

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 2 OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

held in Committee Room 1, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans on Thursday 20 January 2005 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors Lusby (Chairman), Steer (Vice-Chairman), Foster, Eleanor Harris, Marshall, Kate Morris, Martin Morris, Smith and Stevenson.

Portfolio Holder in Attendance:

Councillor Peyton – Community Development.

In Attendance:

Councillor Swendell.

Apology for Absence:

Mr S Welch, Strategic Director of Community Services.

Officer in Attendance:

Mrs C Roach, Community Support Manager.

Also in Attendance:

Community Inspector Hanson, Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Corporate Administrator:

Mr P Storey.

1. MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that Councillor Martin Morris had filled the Liberal Democrat Group vacancy on the Sub-Committee for this meeting only.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Marshall declared personal interests in agenda items 6(i) and 6(ii), Recent Crime Figures and Trends and the Draft Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008, as his wife worked for the Home Office.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 9 November 2004 were confirmed, subject to the substitution of Mr S Welch for Ms S Welch in "Officers in Attendance."

4. **RECENT CRIME FIGURES AND TRENDS**

Inspector Hanson presented figures for offences and detections in the City and District for the period 1 April – 31 December 2004, as attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes. The figures had been produced in line with the Home Office's National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and were used as the basis for the County, area and team policing plans.

Members expressed concerns that the NCRS figures did not include all types of crime, e.g. offences by persons under 16, commercial crime and car crime, and that the figures provided by the Police were therefore not comprehensive. (This issue was considered further when discussing the Draft Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy – Minute 5 below refers.) It was also noted that crimes were recorded where they occurred and that any on railway stations/station property were recorded by British Transport Police, rather than Hertfordshire Police. There was, however, close liaison between the two forces and the sharing of intelligence.

It was difficult to compare year on year figures currently, following changes to the way figures are recorded. Pre April 2002, if people considered a crime had been committed they contacted the Police who decided if the incident should be recorded. Since April 2002, the Police recorded all reports of crime and then investigated to see if a crime had been committed. The vast majority of these incidents remained on the crime log after investigation. The list of crimes was, therefore, an accurate record of reported crime in the City and District. The definition of violent crime had also been extended in early 2004 to include up to fifty crime types, including such things as harassment by text message. The changes would have been in place long enough in February 2005 to allow year on year comparisons to be made.

In answer to Members' questions, Inspector Hanson then provided the following information:

- The Police were happy to provide crime figures on a ward basis for Members' consideration, as happened with meetings at Parish level. Such information would require background information to provide an accurate picture in each ward. Councillor Swendell stated that he already received such figures from the Police and would be happy to provide further information for distribution to Sub-Committee Members.
- Ward constables looked at the logs for their beat on a daily basis and were in a good position to assess any "hot spots" in their area. They were likely to have more up to date intelligence than Members in that respect but any information from Members would be of assistance.
- Reports in the local Press recently that alcohol related crime had risen by 40% in the District were incorrect. The Police had a good relationship with the

local Press and it was unusual for incorrect information to appear in the District's newspapers.

- The level of alcohol related crime under the new licensing arrangements later in the year would depend on the number of applications made for longer opening hours. Conversations with Pubwatch had suggested that a number of licensed establishments would not be seeking extended opening hours.
- There was a Multi Agency Tasking Group which took a partnership approach to locality problem solving and Inspector Hanson chaired this group. The Police also had their own tasking groups to deal with specific types of crimes. Ward constables could be abstracted from their beats to assist tasking forces and this could lead to some discontinuity in wards if operations were lengthy. The District could benefit, however, by having officers seconded from outside the area to deal with particular operations from time to time.
- There were a number of Police Community Support Officers in place now and their role and effectiveness would need to be assessed in the not too distant future.
- There were now three Community Safety Teams in the District and an officer working with Neighbourhood Watch schemes, particularly seeking to reactivate dormant schemes. A seminar would be held on 14 March, to which all Sub-Committee Members were invited, which would seek to engage Members and others at a local level to work together to tackle crimes and issues of local concern.

Members thanked Inspector Hanson for his presentation and for answering their questions.

RESOLVED

That the offers by Inspector Hanson to provide crime figures on a ward basis and by Councillor Swendell to provide supporting information on those figures be taken up.

5. DRAFT CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION STRATEGY 2005-2008

The Community Safety Manager presented the Draft Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and informed Members of amendments made to the latest version (dated 16 January 2005). The Strategy took into account the findings of the recent Crime and Disorder Audit in the District plus the strategic priorities set by the Home Office, based on the British Crime Survey. Members were concerned that several types of crime were not included in the Survey, including sexual offences and those involving persons under 16. They were concerned that local priorities should be included in the Strategy with Councillor Foster stating that he considered fraud and forgery were particular local issues. Councillor Stevenson also referred to the large increase in the number of sexual offences, although this might relate to an increase in the recording of such incidents rather than the number of incidents themselves. The Home Office had set a target for reducing crime and disorder in the District by 18.5% over the next three years from 2005/06 but based on a baseline of 2003/04, effectively giving a four year period to obtain the 18.5% reduction. Members were concerned that this should not be achieved by concentrating on those crimes prioritised by the Home Office at the expense of other forms of crime. There was

also concern that the Police and other agencies might target resources at the types of crime identified by the Home Office. There was scope in the draft Strategy to include types of local crime to be addressed and Members wished this to be developed, e.g. fraud and forgery, sexual offences or crimes by persons under 16.

The Community Development Portfolio Holder undertook to write to the Local Government Association to request them to press the Government towards allowing priorities to be established locally, rather than being decided by Whitehall.

Comments made in considering the draft Strategy, for forwarding to the Responsible Authorities Group which would oversee the final Strategy, were:

- That with the growth in fixed penalties for offences, which did not generate criminal records, not all crimes might be recorded in the future.
- Police Community Support Officers were not a substitute for Police officers but did provide some reassurance for members of the public.
- Locality Problem Solving Groups could be useful in looking at issues in specific areas and seeking to identify resources to deal with them.
- The City Centre was considered to be too large an area to form a Locality Planning Group and other configurations which might be more meaningful should be considered.
- Abstractions, where Police officers were removed from their beats to be involved in specific operations, mean they lost day to day contact with their wards for a period of time.
- The Overview and Scrutiny (NHS) Joint Committee might wish to become involved in the local work around achieving the aims of the National Drugs Strategy.
- Race Hate was not considered to be prevalent in the District and Members asked that this section of the Strategy be re-titled Hate Crime, as it also dealt with other types of crime falling within that category.
- Members asked for further information on the local authorities and partnerships in the same "family" group against which the District would be compared in terms of its Strategy and for information as to whether crimes reported by an agency on behalf of a client, e.g. hate crime, were recorded or if they were only recorded if the client reported them first hand.
- Members asked for breakdowns of crimes to be provided on a ward basis, with supporting information to explain the figures so that issues could be identified in individual wards.

The Community Safety Manager stated that the latest draft Strategy had been amended by the removal of part of paragraph 2.2 as the figures around levels of anti-social behaviour were only a snapshot and not a true overview of the three year period under review. A pie chart had been inserted at 4.1 to make it easier to compare crime figures. Some of the items in the Strategy would be transferred to an action plan which would be drawn up to support the strategic priorities. There would also be further mandatory public consultation on the Strategy before it could be approved and in place in April 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Sub-Committee's comments, as set out above, be forwarded to the Responsible Authorities Group, with particular reference to the following points:
 - 1. That the draft Strategy was considered to be a good working document;
 - 2. That the Strategic Priorities set for the District for 2005-8 be supported but that they did not include issues of local concern, which should be inserted;
 - 3. That the Strategy should deal with the local situation in the District and that local objectives and priorities should also be included;
 - 4. That the British Crime Survey figures, on which the Home office targets were based, did not include certain types of crime, e.g. crimes by persons under 16, and that it would be preferable for all types of crimes to be included in the figures;
 - 5. That the Council's local concerns should be stated on the final Strategy and related documents, subject to this being legally feasible.
- (ii) That the Community Development Portfolio Holder's offer to write to the Local Government Association to request them to press the Government towards allowing priorities to be established locally, rather than being decided by Whitehall, be supported.
- (iii) That breakdowns be provided on crimes on a ward basis, with supporting information to explain the figures so that issues could be identified in individual wards
- (iv) That the Overview and Scrutiny (NHS) Joint Committee be informed of the local work around achieving the aims of the National Drugs Strategy, should they wish to become involved.

6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following reports were received and noted:

- (i) Further Background Information.
- (ii) St Albans Safety Partnership Work Plan 2004-2005.
- (iii) Community Safety Website – Flyers.

Further to items (ii) and (iii) above, it was noted that the Work Plan was locally led and that an updated version would be placed on the Community Safety website shortly.

7. TRAINING DAY – 14 MARCH 2005

The Community Safety Manager gave Members details of a training day to be held on 14 March 2005, to be organised by the Police, around more effective

Policing and locality problem solving. All District, Town/Parish and local County Members would be invited. The Chairman asked that consideration be given to holding a second training day for any Members unable to attend on 14 March.

8. **DATES FOR MEETINGS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE IN 2005/06**

This item, to select Sub-Committee dates for the 2005/06 municipal year, was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm.

(Signed)

CHAIRMAN

Offence and Detections Year on Year % change, for Hertfordshire Constabulary.

St. Albans CDRP

Appendix 1

Offence Category descriptions (based on Home Office guidance and definitions)	Reported Crimes			Detected Crimes		
	01/04/2004 to 31/12/2004	01/04/2003 to 31/12/2003	Year on Year % Change Red = Increase Green = Decrease	01/04/2004 to 31/12/2004	01/04/2003 to 31/12/2003	Year on Year % Change Red = Decrease Green = Increase
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON	1324	1063	25	947	618	53
More serious crime	80	61	31	53	39	36
Less serious crime	1244	1002	24	894	579	54
SEXUAL OFFENCES	90	32	181	44	18	144
Rape	11	8	38	3	6	-50
Indecent assault on a female	30	17	76	20	6	233
Other sexual offences	49	7	600	21	6	250
ROBBERY	83	93	-11	39	26	50
Robbery of business property	6	13	-54	4	8	-50
Robbery of personal property	77	80	-4	35	18	94
BURGLARY	1242	1223	2	283	137	107
Burglary in a dwelling	543	505	8	152	50	204
Burglary in other dwelling	699	718	-3	131	87	51
THEFT & HANDLING	3675	3950	-7	851	549	55
Theft from the person	323	246	31	16	11	45
Theft of pedal cycle	134	111	21	11	6	83
Theft from shop	478	480	-0	220	238	-8
Theft FROM vehicle	1130	1480	-24	350	117	199
Theft OF vehicle	323	370	-13	109	52	110
Vehicle interference & tampering	52	64	-19	8	8	0
Other theft	1209	1177	3	111	98	13
Handling stolen goods	26	22	18	26	19	37
FRAUD & FORGERY	962	796	21	151	156	-3
Fraud & forgery	962	796	21	151	156	-3
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	1703	1482	15	252	184	37
Arson	61	67	-9	5	10	-50
Other criminal damage	1642	1415	16	247	174	42
DRUG OFFENCES	132	127	4	114	123	-7
Trafficking in controlled drugs	22	21	5	13	18	-28
Possession of controlled drugs	110	106	4	101	105	-4
OTHER OFFENCES	79	86	-8	62	53	17
Other offences	79	86	-8	62	53	17
ALL NOTIFIABLE CRIME TOTAL	9290	8852	5	2743	1864	47