authority

St Albans City and District Council

Hertfordshire Constabulary

Hertfordshire County Council

St Albans City and District Council

Hertfordshire County Council

ACTION

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

Vice-Chairman, Brian Peyton chaired the meeting.

Apologies were received from Linda Bateman, Cllr Lyn Bolton, Cllr Robert Clarkson, Niel Clements, Jane Cloke, Martin Cooke, Peter Parsons, Cllr Albert Pawle, Nick Rayment, Laura Redhead, Adrian Smith, Derek & Rosemary Wenzelul.

2. **Minutes of meeting held on 22 June 2005**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 5.11. Chris Roach reported that another Community Safety Partnership training event for local councillors on engaging with local communities was planned but it would now be held early in the New

Year. It was difficult to find a date to suit all Councillors and which was also suitable for police officers.

4. Police Authority Best Value Review of Engagement and Consultation and Police Force Restructuring

Allan Witherick, the Police Authority Community Engagement Lead on the St Albans Responsible Authorities Group, outlined the Home Office proposals to merge police forces with fewer than 4,000 officers. The Home Office had given an extremely short time for consultation. Mergers could only take place within forces in the same Government Office region. The Chief Constables and Authority Chairmen from the Eastern Region had met and drawn up a core short list of options which all forces and police authorities would include (see first three bullet points below). Individual forces and police authorities could include additional options. The short list submitted by Hertfordshire to the Home Office was:-

- A six county regional force
- Herts, Beds and Essex
- Herts, Beds and Cambridgeshire
- Herts and Essex (This was to allow for a Bedfordshire option of merging with Thames Valley, against Government guidelines)

Sally Patient, Communications Manager for the Police Authority, was able to add an update following a recent meeting. The Constabulary and Police Authority had met to assess which options to pursue based on a scoring system set up by the Home Office. This scoring had been sent to all Chief Executives of District and Borough Councils and to the Chief Executive of the Criminal Justice Board. The options would be presented to the Home Secretary on Friday 28 October. Essex has made it known that, at this stage, it would prefer a regional force. Feedback is expected from the Home Office by 9 November as to which options it considers acceptable for progressing further. Final preferred options must be with the Home Office by 23 December and Herts Police Authority has arranged a special meeting on 16 December to decide its final proposals.

In a response to a question, Chief Supt Alison Roome-Gifford commented that some forces are not resilient to sustaining cross-boundary working and that it was important to retain what we currently do in the Basic Command Unit areas.

Cllr Peyton asked whether it was still possible to contribute comments. Sally Patient replied that she could take any comments back to the Police Authority.

Philip Rosen complained about the lack of time between 4 and 10 October to undertake a full consultation. Sally Patient replied that the Police Authority had had the difficult choice of whether to undertake a consultation or not, given the short timescale but had received 100 replies. This would not be the only chance to comment. It was important to raise people's awareness of the situation. By 9 November the Police Authority would have had feedback from the Home Office and would then have about four weeks to undertake

more consultation before firming up on the final choice.

Philip Rosen also asked what was likely to happen to the new Call Centre at Police HQ. Alison Roome-Gifford said it was not known at this very early stage what would happen to the Call Centre.

Robert Fox queried the definition of “co-terminosity” which was explained as matching boundaries of various agencies.

Nick Smith commented that we should not lose sight of the implications of any change for the public and the issue of reducing the fear of crime. People would need reassurance that these changes did not mean a move away from local policing. Sally Patient said that the Police Authority had undertaken lots of press coverage and would try to get those messages across. The intention was to strengthen local policing to provide a better service for counter terrorism.

Laura Cronshaw commented that the CVS had been one of the 100 agencies to submit a response to the consultation. The Police Authority was one of the agencies to sign up to the National Compact which recommends a 13 week consultation period. CVS were disappointed that this was not adhered to. Sally Patient emphasised the difficult position the Police Authority had been placed in and said that people were welcome to submit comments to the Home Secretary direct.

Dennis Cooper reported that there was a significant amount of work going into the development of Neighbourhood Watch in Hertfordshire and that the timing of this police force merger could not have been worse from their perspective. He assumed that reasons had been given as to why forces under 4,000 were inefficient and questioned whether the disadvantages of establishing larger forces had been looked at.

Sally Patient said that the changes would inevitably lead to restructuring of Police Authorities and local accountability would not exist in the same way. Chris White commented that such a restructuring could not be undertaken in isolation from the reorganisation of the police forces.

In response to a question by Nick Smith, Alison Roome-Gifford said there would not be any change locally in the number of officers and she would assume that safeguards would be put in place against moving large numbers of officers cross-border. Allan Witherick commented on the cultural differences between different forces. Sally Patient commented that, should we link with Bedfordshire, it was too early to say whether Luton might call on more officers than, say, Harpenden.

Steve Welch commented that the timeframe for this restructuring led to a feeling of inevitability about the whole matter. We could only have any influence at the margins. As Chair of the St Albans CDRP he said that the Partnership had spent a lot of time building up the partnership work and this restructuring could cause disruption. He was also concerned about possible CDRP mergers. It was difficult

enough to get the partners to understand the role locally – any CDRP mergers could make partnership working more difficult. There was a mixed message from Government about partnership working and delivering improvements at a local level whilst creating merged police forces and, potentially, merged CDRPs.

Regarding the Best Value Review of Engagement and Consultation, Sally Patient reported that there was a second stakeholder event on 30 September and the Police Authority were working on the final report. However, recommendations from the review will be influenced by the possible merger of police forces and would not, for example, involve major changes to staffing. The Best Value Review will be limited to what it is feasible to undertake at this time. A copy of the final report will be sent out in November.

5. Half yearly performance update

Chief Superintendent Alison Roome-Gifford gave a presentation on the crime figures for St Albans District for the current financial year. A copy of this presentation is attached to these minutes for ease of reference. Essentially all crime is down in Quarter 2 following a bad start in Quarter 1. Police had undertaken specific operations to target volume crime such as theft from vehicles and shoplifting and we were now fairly well on target to meet our Home Office target of reducing crime by 18.5% by March 2008.

Alison Roome-Gifford emphasised that 91% of immediate responses are attended within 15 minutes in the Central Police Area.

6. Locality Policing Structure

Chief Inspector Mark Hunter gave a presentation on the locality policing arrangements in St Albans and District. A copy of this presentation is attached at the back of Alison Roome-Gifford's presentation. Mark Hunter explained the resources available through the police community safety teams and how these are centred round the three police stations at St Albans, Harpenden and London Colney. He went on to explain that St Albans District had been divided into five broad localities based around St Albans North; St Albans City; St Albans South; Harpenden, Redbourn and Wheathampstead and London Colney and that Constables were already arranging meetings within their wards so that issues of local concern to people could be discussed.

Mark reported that Watford were piloting a volunteer scheme to help with the administration of neighbourhood panels. It was not expected that Constables would take minutes of meetings. As the neighbourhood meetings become established it is hoped that volunteers will come forward to help with administration.

Inspector Mike Hanson commented that all meetings were in the evenings and that all people would be invited by the ward constable initially. At the first meeting a discussion would take place as to what other groups or persons needed to be invited to attend.

7. Feedback on the rollout of DPPPO

Chris Roach reported that the Licensing & General Purposes

Committee of the District Council had given its approval to establish two new Designated Public Place Orders, one in Harpenden town centre and one covering the Clarence Park area of St Albans, the latter having a shared boundary with the original city centre DPPO.

Considerable public consultation had been undertaken regarding the establishment of these designated areas and no objections had been received. The Community Safety team were now making the final arrangements and the orders would come into effect from 1 January 2006.

Chris Roach reminded those present that the DPPOs were for the purpose of tackling anti-social drinking and not meant to stop citizens going about their usual business.

8. Neighbourhood Watch

Dennis Cooper, a Community Co-ordinator for Neighbourhood Watch, gave a presentation on the Watch in St Albans District.

He reported that there is a considerable amount of work going on at present and explained his role. In Spring 2004 a working party had been established to review the structure of Neighbourhood Watch. This led to the formation of HertsWatch in the Spring of 2005. In the summer of 2005 St Albans and District Neighbourhood Watch steering committee had been formed and in September 2005 7 locality co-ordinators had been appointed. One month ago they had started appointing ward co-ordinators. It is hoped that this new structure will facilitate communication both up and down Neighbourhood Watch. Neighbourhood Watch ward co-ordinators would also be invited to attend ward meetings.

In response to a question as to whether Neighbourhood Watch was successful in catching criminals, Dennis replied that the Police were logging all calls to track effectiveness. They were also looking into streamlining representation at meetings.

9. Any other business

- (i) Nick Smith reported that Youth Justice were looking at the True Vision campaign aimed at tackling hate crime. He would report back at a later meeting.
- (ii) Brian Peyton reported that there would be a Local Strategic Partnership event on 9 November. Invitations to the event were circulated.
- (iii) Niel Clements asked that a formal complaint be made about the clash of meetings. Chris Roach replied that it was extremely difficult to find a date that suited everybody.
- (iv) Chris Roach said that if anyone was interested in visiting the CCTV control room they should contact her and a visit could be arranged.

10. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 15 March 2006, 7pm in the Council Chamber at St Albans City & District Council Offices.