

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

held on Thursday 5 October 2006 in Committee Room 2, District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans at 6.00pm.

Present:

Councillors Lusby (Chairman), Green (Vice-Chairman), Canham, Eileen Harris, Rowlands and Willcocks.

Apology for Absence:

Councillor Stroud.

In Attendance:

Redbourn Parish Councillor Swendell.

Officers in Attendance:

Mr B Peers, Engineer and Technical Services Manager;
Mrs C Roach, Community Support Manager;
Ms L Treasure, Business Crime Manager;
Mr P Storey, Corporate Administrator.

Also in Attendance:

Community Inspector M Hanson, Hertfordshire Constabulary.

1. REPLACEMENT MEMBER

It was noted that Councillor Canham had replaced Councillor Stevenson as a member of the Sub-Committee for this meeting only in accordance with the notification procedure.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of Meeting No.1 of the Sub-Committee held on 4 July 2006 were taken as read and confirmed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Minute 7 – Quarterly Crime Figures

A letter had been sent to the Home Secretary, expressing concern that the iQuanta crime figures could only be considered after the exclusion of the public from meetings. A reply had been received stating that the figures fell within the Sub-Committee's remit for discussion. A further letter had been sent asking if the figures could be considered in the public part of the meeting. Members asked that the reply, when received, be circulated to all members of the Sub-Committee.

(ii) Minute 10 – Response from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

A meeting had been held with the CPS, as requested, at which the Chairman, officers and the Police had been present. The CPS had stated that information relating to ASBOs could only be shared with the Police and not with Anti-social Behaviour Officers based within local authorities. The officers had disputed this view and stated that such information was shared in other districts. The CPS and officers would look further into the situation and look at how well the protocols were operating. A further meeting would be held before Christmas 2006.

4. **VANDALISM AND THEFT OF STREET NAME PLATES**

The Sub-Committee considered a reference from the Overview and Scrutiny (Enterprise and Civic Environment) Committee from its meeting on 14 March 2006 and a further report made to that Committee on 12 September 2006. The Committee had asked that the Sub-Committee be requested to look into the issue of vandalism to street name plates.

The Engineer and Technical Services Manager stated that the incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour so far this year had declined against the number of incidents for the previous year. He thought this might be as a result of a long hot summer which had meant that more people were out and about. This had meant that many areas were subject to public surveillance by the residents which, in turn, meant that potential offenders were less likely to undertake acts of vandalism. He would monitor the situation during the winter months to see if anything changed. Inspector Hanson stated that only one vandalised street name plate had been reported to the Police. The Engineer and Technical Services Manager stated that he did not normally report these matters to the Police as it was difficult to see what action could be taken if there was no evidence of who had committed the vandalism. There was now an improved budget for this area of work which allowed missing or damaged street name plates to be ordered on a monthly basis, rather than aggregating missing plates and ordering in batches as previously. There should be two name plates at each end of each through road. Where name plates went missing at both sides of a road, a temporary plastic name plate was installed to assist emergency vehicles to find locations. There were plans to introduce an internet-based system whereby members of the public could report missing or damaged plates online. Details would be publicised through the next Community Wrap. Details would also be provided to Members through the Members Information Bulletin. Members asked that the publicity on street name plates should indicate the number of plates on through roads (four) so that members of the public would be aware when any were missing and could report that to the Engineer and Technical Services Department. The Engineer and Technical Services Manager would try to include that information in the Community Wrap if the publication deadline had not passed.

Councillor Swendell stated that the Council needed to have a policy regarding criminal damage. The Community Support Manager stated that Cabinet had set up a working party which was looking to establish a single cross-Council enforcement team. One of the areas it might be considering as part of its remit was the monitoring of criminal damage to Council property in the District. The Chairman asked for a copy of the working party's final report to be made to the Sub-Committee for information.

RESOLVED

That a copy of the final report of the Cabinet Working Party looking at the establishment of a single enforcement team be made to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee

5. **QUARTERLY CDRP CRIME FIGURES**

It was noted that, pending a reply to the further letter sent to the Home Office (Minute 3(i) above refers), the crime figures had been split into sections on the agenda, with the CDRP figures in Part I and the iQuanta figures in Part II (Minute 13 below refers).

A summary of the September All Crime figures, which had only just been received, was circulated at the meeting and it was agreed that the September figures be issued with the minutes of the meeting. The All Crime figures for April-August 2006 showed a reduction of 15% against the same period last year. Mashalswick South and Harpenden North were the only wards showing an increase, whilst the other 18 wards in the District showed a decrease in the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, although the rate of improvement was slowing down in those wards. It was noted that the British Crime Survey figures for the District showed a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour of 27% to the end of August 2006, which made the District the best performing CDRP in Hertfordshire.

Inspector Hanson stated that the problem area where the Police were concentrating resources was personal robbery, particularly by young people on other young people.

6. **POLICE REPORT**

Inspector Hanson reported that there was one Constable post to be filled in the District and he anticipated this would be filled shortly. There was also one PCSO post currently to be filled.

7. **REVIEW OF LOCALITY POLICING MEETINGS**

Inspector Hanson stated that he had not had the opportunity to review the locality policing meetings in detail and welcomed Members' comments on them. His own views were that the meetings were working well and meetings were being held frequently. Members considered that the meetings were very useful, although there could be difficulties in attending due to clashes with Council meetings. Members also asked if minutes of the meetings could be taken by Police officers or PCSOs. Inspector Hanson stated that although the Police took the lead, they were not Police meetings but were meetings involving interested parties in each ward. He did not want Police officers or PCSOs minuting them. He was, however, looking into the possibility of introducing a minutes template listing actions, rather than more formal minutes.

In answer to a question about displacement of criminals/anti-social elements, Inspector Hanson stated that it was his aim to make the situation uncomfortable for such people in the District through the initiatives being undertaken. Similar initiatives in Hertfordshire, and eventually nationally should prevent the problem being displaced to other areas. He also stated that locality policing meetings had been established in the District following the Government's call for ward panels by 2008.

The meetings were seen as being more practical than panels were likely to have been. He considered that this decision had placed the District ahead of neighbouring authorities who had not created locality policing meetings.

8. **PRESENTATION ON SABAC – ST ALBANS BUSINESS AGAINST CRIME**

Linda Treasure gave an oral presentation on SABAC, St Albans Business Against Crime, which had recently been formed. Businesses in the District were being invited to join SABAC, initially in the city centre, for a small fee. SABAC shared intelligence on anti-social activities and persons. SABAC operated a scheme whereby a person banned from one member's premises would also be banned from all members' premises. Some businesses had already been given their own radios to report anti-social behaviour in their premises. Businesses in St Albans and London Colney were being invited to join SABAC, which would then be rolled out to Harpenden and then to the local retail and industrial parks. Railway stations and petrol stations would also be eligible to join SABAC. Pubwatch would also be part of SABAC. No negative comments had been received about the scheme which, although new to the District, was one of almost 200 in the country. The scheme was funded by the Police and hosted by the Council for its first year, with the Business Crime Manager reporting to the Community Support Manager. A SABAC Board with representation from local businesses had been appointed. After the first year it was anticipated that SABAC would be self funded by businesses in the District.

It was noted that shoplifting was a significant problem for businesses in the District. Members suggested that businesses did not always take all the precautions they might to reduce shoplifting and other forms of theft from their premises and suggested that more could be done in this area to educate shop owners and managers.

In answer to a Member's question, Ms Treasure stated that there were differences between the CCTV systems in the city centre and in the Maltings but it was hoped it might be possible to link them in the future. The Community Support Manager stated that because businesses would be encouraged to report crimes such as shoplifting and anti-social behaviour to the Police, this might result in crime figures showing an increase initially.

9. **COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE TO JUNE 2006**

The Community Support Manager presented a report on service delivery and improvement actions. She stated that a new Community Safety Co-ordinator had started on 7 August 2006. The Co-ordinator had been tasked with organising training on mainstreaming community safety throughout the Council. Such training would be made available to relevant officers, Members and also to the Town and Parish Councils,. The training would cover Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act which required Councils to take community safety implications into account when taking decisions. As an example of mainstreaming community safety, the Community Support Manager would look into incorporating this requirement into all committee reports, particularly those to Planning Committees.

Members expressed interest in the pilot project on the Alban Way and the Community Support Manager undertook to speak to the Parks Manager regarding budgetary provision for the project. Members also asked that figures for anti-social behaviour at St Albans City and Harpenden railway stations, which were collated by

the British Transport Police, be reported to alternate meetings of the Sub-Committee. The Community Support Manager was hoping to work with First Capital Connect regarding reducing crime and anti-social behaviour at the District's railway stations. She was disappointed that the company had not to date consulted the Council regarding its plans for investment at the stations despite a meeting with the company after the award of the franchise. She also stated that she was liaising with the Leisure department regarding rough sleepers in closed churchyards, which were the responsibility of the Council to maintain.

10. **CRIME AND DISORDER ACT REVIEW UPDATE**

The Community Support Manager presented a report indicating how the review of the Act and proposed changes would affect the District. It was noted that St Albans was "ahead of the game" in many respects, as set out in the report. The Chairman asked regarding the content of the National Intelligence Model. The Community Support Manager stated that she understood the Model related to intelligence led policing and that the Police and Justice Bill would contain the necessary legislation to implement the changes required for the Model. Members considered that the report provided an overview of the Review but wished to consider it in more detail at the next meeting.

A Member asked if there were any protocols on the role of Members and the information they could be given on particular situations, especially in relation to locality policing meetings. The Community Support Manager stated that she would look into this matter. Members asked for more information on how the proposals under the review would affect the District.

11. **SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07**

The Sub-Committee requested a progress report on the Crime and Disorder Act Review to its next meeting (on 4 January 2007), to be included in the Progress Report on Community Safety Activities. Members also asked that items on the implications of the Police and Justice Act for the District and the outcome of the Audit Commission review of partnership working in St Albans be reported to the same meeting.

The work programme, as amended above, is attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

12. **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.

13. **IQUANTA CRIME FIGURES**

There had been a large reduction in crimes in the District during the period 1 June – 31 August 2006, which had improved the District's position in the CDRP rankings. Theft and robbery figures were a concern and shoplifting was more prevalent than had been realised in the District.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm.

(SIGNED)

CHAIRMAN

COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB- COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07

Meeting dates			
4th July 2006	5th October 2006	4th January 2007	14th 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 • The Government's "Respect" Agenda • Response from the Crown Prosecution Service 	<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 • Review of the Crime and Disorder Act • Street Nameplates • Review of Locality Policing Meetings 	<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 (including an update on the Crime and Disorder Act Review) • Implications for the District of the Police & Justice Act • Outcome of the the Audit Commission Review of Partnership Working in the District 	<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