

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 1 OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

held in Committee Room 1, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans on Tuesday 5 July 2005 at 7.00pm.

Present:

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

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Foster and Stevenson.
Mr S Welch, Strategic Director of Community Services.

In Attendance:

Councillor Smith

Officers in Attendance:

Mrs C Roach, Community Support Manager;
Mrs C Ashby, Community Safety Officer.

Also in Attendance:

Community Inspector Hanson, Hertfordshire Police.

Corporate Administrator:

Mr P Storey.

1. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of Meeting No.3 of the Sub-Committee held on 22 March 2005 were taken as read and confirmed.

Members noted that progress on many of the actions requested in the Minutes would be given in the reports contained on the agenda.

2. **MULTI-AGENCY PROBLEM SOLVING IN SOPWELL WARD**

Councillor Smith gave an oral presentation, as requested at the previous meeting, on an issue which had arisen in Sopwell Ward and which had involved liaison between a number of agencies. Complaints had been received by her in August 2004 regarding noise in Pat Lerner House and of vehicles being driven dangerously along the highway in that area. She had contacted the Police and Hightown Praetorian Housing Association and other problems had come to light. Environmental Health and Anti-Social Behaviour Officers had become involved, as had Ward Members for

St Peter's, as the problems were on the boundary of that ward. Local residents had been asked to keep logs of incidents in the area. The Police had taken action to resolve the various problems. Residents had been written to about the action and a public meeting held to reassure them and to seek to ensure their needs were met. There had been a change of use of Pat Lerner House, which would become general purpose housing. Some of the existing residents had moved on and others had been rehoused. The situation had been resolved in January 2005 and Members had been instrumental in bringing the problems to the attention of other agencies so that action could be taken.

Councillor Swendell asked about the logging system used by residents and drew attention to the nuisance record diaries which had been used in a similar situation in Redbourn. There had been some initial concerns that these diaries might breach the Data Protection Act but this had been resolved. Inspector Hanson stated that diaries were useful to record one-off incidents but the Police did not have the resources to collect and study on-going records. He preferred people to report problems direct to the Police. Councillor Smith stated that it had been difficult to persuade some people to keep logs, although a number had done so. Members referred to the incident logs which various agencies could supply and the use of professional witnesses where people did not want to keep or sign a log.

The Chairman asked if Ward Members would have been informed of the situation at Pat Lerner House if the situation had been brought to the attention of the Police or another agency. Councillor Smith referred to another incident of which Ward Members had not been informed and which she first became aware of in the local press. The Chairman stated that the situation should improve under the recently approved Community Safety Strategy, which linked together a number of agencies. Inspector Hanson referred to Locality Policing which was currently being structured and would involve liaison with a number of other agencies. He gave further details, as at Minute 3 below.

Members thanked Councillor Smith for her presentation.

3. **LOCALITY POLICING STRUCTURE**

Further to Minute 2 above, Inspector Hanson circulated a diagram of the proposed Locality Policing Structure. There would be twenty Ward Teams, with seven Locality Teams above that and one District Team. Ward and Locality Teams would include Ward Members and other agencies and there would be a District Council representative on the District Team. Ward Teams would meet monthly to consider local issues and how they could be resolved. Neighbourhood Watch schemes would have a key role in the Ward Teams and the Police were looking into "kick starting" the schemes where necessary. The intention was that the Ward Teams would develop into Neighbourhood Panels, which would influence how the Wards were policed. The Locality Teams would meet quarterly and need not necessarily involve Members from Wards which did not have any issues at that time. The District Team would meet every six months and would be the monitoring group. The structure was intended to be flexible and would place more responsibility on Ward Constables to liaise with Members and agencies in their Wards. The new structure should be operational in September 2005.

Members asked for information on Ward staffing figures. Inspector Hanson stated that this information was not currently kept but was likely to be kept in the future.

4. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A)(4) 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.

5. **RECENT CRIME FIGURES AND TRENDS**

Councillor Swendell expressed concern that the iQuanta crime figures had to be considered after the exclusion of the public because they were confidential, unaudited information obtained from the Home Office website. The Community Support Manager stated that the figures would be made public after they had been audited but this could take several months. There were crime figures produced by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which could be made public and these were circulated at the meeting. However, as the Home Office iQuanta figures were those against which the District was judged in trying to achieve the Government's crime reduction targets, they had to be considered by the Sub-Committee and could not be discussed in the public part of the meeting.

Inspector Hanson drew attention to the figures for criminal damage which were very far off target and also thefts from persons and motor vehicles. He stated that there were no "hot spots" in the District and that crime tended to be sporadic. He drew attention to the recent spate of pick pocket thefts in the market, which had declined after an arrest had been made and crime prevention action had been taken. This kind of activity tended to migrate between towns and rapidly moved on. Operations were underway on other types of crimes and the new Locality Policing structure should assist to deal with incidents.

Inspector Hanson then made the following points in relation to crime figures and trends:

- Figures could be distorted if one person committed several incidents at the same time, e.g. damaging a line of motor vehicles, as each incident would be recorded as a separate crime;
- Many probable alcohol related crimes were not recorded as such as there were often no witnesses to indicate whether or not alcohol had been involved;
- Since the Designated Public Places Order had come into effect on 1 April 2005 a good deal of alcohol had been seized and people moved on. The Community Safety Officer stated that no fixed penalty notices had been issued yet on people continuing to drink alcohol in a designated place but that the need to issue these would be kept under review;
- Less than 1% of Ward Constables had been abstracted from the Central Area during the last year, although one was currently in Thailand helping to deal with the effects of the Tsunami. In Redbourn, the Ward Constable had been abstracted one week in five as she was a specialist in a particular area of Police

work. The Chief Constable had stated that Ward Constables should not be abstracted for more than 20% of their time.

Members thanked Inspector Hanson for attending the meeting and presenting the crime figures and trends for the District.

The Sub-Committee then returned to Part I of the meeting.

6. **FINAL COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY**

A copy of the Community Safety Strategy, as approved by the Home Office, was contained in the agenda and could be extracted for Members' future reference. Members noted that in some areas, the District was ahead of target but behind in other areas and that the Strategy included local issues as well as targets set by the Home Office.

7. **DRAFT COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received an early draft Action Plan for the period 2005-2006. The Plan provided a baseline for where the District was now, where it was hoped to be in the future and for issues to be targeted for consideration. It was noted that it was difficult to include actions in the Plan without revealing information about specific operations to be undertaken. The Performance Management Group would study where targets in the Action Plan were not being met and could focus resources on those areas. The Responsible Authorities Group would also monitor performance in meeting the Plan's targets.

It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would receive summary exception reports, indicating where targets in the Plan were not being met. This would be undertaken for a trial period to see if it proved useful.

8. **COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received a progress report on Community Safety activity since its last meeting. Members asked that further progress reports be presented to future meetings. It was noted that a bid for funding was likely to be made for a community home for controlled drinking but that it was likely to be a long term project.

9. **DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2005-08**

The Sub-Committee received an early draft Communications Strategy for the period 2005-2008. A short initial meeting had been held with partners to look at how to inform people that the Community Safety Partnership existed and what its aims were. Different communication approaches would be needed for different groups. Abbreviated, user friendly versions of the Community Safety Strategy would be produced and distributed in hard copy format. The intention was to seek to engage people in the process.

The Chairman suggested that Members could deliver the abbreviated versions when they delivered printed material to residents in their wards.

Councillor Swendell stated that there was a need to overcome public cynicism

10. **WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06**

The Sub-Committee considered items for inclusion in its Work Programme for 2005/06. A number of items had been suggested for future consideration at the Sub-Committee's first meeting, on 9 November 2004. The Work Programme was then agreed, as set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes. It was agreed that items could be added to the Work Programme as the year progressed.

11. **UPGRADE OF THE POLICE TELEPHONE SYSTEM**

Councillor Swendell expressed concern at the recent upgrade of the Police telephone system, which made it difficult to contact the Police on non-emergency matters. The Community Support Manager undertook to raise this item with the Divisional Police Commander and obtain more information (Appendix 1 refers). She also stated that a new Chief Inspector (Partnerships) had been appointed for the area.

Members asked that a standing item be placed on the agenda for each meeting on reports and updates from the Police as these were considered to be very useful.

The meeting ended at 8.42pm.

(Signed)

CHAIRMAN

COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06

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 • Exception Report on the Community Safety Action Plan • Community Safety Update • Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and demonstration of surveillance equipment • Lighting • Use of CCTV Cameras 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Exception Report on the Community Safety Action Plan • Community Safety Update • Locality Policing Meetings Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Crime Figures for the District • Police Report • Exception Report on the Community Safety Action Plan • Community Safety Update • The Effects of the Licensing Legislation in the District • Racial Crime

Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the Police suggested that the 5 October 2005 meeting would be too early to receive a report on Locality Policing Meetings, as they would only have commenced in September. It was agreed with the Chairman, therefore, that this item be moved back to the 12 January 2006 meeting (from 5 October) and that Lighting and the Use of CCTV Cameras be brought forward from 12 January 2006 to 5 October 2005. The Work Programme above has been amended to reflect these changes.

UPGRADE OF THE POLICE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Further to Minute 11 above regarding when the Police Headquarters Call Centre would be completed, the Community Support Manager was able to confirm, having checked with the Police, that the Control Room building is scheduled for completion in December 2005. With regard to performance figures, the average over the last 13 weeks to 12 July was 73% for non-emergency within 30 seconds and 94% for emergency within 10 seconds. The initial speed within which the Police answer non-emergency calls is very good, but delays are being experienced by some callers owing to the time it takes them to transfer the call, if required, to the contact centre or control room to deal with them. The Police are still looking at the possibility of establishing area help desks.