

MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 4 OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

held on Monday 20 March 2006 in Committee Room 1, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans at 6.30pm.

Present:

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

Apology for Absence:

Mr N Kieran, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator;
Mr R Thackeray, Community Safety Officer.

Officers in Attendance:

Mrs C Roach – Community Support Manager;
Mr P Storey – Corporate Administrator.

Also in Attendance:

Community Inspector M Hanson, Hertfordshire Constabulary;
Detective Inspector D Sales, Hertfordshire Constabulary.

1. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman agreed to accept for consideration a briefing paper providing a Summary of the Respect Action Plan. The paper had been produced following the issue of the agenda for this meeting.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of Meeting No.3 of the Sub-Committee held on 12 January 2006 were taken as read and confirmed.

3. MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 6 – Letter to the Crown Prosecution Service

The Community Support Manager reported that the views of the Police were being sought on the draft letter to the Crown Prosecution Service. The Strategic Director of Community Services had also suggested that the letter should be sent by the Responsible Authorities Group. The Chairman stated that she should have been consulted on this matter as the Sub-Committee had requested that a letter be sent from them. She would discuss the matter with the Strategic Director of Community Services outside the meeting.

4. RACE AND HATE CRIME

Inspector Sales gave an oral presentation on race and hate crime. The definition of hate crime was “any crime where the perpetrator's prejudice against an identifiable

group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised” and categories included racism, homophobia and disablist crime. A racist incident was defined as “any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person” and a similar definition applied to a homophobic incident. A Police Officer attended all racist incidents and all racist or homophobic incidents were recorded on the crime statistics. Although all incidents were recorded, some were recorded as non-crime incidents depending on the circumstances involved. There were three Police Officers in the Hate Crimes Unit and they were able to offer interpreters and specialist safety equipment, e.g fireproof letter boxes. The Police worked closely with other agencies, including the Council, and voluntary bodies and there was a good deal of “joined up working”. They welcomed the re-establishment of the St Albans Community Forum and had also established a Police Independent Advisory Group of “critical friends”. There was also a People in Partnership scheme which had been launched to assist people with learning difficulties in their relationships with the Police.

Members noted that there had been 109 racial incidents and 8 homophobic incidents in the year from 1 April 2005, out of a total of 10,600 crimes across the District and that this was not a major issue in the District. They asked if a breakdown of racial and homophobic crimes by wards could be provided to Members.

5. **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 it involved the likely disclosure of confidential information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure.

6. **QUARTERLY CRIME FIGURES**

Inspector Hanson and the Community Support Manager presented the the quarterly crime figures. They drew attention to the fact that 3 - 4 crimes per 1,000 was the difference between districts at the top and bottom of the IQUANTA lists. Inspector Hanson stated that the number of incidents across the District was down by 4% (1% in St Albans, 12% in Harpenden and no change in London Colney) and gave figures for wards as follows:

Wards – Down	Wards - Down	Wards - Up
St Peter’s	Harpenden South	Sopwell*
Marshalswick North*	Harpenden West*	Clarence*
Marshalswick South	Harpenden North*	Ashley*
Batchwood	Harpenden East*	Cunningham
Verulam*	Wheathampstead	St Stephens
Sandridge*	Redbourn	Park Street*
London Colney		Colney Heath

* = over 10% up or down

Inspector Hanson stated that the target set for crime detection in the District was 22.3% for the year but the actual figure was 21%. He agreed with Members that the target was too low and that there should be higher targets for crime detection and

reduction. He also stated that many of his officers were young and lacked the experience of older colleagues in detecting crimes. Councillor Swendell stated that the proposed re-organisation of Police forces would not assist in reducing crime by creating larger Police forces covering wider areas.

Members expressed concern that the IQUANTA figures had to be treated as exempt information as required by the Home office because that data was unaudited. They asked that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services write to the Home Office to ask that the information be published in the public interest. Councillor Swendell circulated a draft letter to that effect and Members asked that the letter be passed to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to be used as a template. The Chairman asked to see a copy of any letter sent to the Home Office.

RESOLVED

That a the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be asked to write to the Home Office requesting that the IQUANTA position statement and crime figures be published in the public interest and that a copy of the letter be sent to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

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

7. REPORTS AND UPDATES FROM THE POLICE

Inspector Hanson reported that 2 Police officers had left from the St Albans area, London Colney had 3 officers rather than 5 and 2 PCSOs rather than 3. Harpenden was up to strength. Abstractions had been minimal through the year until December 2005, but were currently very high. A major drive was being undertaken to increase the crime detection rate to seek to meet targets and this had required abstractions of officers to concentrate on specific Police operations. The Home Office had the ability to send in the Police Standards Unit to investigate why targets were not met and there could also be financial penalties. Inspector Hanson stated that he considered the targets should be to achieve year-on-year improvements in the crime detection and reduction figures.

The Police were happy with the way in which ward meetings were progressing and Members expressed their support for these meetings. Inspector Hanson would be reviewing the meetings in the week commencing 27 March 2006 and would wish to see tangible benefits arising from ward meetings. He also hoped to secure Community Safety partnership funding once again in 2006/07 so that the Multi-agency group could fund problem-solving activities in wards/localities.

Inspector Hanson referred to an error which had led to PCSOs being graded too highly and reported that new PCSOs would be appointed at a lower grade. There would be morale issues to be addressed here and there might be a consequent reduction in the quality of applicants.

8. PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS 2005/06UPDATE

The Community Support Manager reported that the British Transport Police were now working closely with the Crime Reduction Partnership and had a strong input into the Partnership. She was seeking to extend the Designated Public Place Order (the no drinking byelaw) on to stations and railway carparks with the help of the Transport Police. Councillor Swendell stated that crimes committed at railway

stations in the District did not feature in Hertfordshire Constabulary's crime figures for the area but were instead included in British Transport Police's crime figures. It was noted that bicycle thefts were high at the railway stations and the Community Support Manager stated that design issues could be considered to reduce such thefts, e.g. more secure storage. The Police tended to concentrate on larger crimes, but smaller thefts were not ignored.

9. **THE EFFECTS OF LICENSING LEGISLATION ON THE DISTRICT**

Councillor Steer reported orally on the effects of the licensing legislation in the District. Most pubs and clubs had now been licensed but only one garage had been licensed for the sale of hot drinks after 11pm. Applications referred back from the Magistrates Court had now largely been dealt with. A few licence variations had now been received from premises which had originally only wanted grandfather rights. The Council's smoking policy had been supported by the Government's policy on no smoking in public places. She stated that alcohol related crime and disorder had reduced over the Christmas period but it was too early yet to tell what the long term effect of the licensing legislation would be. The summer period would give an indication of how successful it had been. Enforcement of the legislation was now being looked into by the Strategic Director of Community Services to ascertain how successful it was. The next licensing issue to come before the Council would be the proposed Gaming Act and this would require a new Council policy.

Members noted that licensing was now a major function of the Council and expressed concern that the function needed to be fully resourced.

10. **DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR 2006/07**

The draft Action Plan had not been completed in time for this meeting and it was agreed that it be considered by the Sub-Committee at its first meeting in the next Municipal Year (2006/07).

11. **UPDATE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTIVITY**

The Community Support Manager stated that she was working to produce the Community Safety Service Plan and could email this to Members once it had been completed. Members asked that the Service Plan be reported to the first meeting of the Sub-Committee in 2006/07. The Community Safety Partnership was 2% off target for February 2006 but this was an improvement on the figure for the previous month. The Police, in collaboration with the District Council and Community Safety Unit, had issued a press release on the Automatic Number Plate Recognition scheme, which was just about to go live in the District. The CCTV operators had just undertaken training to become accredited under the SIA (Security Industry Association). Failure to have done so could have led to CCTV evidence possibly being inadmissible in court. The Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee had called-in the decision on CCTV made by Cabinet on 7 February 2006. The item had been considered by the Sub-Committee on 12 January 2006 and by the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee on 17 January 2006. The call-in related to the decision to make a charge to Parish Councils towards the maintenance costs of CCTV cameras and would be considered on 21 March 2006.

12. **SUMMARY OF THE RESPECT ACTION PLAN**

Further to Minute 1 above, the Community Support Manager stated that the Respect Action Plan was a “general direction” document from Government, which was currently not supported by legislation. The full Action Plan was on the Internet if Members wished to see it. The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator had been unable to attend this meeting but could attend the next meeting of the Sub-Committee and speak to the Action Plan.

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

The Sub-Committee added the Respect Action Plan (as at Minute 12 above) and the Service Plan to the Work Programme as items for consideration at its next meeting, on 4 July 2005 (Appendix 1 refers). It was agreed that the remainder of the Work Programme should be completed by the Sub-Committee membership for 2006/07.

14. **SINGLE, NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER**

The Chairman referred to the new single, non-emergency number (101) to be used to report low level crime. It was noted that there would be a cost of 10p per call to report incidents. It was not clear at this time when the new number would come into service.

The Chairman also asked the Community Support Manager to supply Members with copies of the new free booklet on Criminal Justice which she had read about in a recent article.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.

(SIGNED)

CHAIRMAN

COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07

Meeting dates			
5 July 2005	5 October 2005	12 January 2006	20 March 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Multi-Agency Problem Solving in Sopwell Ward • Final Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 • Draft Community Safety Action Plan 2005-2008 • Community Safety Update • Draft Communications Strategy 2005-2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress report on Community Safety Activities • Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and general surveillance • CCTV and Lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • CCTV – A Review of Operations • Review of the Sub-Committee’s Work 2005/06 • Update on Police Restructuring Proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress report on Community Safety Activities • The Effects of the Licensing Legislation in the District • Racial Crime • The Government’s “Respect” agenda • Draft Community Safety Action Plan

COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB- COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06

Meeting dates			
4 July 2006	5 October 2006	4 January 2007	14 March 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress Report on Community Safety Activities • Respect Action Plan • Community Safety Service Plan • Report on vandalism of street name plates (item referred by O&S E & CE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress Report on Community Safety Activities • Half Yearly Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress Report on Community Safety Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress Report on Community Safety Activities