

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

held on Wednesday 5 October 2005 in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans at 7.00pm.

Present:

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

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Foster;
Mr M Hanson, Community Inspector, Hertfordshire Constabulary
Mr S Welch, Strategic Director of Community Services.

In Attendance:

Councillor Donald.

Officers in Attendance:

Mr N Kieran – Anti-Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator;
Mr B Peers – Engineer and Technical Services Manager;
Mrs C Roach – Community Support Manager;
Mr C Fagan – Democratic Services Manager.

1. REPLACEMENT MEMBER

The meeting noted the replacement of Councillor Eileen Harris by Councillor Smith, for this meeting only, in accordance with the notification procedure.

2. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman accepted the following item for consideration as urgent business:

Police Force Restructuring, on the grounds that a response to a Government consultation was required by 10 October 2005.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of Meeting No.1 of the Sub-Committee held on 5 July 2005 were taken as read and confirmed.

4. CCTV OPERATIONS AND LIGHTING

Members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to visit the CCTV Operations Centre, which had been arranged by Brian Peers.

Councillor Swendell drew attention to the apparent lack of provision of CCTV cameras in the parished areas and asked what the criteria were for locating cameras.

Brian Peers responded that cameras had originally been provided on the basis of co-funding between the Home Office, the District Council and Parish Councils. Some Parish Councils, notably Redbourn, had been more ready to participate than others and had in consequence received some provision of cameras earlier than other Parishes. The location of cameras was determined chiefly by the expected likelihood of situations requiring viewing of footage from these cameras. CCTV cameras required a reasonable line of sight to be effective. The District Council was currently working with a number of Parish Councils on provision of cameras within Parishes. The Council's budget for CCTV provision was limited and they were attempting to obtain contributions for such funding from developers of any suitable site. The current car parking contract, which involved upgrading security, provided an opportunity for extra provision of CCTV cameras. The District Council currently had two mobile CCTV cameras, which were used respectively for anti-social behaviour work and for fly tipping.

Councillor Smith referred to a site in Sopwell Ward where fly tipping regularly took place and requested information on how she could obtain the services of a CCTV camera at that location. She was advised to contact the Head of Environment and Health.

Christine Roach stated that the Council had a multi-agency CCTV monitoring group, one of the roles of which was to check the current and potential locations for CCTV cameras. The decisions on where these cameras should be located would be prioritised on the basis of police statistics of incidents. Much of the current provision of CCTV cameras had been enabled by Community Safety Partnership funding from the Home Office.

Brian Peers observed that a Home Office initiative which was being piloted in St Albans, Stevenage and Watford, would provide Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras on 8 routes into the City Centre, which would be used to track the movements of suspect individuals' vehicles.

Mr Peers stated that there would be an opportunity for interested Members to visit the Control Room to observe the operation of the cameras in the Council's Pub-Watch Scheme.

Mr Peers stated that lighting was a principal contributor to better safety. The Council had a budget for lighting improvements and he was liaising with the Police to suggest sites for better lighting, for example on footpaths in both the City and village communities. He would welcome suggestions from Members about suitable locations. Councillor Swendell commented that improvements to lighting could result from simple operations such as the regular cleaning of lamp glasses.

RESOLVED

That the thanks of the Sub-Committee be accorded to Brian Peers for his presentation and for arranging the visit to the CCTV Control Room.

5. THE WORK OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT, INCLUDING ASBOs, ABCs AND GENERAL SURVEILLANCE

Neil Kieran updated the Sub-Committee on the latest situation. Since the scheme began in June 2005, 58 cases had been referred for further action. The Council staff involved had been accredited with police powers and this included the power to take alcohol from people within the no-alcohol zone. Action could be taken under these powers subject to evidence being obtained to ban persons causing annoyance from the City Centre. The

role of the officers was to identify and prioritise offenders and put a case to exclude them. Following that, ASBOs might be imposed. His unit had produced a leaflet on legal and illegal uses of motorcycles/scooters and related vehicles. The Council had been nominated for a Hertfordshire Problem Solving Area Policing Award in respect of work done within the Cell Barnes area and there was a possibility of the Council making an application for beacon status in this field. It was hoped shortly to establish a hotline for people to report incidents to his section for investigation.

Mr Kieran then demonstrated surveillance equipment purchased with Home Office funding, which was currently in use within the City and District. In answer to questions, he stated that the Council's team comprised himself and Tony Clark, the Anti-social Behaviour Caseworker. They were active in the Shop Watch Scheme and were currently averaging one citizen's arrest per week for shoplifting. In general, however, they relied on their powers of persuasion and verbal skills to deal with problem situations. All anti-social behaviour information obtained was linked up to Police records and the Council worked closely with the Police in this area.

RESOLVED

That the thanks of the Sub-Committee be accorded to Neil Kieran for his demonstration and the information provided.

6. EXCLUSION OF 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.

7. QUARTERLY CRIME FIGURES

On behalf of Inspector Hanson, Christine Roach circulated up to date figures as at 30 September 2005, which replaced those sent out with the Agenda. The Committee noted a great improvement over the previous quarter's figures with the exception of Theft from the Person. Christine Roach commented that the latest figures indicated that the District was back on course to meet the targets set out in the strategy. Councillor Swendell observed that there were difficulties with the terminology in that some figures indicated an 18% rise in crime when the Council's target over 3 years was a reduction of 18%. He stated that the figures also showed a 24% drop in detection rates. Christine Roach commented that the figures for the first quarter had been off-target but the Community Safety Partnership was now back on track. Nevertheless, she would draw this matter to the attention of the Police and report back to the Committee via the minutes.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting, Inspector Hanson has reported that Detections rates have fallen largely because Police now only get credited on the statistics with Sanctioned detection rates. This basically means that Police no longer count admissions made by offenders on other offences after they have been convicted and sentenced on the original offence or offences. These were known as 'clear ups'. The Police sanctioned detection rate is currently up on last year's but below target. This is due to internal factors and being addressed, through training etc. Basically Police are arresting more people but not converting enough to sanctioned detections. The theft from person figures are high due particularly to the problem with thefts from the handbags of the elderly in the city centre

largely on Wednesdays and Saturdays (market days). These were high early in the year, but are now much lower and the statistics are improving. There is an ongoing police operation in the city centre to deal with these and Police have handed out over 1000 chains to elderly visitors to secure handbags.

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

8. **REPORTS AND UPDATES FROM THE POLICE**

In the absence of Inspector Mike Hanson, Christine Roach reported information received from him. In terms of Neighbourhood Watch, there were 710 operational schemes out of a total of 1,651 roads. Members queried the accuracy of some of these figures. Christine Roach responded that the police were now committed to improving the quality of the information in Neighbourhood Watch Areas. Members stressed the need for the police to support actively Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators to encourage them to continue with their voluntary work. She stated that Brian Peers had offered Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators a tour of the CCTV Control Room and had offered to host the next Co-ordinators' meeting.

Afternote: Mike Hanson subsequently reports that some of the schemes are dormant but that Ken Lane, the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, is working through them as fast as he can to re-launch dormant schemes.

On the issue of community policing, Christine Roach reported on behalf of Mike Hanson that the majority, 15 out of 20, ward meetings had now taken place with the remaining few to be held shortly. On the subject of police officer abstractions, it was noted that the area came within the 20% maximum abstraction level. She stated that ward meetings would receive crime figure updates.

Members stressed that percentages were less significant to them than absolute numbers. Councillor Swendell expressed a wish to be shown comparative figures for Dacorum and Watford as he felt that these were more relevant to local people than regional figures. Christine Roach reported that St Albans figures were shown in a family grouping of most similar Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, as imposed on the Partnership by the Home Office.

Christine Roach undertook to pass these comments on to the Police.

9. **ST ALBANS COMMUNITY SAFETY REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report on recent Community Safety activity and future plans.

Members noted the recent bid to the ODPM Homelessness Innovation Fund for a fixed-term project manager who could co-ordinate a project to provide a community home for control drinking. They were concerned that fixed-term funding implied that the funding would cease.

Christine Roach responded that, if the bid was successful, the intention would be for Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association to appoint a project manager on a fixed term contract of approximately 15 months with effect from 1 January 2006 to pull together the structure, funding, permissions etc in relation to the possible establishment of a community home for controlled drinking. The Council will be informed shortly on the success or otherwise of the bid.

Members commended the Council on the success of the recent Taxi Marshal Scheme which provided for a smoother flow of passengers into taxis and away from centres of entertainment, such as the City Centre and Batchwood.

Christine Roach stated that a Drug and Alcohol Workplace policy was shortly to be introduced into the Council and that drug and alcohol awareness training would be offered to all Council Staff and Members, funded by the Human Resources budget. Additionally, she was planning to establish training around mainstreaming of community safety throughout the Council and, again, for Members. Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Councils could be fined if they do not consider the community safety implications of any decisions they took.

10. **SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06**

The work programme was agreed as set out at Appendix 1, with the addition of the outcome of the Police Restructuring Proposals to the agenda for 12 January 2006.

11. **POLICE FORCE RESTRUCTURING**

Members received information from Councillor Swendell and the Officers on proposals from the Home Office for police force restructuring to provide for the amalgamation of forces with less than 4,000 officers or 6,000 total staff. They noted with grave concern that a consultation letter from the Hertfordshire Police Authority was dated 4 October 2005 and the closing date for the consultation was Monday 10 October 2005. Christine Roach tabled and drew attention to a briefing note produced for a multi-agency workshop meeting at Hertfordshire County Council offices on 30 September and suggested that if the Committee were minded to produce a response that document could taken as the basis.

RESOLVED

That Members produce a response to the consultation, using the tabled briefing note, for which the endorsement of the Portfolio Holder for Community Development and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee should be sought.

Note: The Chairman, Members and officers met following the meeting to prepare a response to the consultation. The response is attached at Appendix 2 and sent by e-mail on 7 October 2005.

The meeting ended at 8.55pm.

(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 • 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 • Locality Policing Meetings Report • Community Safety Work Programme and Performance Targets • Progress report on Community Safety Activities • Outcome of 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 |

Subject: Response to Consultation on Force Restructuring

Dear Sally

I should be grateful if you could pass the following on to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson and to Mr Whiteley.

"Dear Mesrs Laidlaw-Dickson and Whiteley

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Community Safety Sub-Committee of St Albans City & District Council.

We are amazed at, and very unhappy with, the length of time given for consultation on this important issue. Given that your letter is dated 4th October and responses are required by 10th October this, in effect, gives us three working days for consultation. The issue has therefore only had time to be discussed by the Community Safety Sub-Committee of the Council and not by a higher committee. Please convey to the Home Office our dissatisfaction in this respect.

Members of the Committee have had the chance to review the summary feedback from the workshop/seminar on Friday 30 September and would support the issues and concerns raised in that feedback.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Joyce Lusby
Chair, Community Safety Sub-Committee
St Albans City & District Council"