

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd May 2006.

Present:

Councillor John Haynes (Chair)
" John Wells (Vice Chair)
" John Appleton
" David Booth
" Jose Compton
" Michael Doody
" Anne Forwood
" Bernard Kirton
" Barry Longden
" Mike Perry
" Dave Shilton
" Heather Timms

Also Present: Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Councillors Alan Farnell and June Tandy.

Officers:

William Brown, Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer.
Trevor Brice, Deputy County Fire Officer, Community Protection Directorate.
Jim Graham, Chief Executive, Warwickshire County Council.
Victoria Cooke, Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Charles McGibbon, Senior Business Analyst, Performance and Development Directorate.
Nicole North, Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate.
Diane Johnson, Head of Youth Offending Service.
Kate Nash, Community Safety Manager, Community Protection Directorate.
Assistant Chief Constable Andy Parker, Warwickshire Police.
Jane Pollard, Scrutiny Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.
Helen Murphy, Financial Services Manager, Community Protection Directorate.
Oliver Winters, Head of Finance, Resources Directorate.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Others Present : 2 Members of the Fire Service Union and another.

1. General

The Chair referred to the revised agendas that had been sent out to Members for this meeting. He confirmed that the agenda sent out on 20 April 2006 was the appropriate agenda for consideration by the Committee, together with the report forwarded on the 28 April 2006 from the Strategic Director of Community

Protection/County Fire Officer, and headed Community Protection Medium Term Efficiency Projects.

(1) Apologies

None

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as follows –

The following Members declared personal interests arising by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillors as listed below:

Stratford-on Avon District Council – Councillor John Appleton

Warwick District Council - Councillors Josie Compton, Michael Doody and Dave Shilton

Rugby Borough Council – Councillor Heather Timms

North Warwickshire Borough Council – Councillor Anne Forwood

2. Public Question Time

Question from Mr. Paul Reader, resident of Arley –

- Q. 1. At the next Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee could you please ask the Committee to find out if measures are being taken to substantiate the reason for the increase in Violent Offences, i.e. is any quantitative evidence being gathered, are repeat offenders responsible, are specific incidents giving anomaly to recorded crime figures, etc.
- Q. 2 Could you please ask if it is Policy for Warwickshire Police to –
- (a) classify Violence as disorderly behaviour?
 - (b) issue Fixed Penalty Notices for certain Violent Crimes or are all offenders of violence brought before the Courts, where evidence is available? If Fixed Penalty Notices are issued for Violent Crime, What Category of Violence comes under the remit for a Fixed Penalty Notices, common assault, ABH, GBH or hospitalization of a victim?

ACC Andy Parker referred to his response to the above questions, tabled at the meeting. He also circulated a further update on figures relating to information on violent crime, covering the 3 year period 2003 – 2006 and

highlighted the increase in the number of recorded incidents of harassment over this period. He explained that harassment was commonly known as public disorder and could consist of someone shouting abuse or behaving in any way, which might cause fear and alarm to another. The Home Office classed this type of disorder as a violent crime. The Police had concentrated their efforts on that type of offence, which had resulted in violent crime increasing. The Police arrested 1,161 more offenders in 2005/06 than in the previous year. Without targeted police activity, recorded violent crime would have fallen last year.

During discussion a Member expressed concern that, despite the reported increased Police activity, crime in his area had not been seen to be reducing or any arrests made. He welcomed information on the number of crimes that had been solved.

In reply to questions ACC Parker said that –

- There had been a slight increase in gun crime over the West Midlands region but a dedicated team had been established and good results achieved. There were three joint operations ongoing at this time.
- Increased Police activity had led to a rise in the number of recorded crimes, particularly in the areas of, domestic violence, harassment (including ASB) and hate crime.
- Where Members were concerned about lack of Police action a complaint should be made direct to the District Commander, or direct to him if that request failed to achieve a response.

The Committee –

- (1) Thanked ACC Andy Parker for responding to the questions;
- (2) Asked that the response from ACC Andy Parker and the further update on recorded crime be forwarded to Mr. Reader;
- (3) Asked that Mr. Reader be thanked for his questions.

3. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Letter to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Chairs from Jim Graham, Chair of Youth Justice Management Board

Jim Graham said that he was addressing the Committee as Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board. He explained that the County Council funded over 70% of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) operations and was part of a joint enterprise, led by Diane Johnson and set up to tackle youth crime. Nationally the YOTs appeared to be doing well, particularly in Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). He was also Chair of the Community Safety Partnerships. and was well aware of the work being done by a number of different groups. His concern, expressed in the letter to the Chair of the

CDRPs, was that there were a number of separate groups working hard to reduce anti-social behaviour, but their work lacked co-ordination. The concern also related to the way in which young people, the subject of ASBOs were dealt with, without sufficient forward planning and about the need to involve the YOT. In this respect he had asked for reports from each CDRP.

Nationally, there was also a problem of ASBOs being used increasingly resulting in young people being given higher punishment tariffs for breaching ASBO's than they would have had for the original behaviour which caused an ASBO to be taken out. He highlighted the cost to the County Council of placing young people in secure accommodation.

During discussion Members –

- Said that from personal experience they had found that ASBOs took a long time to process and were hard to get in place.
- Had been informed at the Select Committee meeting on this issue that ASBOs were only used as a measure of “last resort”.
- Agreed that early intervention was essential in diverting young people from entering a life of crime as was help and support for families who were in need of parenting skills.

One Member expressed concern that despite the wide range of measures used to deal with anti-social behaviour these were ineffective in some areas where problems still existed and caused great distress to residents.

In reply to Members' questions and concerns Diane Johnson said that –

- Members' concerns about the impact of anti-social behaviour on the community were acknowledged;
- The YOT worked with young people aged between 10-17 years, and was a multi-disciplinary team that operated in partnership with other teams and agencies including the Police. The YOT was required by law to help prevent offending and to work with young people, within the legal framework and with the courts.
- The time taken to process ASBOs had been improved recently;
- Planning was essential to ensure the effectiveness of ASBOs. Comment on what prohibitions might be effective would be of great assistance. Additionally, a greater understanding of the process to ensure that breaches did not occur was essential to prevent a further appearance in court. Young people who were placed in custody were more likely to re-offend and to end up back in custody.
- Early intervention in Warwickshire was working well. There had been a significant increase in the work being done on parenting and with

families. Recruitment was currently taking place for staff to work solely with parents. A pilot scheme was currently being evaluated.

Diane Johnson highlighted that the additional work relating to ASB was being carried out currently within the YOT capacity and represented a significant increase in work. She added that this additional work would be brought to Members' attention a future report to Committee outlining the budget pressures on the Youth Offending Service and which she hoped they would support.

In conclusion, Jim Graham reiterated his concerns about the need for co-ordination of the work done on ASB and said he had already taken steps to amalgamate groups and streamline processes. He re-emphasised his concerns that secure accommodation should be used in those cases where serious crimes were evident e.g. murder, rape, arson. He asked those Members who represented their district and borough councils on CDRPs to convey his concerns.

The Chair and Members expressed their concern about the lack of consistency of CDRPs in the County in terms of Member representation and asked the Chief Executive to intervene to address this issue.

The Chair thanked Jim Graham and Diane Johnson for attending the meeting.

4. Safer Neighbourhoods Update

ACC Andy Parker, with the aid of a power point presentation (copy circulated to Members), presented a report from the Warwickshire Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, which summarised the progress of the Safety Neighbourhoods Programme. He outlined a proposal on how partners might engage with communities in the Safer Neighbourhood team areas (Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings). He encouraged elected Members and other agencies to engage at the earliest opportunity. Details of the Safe Neighbourhood team based at Police Headquarters were circulated. The team was now led by Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse. He stated that the Police were seeking to have a public contact point in each of the 32-team areas. He envisaged that any additional premises would be shared with other agencies and sought partner support.

In answer to questions he explained the proposed allocation of resources across the County and confirmed that the 32 Safer Neighbourhood Team areas were not yet 'set in stone'. He also confirmed that there would be flexibility allowed in relation to public consultation and local target setting.

The Chair thanked ACC Andy Parker for presenting the report.

5. Community Protection Medium Term Efficiency Projects and 2006/2007 Annual Efficiency Statement

The Chair outlined the background to this issue and reminded Members that that the reason for Cabinet referring the report on the Fire and Rescue Service draft Annual Efficiency Statement related to concern expressed about the efficiency savings being proposed for the north of the County.

William Brown presented his report, which was requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 20 April 2006, which provided Members with the opportunity to comment on the Community Protection Directorate Medium Term Efficiency Projects. This report was considered in conjunction the report to Cabinet on 6 April 2006, Annual Efficiency Statement 2006/2007, which was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration (item 9 below).

William Brown highlighted the two types of savings that were required of the Community Protection Directorate which were –

- Savings required nationally by the ODPM of around £1,042K for the period 2004/005 – 2007/08 which would not be taken out of the budget but reinvested to fund the Fire and Rescue Modernisation agenda.
- The two and a half percent efficiency savings budget agreed by the County Council and which applied across the whole of the Council's Directorates.

The following points were made during discussion –

- That there was confusion about which agendas and reports should be considered and the Monitoring Officer should be asked to investigate the reason for this confusion.
- That the discussion should be focused around the report referred from Cabinet on 6 April 2006 and the concern expressed at that meeting that the efficiency savings proposed had been unfairly directed to the north of the county.
- That the Committee should move forward and discuss the options set out in Table 3, page 9 of the report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection, requested by Members at their meeting on 20 April 2006.
- That the efficiency savings should be aimed at achieving an efficient Fire and Rescue service which met the needs of the people of Warwickshire.

In response to comments by Councillors June Tandy and Alan Farnell, Oliver Winters advised that the County Treasurer had a statutory duty to sign off a balanced budget for the County Council, which was agreed by all parties, and

he had carried out this duty over the last few years on the basis of unidentified efficiency savings.

William Brown advised that there were a wide range of efficiency saving that could be applied across the whole of the County that would produce savings without affecting the efficiency of the service, would reduce the risks to the community and that could be sustained in the future. He added that the savings were not only to be found for one year but over successive years. He acknowledged Members' concerns about the proposed savings in the north of the county but highlighted that sustaining overall efficiency of the service was a county-wide issue.

Resolved that –

- (1) The Strategic Director of Community Protection/County Fire Officer be asked to prepare a further report to the Committee's 25 July 2006 meeting on options for a rolling programme of efficiency savings for the Community Protection Directorate/ Fire and Rescue Service over the next three years.
- (2) The Monitoring Officer be asked to consider the reasons for confusion in the agendas and reports sent out for this meeting.

6. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to this Committee.

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

Members noted the provisional items for future meetings

(b) Future Items Relevant to this Committee

Members noted the Forward Plan item relevant to the work of this Committee as follows –

Cabinet 25 May 2006

Annual Efficiency Statement – Gains Achieved in 2005/06 (Fire and Rescue)

7. Any Other Item

None

8. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information.

Agenda 9 below was considered in open session and in conjunction with agenda 5 above.

9. 2006/07 Annual Efficiency Statement

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection/County Fire Officer, which was presented to Cabinet on 6 April 2006, in conjunction with item 5 above.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 5:35 p.m.