

## **MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 3 OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE**

held on Thursday 12 January 2006 in Committee Room 2, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans at 6.30pm.

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### Present:

Councillors Lusby (Chairman), Steer (Vice-Chairman), Eleanor Harris, Stevenson, Stroud and Swendell.

### Apology for Absence:

Councillor Stevenson.

### In Attendance:

Councillor Pakenham.

### Officers in Attendance:

Mr B Peers – Engineer and Technical Services Manager;  
Mrs C Roach – Community Support Manager;  
Mr R Thackeray – Community Safety Officer;  
Mr P Storey – Corporate Administrator.

### Also in Attendance:

Community Inspector M Hanson, Hertfordshire Constabulary

## 1. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of Meeting No.2 of the Sub-Committee held on 5 October 2005 were taken as read and confirmed.

## 2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### Minute 8 – Reports and Updates from the Police

Inspector Hanson reported that there were now 683 Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the District, which was a reduction from 720 at the last meeting. The Police had written to every Watch co-ordinator on their records and considered all schemes to be active unless they had been informed to the contrary. The Chairman stated that some schemes might not be active even if they had not informed the Police of that fact. Inspector Hanson stated that there was a "ringmaster" system in the District where the Police would seek to co-ordinate the various Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

Under the same Minute, Councillor Steer referred to a Ward Police Meeting she had attended in Harpenden recently. She stated that the Police intended to hold four

meetings in each Ward in Harpenden during the year and assumed the same situation would apply throughout the District. (Note: there was further discussion on Ward Police Meetings later in the meeting. Minute 9 below refers.)

### Minute 9 – St Albans Community Safety Report

The Community Support Manager reported that the bid to the ODPM Homelessness Innovation Fund for a fixed term manager to co-ordinate a project to provide a community home for controlled drinking had been unsuccessful. Some interest had been generated at the ODPM, however, regarding the number of rough sleepers in the District. A count of rough sleepers had recently been undertaken in St Albans and none had been found, which was an exceptional occurrence. The Housing department would be undertaking a further count would be undertaken before the end of May. Accordingly, the Portfolio Holder had agreed that a proposed report to Cabinet on the subject be deferred until after the count had been undertaken. The Chairman stated that she would be interested in being involved in a count and asked that Members be offered the opportunity to take part once a date had been agreed.

### 3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

#### RESOLVED

That under Section 100(4A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that involved the likely disclosure of confidential information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure.

### 4. QUARTERLY CRIME FIGURES

Inspector Hanson and the Community Support Manager presented the quarterly crime figures. They stated that a change as low as 0.3% per 1,000 residents in a figure could alter the District's position in the comparative tables. There was also less than 1% difference between the top and bottom of the tables in the case of some crimes. Inspector Hanson was concerned regarding thefts against persons, which were often purse "dippers" in the market, and this was an area which had been targeted by the Police. The British Crime Survey figures indicated that theft of bicycles was high in the District and the Community Safety Partnership were looking at methods of prevention. The Engineer and Technical Services Manager stated that the Council was seeking to encourage cyclists into the City Centre, in preference to motor vehicles, and was looking at creating more and secure cycle racks in St Peter's Street. The CCTV cameras would also provide some measure of security for parked bicycles.

It was noted that the British Transport Police were attending a number of community safety meetings with the result that any crimes taking place at railway stations and on station property can now be considered alongside other crimes.

Inspector Hanson reported that in the Police year to date (1 April – 31 December 2005) overall crime in the District had reduced by 4%, from 9,296 to 8,888 crimes as compared with the same period in 2004. The figures per type of crime for the period were:

Crimes against the person:	Down 6%
Robbery of personal property:	Down 14%
Burglary:	Down 11%
Theft and handling:	No real change
Fraud and forgery:	Down 26%
Criminal damage	Down 1%
Drug offences:	Up by 26%
Theft of bicycles	Up 31%

The position in individual Wards was reported as:

- St Peter's, Marshalswick North and South, Batchwood, Verulam and Sandridge, all Harpenden Wards, Redbourn and Wheathampstead – overall crime reducing;
- London Colney – level of overall crime increasing;
- All other wards – level of overall crime increasing.
- St Peter's Ward and London Colney were identified as "hot spots".

The Police were actively targetting persistent and prolific offenders (PPOs), who were responsible for most of the crime in the District, were being more proactive in cases of domestic violence and seeking to be more visible, particularly through the use of PCSOs. Detection rates were down by 24% against the previous year, partly as a result of a required change to "sanction detections", whereby detections were only recorded if a conviction was secured. The Police were seeking to increase detection levels.

The Police were fully up to strength on officers in St Albans, but were one PCSO light due to a recent transfer. The London Colney team was two Constables short, with one to be recruited imminently and another within a few weeks. The Harpenden team was one officer short and the post would be filled on 1 February. The number of PCSOs in the County would be doubled within the next 2-3 years, and it was likely there would be one PCSO in each Ward.

It was agreed that the figures circulated at the meeting and not covered by the Home Office's confidentiality clause be sent to Sub-Committee Members following the meeting.

At the conclusion of this item, the Sub-Committee resumed in public session.

## 5. **REPORTS AND UPDATES FROM THE POLICE**

This item had been subsumed in the report on Quarterly Crime Figures above (Minute 4 refers).

## 6. **PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received a progress report on activities since its last meeting.

It was noted that concern was expressed in the report regarding the actions of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in a number of situations, particularly without consulting the Police or the Council. Members asked the Community Support Manager to formally write to the CPS expressing those concerns.

Funding had now been secured for the creation of a Business Crime Reduction Co-ordinator, which would be a part-time, fixed term post only. Any extension of the post would need to be met from income generated by the postholder.

The Community Support Manager was looking to produce a quarterly newsletter on community safety issues and to issue press releases on good news items.

Members suggested that Church groups might be interested in the possibility of purchasing the minibus which had been bought by the Community Safety Partnership using Communities Against Drugs funding and which was no longer required. The Engineer and Technical Services Manager had stated that the Council might be interested in purchasing the minibus for community use.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Community Support Manager be asked to write to the CPS expressing Members' and Officers' concerns as set out above.

## **7. POLICE RESTRUCTURING PROPOSALS - UPDATE**

A letter from the Chairman of the Hertfordshire Police Authority providing an update on the restructuring situation was circulated at the meeting. The Authority had agreed that the benefits of a merger with Bedfordshire Police should be fully assessed. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes. The Community Safety Manager reported that she had received an update from Sally Patient, Communications Manager of the Police Authority, in which Ms Patient had stated that Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Forces were developing a business case for merging and this would then go to the Home Secretary once the Authority had approved it. However, it would go in the form of "Hertfordshire Police Authority is minded to consider ....." and not a formal request for voluntary amalgamation. In the meantime the Police Authority are waiting to hear back from the Home Secretary but his could be a few weeks yet. The Community Safety Manager undertook to provide the Sub-Committee with regular updates on the proposals.

Councillor Swendell expressed concern at proposals to merge Police forces, stating that smaller forces (including Hertfordshire) had been very efficient in undertaking their duties. He did not consider that mergers would benefit local communities

The Chairman asked about the costs of mergers and was informed that the Government had agreed to make a set contribution towards costs. It had not been stated how additional costs would be met.

## **8. CCTV – A REVIEW OF OPERATIONS AND THE IMPACT ON COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Members received a report reviewing the Council's current CCTV operation, the impact on community safety and proposals for future operation. The Portfolio Holder for Community Development had requested the Sub-Committee's views for reporting to Cabinet on 7 February 2006 when the issue would be considered.

Members noted that CCTV was part of a co-ordinated approach to community safety enhanced by schemes such as Pubwatch and Shopwatch. The number of incidents of crime and disorder had reduced under this co-ordinated approach, although it was

difficult to produce comparative statistics year on year as the Police system of recording incidents/crimes had been changed by the Government over the years. The scheme was promoted as "Community CCTV" to indicate that it was aimed at protecting law abiding residents and not intended to be intrusive. CCTV had also proved effective in protecting the reputations of agencies and individuals in certain situations.

Members stated that they had been very impressed by the quality and range of the cameras involved on a recent visit to the CCTV Control Room. The Engineer and Technical Services Manager stated that the cameras purchased had been those which could give the best quality pictures, which could be used for evidential purposes. He was now investigating upgrading the cameras in the rural areas. He was also looking into the possibility of using mobile 'phone connections, when the technology was available.

The Engineer and Technical Services Manager informed Members that the partnership arrangements with the CCTV operator had allowed the Council to successfully bid for the CCTV partnership contracts in adjoining council areas. This would lead to extra income towards the cost of the scheme and to the Control Room being staffed by two operatives at all times, in accordance with Health and Safety requirements. The Council had also received Home Office funding (£100,000), with two other areas in the County, to operate an ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) scheme, which was integrated with CCTV.

It was noted that bids for funding for CCTV were considered by the Community Safety Partnership against other bids and that there was also a CCTV Monitoring Group with delegated authority from the Community Safety Partnership, to make grants in this area. Under Local Area Agreements to be implemented in the County from April 2006, funding streams would be pooled and could be top-sliced at County LSP level for County-wide projects. This could impact on the funding available at local Community Safety Partnership level, and thus on CCTV.

Members strongly supported the use of CCTV in the City and District and asked that the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee, as the parent body, be recommended to refer the comments below to Cabinet.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee be asked to consider the following comments and recommend them to Cabinet:

- That the Sub-Committee endorses the use of CCTV in the City and District and is pleased with the results of the scheme;
- That CCTV was considered to be important for the benefit and protection of the citizens of the District;
- That neighbouring authorities deciding to buy in CCTV support from the District Council and its partner indicates how well the scheme is regarded and offers other opportunities for expansion, which could bring in revenue to the District Council and improve the service on offer to local residents;
- That all Members be encouraged to visit the CCTV Control Room to witness the capabilities of the cameras and the staff;
- That the report be expanded slightly to cover the technical capabilities of the cameras;

- That Members endorse the current operation of CCTV in partnership with Community Safety and recommend to Cabinet that additional funding be found to further enhance the system.

9. **POLICE WARD MEETINGS**

Several Members reported on the Ward Policing Meetings which had taken place in their Wards. In several cases, those meetings were being well Chaired by the Ward Constable, although relatively informal, and agendas and minutes were being produced. The Chairman stated that in Clarence Ward, the Police tended to only be emailing one Ward Member regarding meetings and expecting her to notify the other Ward Members. She would prefer all Ward Members to be notified by the Police. Members found the meetings very interesting.

10. **REVIEW OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE'S WORK**

The Chairman asked for Members' views on the work of the Sub-Committee to date. Members considered that the role of the Sub-Committee was both interesting and useful.

11. **SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06 AND 2006/07**

Members asked that the Government's "Respect" agenda be included on the Sub-Committee's Work Programme for its next meeting, on 20 March 2006, along with the Community Safety Draft Action Plan. It was noted that the Draft Action Plan would be presented to the Responsible Authorities Group on 28 March 2006 for approval. The Work programme, as agreed, is attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

It was also agreed that the Work Programme for 2006/07 be considered at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

**(SIGNED)**

**CHAIRMAN**

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Fax: 01992 555625  
Date: 21 December 2005

Dear Colleague,

**POLICE FORCE RESTRUCTURE**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded rapidly to our request for feedback on the recent debate regarding police force restructuring.

We received over 500 responses from stakeholders and the public, and these were considered, along with the business cases, at an extraordinary Police Authority meeting last Friday, 16 December.

Although we did not ask for preferred options, many people took the opportunity to let us know their views. Below is the breakdown of the 500 responses we received. You will see that there is no clear consensus.

- Option 1 – Regional Strategic Force (Beds, Cambs, Herts, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk)
- Option 2 – Herts/Beds/Essex and Norfolk/Cambs/Suffolk
- Option 3 – Herts/Beds/Cambs and Essex/Norfolk/Suffolk

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Standalone	No view given	Total
17% (85)	22% (111)	21% (110)	19% (98)	21% (108)	512

The Police Authority regrets the undue haste with which it has been asked to make decisions on the future of policing in Hertfordshire. We believe there are still some very important issues, such as future governance arrangements and how the restructuring is going to be financed, which have yet to be resolved. This concern was compounded by a letter from the Home Secretary received the day before our meeting, which offered a contribution towards costs incurred but only to those authorities who volunteer before the 23 December deadline to merge their police forces.

At our meeting on Friday, the Authority unanimously agreed to look at alternative options for improving the current services. In particular, it agreed to work with neighbouring forces to create and implement a legally binding framework in the region to fill the protective services gap. It also agreed to assess fully the benefits of a merger of the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire police forces.

The next steps in the Home Secretary's planned restructuring are not clear but we will endeavour to keep you informed of progress and involved in the debate.

Thank you for your continued support and all Best Wishes for 2006.

Yours sincerely

**Ian Laidlaw-Dickson**  
**Chairman**  
**Hertfordshire Police Authority**

**Meeting dates**

<b>5 July 2005</b>	<b>5 October 2005</b>	<b>12 January 2006</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quarterly Crime Figures for the District</li><li>• Multi-Agency Problem Solving in Sopwell Ward</li><li>• Final Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008</li><li>• Draft Community Safety Action Plan 2005-2008</li><li>• Community Safety Update</li><li>• Draft Communications Strategy 2005-2008</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quarterly Crime Figures for the District</li><li>• Police Report</li><li>• Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets</li><li>• Progress report on Community Safety Activities</li><li>• Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and general surveillance</li><li>• CCTV and Lighting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quarterly Crime Figures for the District</li><li>• Police Report</li><li>• Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets</li><li>• CCTV – A Review of Operations</li><li>• Review of the Sub-Committee’s Work 2005/06</li><li>• Update on Police Restructuring Proposals</li></ul>