

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2007.

Present:

Councillor	John Appleton
"	Richard Chattaway (Chair)
"	Gordon Collett
"	John Vereker
"	Barry Longden
"	Mike Perry
"	John Wells (Vice Chair)

Officers:

Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety, Community Protection Directorate.

Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.

Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Glen Ranger, Assistant County Fire Officer, Community Protection Directorate

Mark Ryder, Head of Trading Standards and Healthier Communities, Adult, Health and Community Services.

Julie Sullivan, Corporate Safety Manager, Community Protection Directorate.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Davis, Bob Hicks, Heather Timms and Councillor Richard Hobbs (portfolio holder for Community Protection).

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

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

Stratford-on Avon District Council – Councillors John Appleton and Mike Perry

(3) (a) Minutes of the meetings held on 1 May 2007

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 May 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

(b) Matters Arising

None.

2. Public Questions

None

3. Progress on Safer Neighbourhood Policing - Presentation by Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse and Chief Inspector Tim Bailey.

CS David Whitehouse reminded Members of the background to Safer Neighbourhood Policing, as reported to previous meetings of the Council and updated the Committee on the following issues -

Post Implementation Review

CS Whitehouse explained that a post implementation review had been carried out by HMI of Constabulary in June which included a telephone mori poll and talking to members of the public. The results of the mori survey showed that the public's perception of police performance in respect of a wide range of issues was middle of the range and above when compared with the national average (working with the Police was above 80% against the national average of 76%). One area where the Police performance was perceived as not doing so well was revealed in the question "how to contact the Police". It was hoped, nevertheless, that the programme would receive a 'good' or 'fair' rating (the ratings range being excellent, good, fair and poor).

Resources

CS Whitehouse reported that the number of Community Support Police Officer (CSPO) had increased from 63 to 139 and said he hoped that Members had seen more Police presence in their areas. There were currently 31 Teams deployed across the county.

Estates and Transport

There were now 5 mobile police station, 4 new stations and one already in existence in North Warwickshire, which was provided by partnership funding. Five Safe Neighbourhood offices had also been established in Camp Hill, Benn Hall, Rugby, Southorn Court Leamington and Hatton Park. Other locations were also being investigated in Whitnash, Wolvey and Newton Regis. In addition he had been approached by Sainsburys to establish a beat office on their premises.

Website

A wide range of information was available on the Safer Neighbourhoods website (www.safer-neighbourhoods.co.uk). An Information Officer would soon be appointed to help the teams.

CI Tim Bailey reported on Community Engagement and Partners and Communities Together (PACT), which he said influenced and complemented national priorities. Five methods for engagement had been identified; surgeries, environmental visual audits, post cards, neighbourhood surveys and PACT meetings. These methods of community engagement often identified issues that were non-traditional Police issues because of the involvement of residents' and partner organisations, which enabled joint problem solving.

CI Bailey circulated copies of the Spring/Summer 2007 magazine "Impact – Your Safer Neighbourhoods magazine" and highlighted community initiatives in Coleshill, Rugby, Warwick, Camp Hill, Rugby and in particular an initiative in Galley Common with a hard to reach group of young people. The top 5 PACT priorities agreed across the county were identified as –

- (1) Nuisance Youths
- (2) ASB
- (3) Speeding vehicles
- (4) Criminal Damage
- (5) Parking and obstruction

During discussion Members comments were noted as follows -

- (1) The work of the Community Safety Teams, in particular the PCSOs, was commended and welcomed and worked well and PACT meetings had high public attendance.
- (2) A question was asked about the appropriateness of using school classrooms for the location of community beat offices and it was suggested that One-Stop Shops might be a more suitable venue.
- (3) Area PACT priorities re-affirmed the poor Mori poll response to "how to contact the Police" because the unanimous view at many PACT meetings was that it was difficult to get through to the Police on the phone.
- (4) A Member questioned the Police comment that PACT meetings should be chaired by county councillors as the Member believed that initially the instructions regarding the chairing of these meeting was the opposite to what had been stated.
- (5) That a PACT meeting, in one area, had started off well but had lost the momentum and pace. How PACT meetings would sustain interest and improvement was an issue of concern. The particular Member said that he had chaired his PACT meetings because the public present had not wanted to take on this role. The first 2 PACT issues (nuisance youths and ASB) were being dealt with and had shown patchy improvement but he maintained his concern about sustaining improvement.
- (6) Concern was expressed about the impact of PACT meetings, and similar unelected bodies, on the future of Area Committees.
- (7) A Member stated that the launch of the PACT meeting in the Dasset area had encountered difficulties because it had been arranged to take place before the start of an Area Committee (Stratford-on-Avon District Council Area Committee) and suggested that the two meetings should be held separately to avoid confusion in future.

In response to Members' comments CS Whitehouse and CI Bailey said that –

- (1) The location of Beat Teams in schools had been promoted only where a multi-agency base already existed and with the support of forward thinking Head Teachers. It was hoped to extend this model to other areas but he accepted Members' concerns about a Police office being located on a school site and the potential conflict that might arise.
- (2) The Police acknowledged the difficulties encountered by the public when trying to make contact by telephone and this was a persistent problem, which required much work to be done to put right.
- (3) Contacting local Police was being addressed by enabling direct access to PACT teams by e-mail. Contact by the phone to local teams was compounded by current phone calls being directed to a phone centre and was being addressed by local Police Officers being asked to share their "personal" police voicemail number.
- (4) Government guidance was given about how PACT meetings should be managed and they should also link in with CDRPs. The particular issue with Stratford PACT meetings was being addressed.

The Chair, in summary, recognised that some PACT areas were working well but some were not so good. He suggested that where good practise was achieved that this should be rolled out across other areas in order to try to address the concern about sustaining improvement of PACT performance. He welcomed the fact that the 5 PACT priorities did not all fall within the responsibility of the Police and it was encouraging that PCSOs had made a difference and that there had been a reduction in the public's perception of the "fear of crime". He thanked CS Whitehouse and CI Bailey for attending the meeting and hoped they would accept an invitation from the Committee to attend a future meeting.

CS Whitehouse thanked the Committee for inviting him and CI Bailey to address them and said that it was a Police decision to take the community partnership path and that Member and community support was vital to ensure the success of PACT meetings.

4. Year End Performance Report 2006/07

(a) Community Protection Directorate

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer, which outlined the full year (2006/07) performance report prepared by the Community Protection Directorate.

Glen Ranger, referring to the Executive summary, highlighted that remedial action was being taken to address targets not achieved in respect of issues such as –

- Secondary fires (linked with anti-social behaviour)
- Accidental dwelling fires
- Automatic Fire Alarm mobilisations

He informed Members that the Fire and Rescue Services was performing well against targets related to property fires – deliberate vehicle fires and fires in non-domestic properties, and improving against fire injuries, confinement of fires to room of origin and deliberate primary fires.

He said that the Directorate underspend included 439k relating to grant monies, much of which had arrived late in the year, and a further 199k was attributed to pensions. He pointed out that the underspend was earmarked for specific projects and the development of plans for implementation were being progressed to ensure implementation was achievable during 2007/08. The report also showed that 100% of key Community Protection objectives were achieved for 2006/07.

In answer to questions Glen Ranger gave assurances that measures to address areas of under performance were in place and this included better targeting of vulnerable communities and new processes relating to Automatic Fire Alarm mobilisation.

In reply to concern expressed about the increase in crime Kate Nash acknowledged that the statistics reflected a disappointing trend in crime and said that there was no absolute explanation as to why the increase had occurred. Some of the increase could be attributed to more robust Police prosecutions for violent crime and to the theft of satellite navigation equipment from vehicles. There was also tension between Police detection targets and WCC targets to reduce crime.

Councillor John Vereker added, from his knowledge as a member of the police Authority, that the Home Office (Criminal Justice Board) had altered the way crime was recorded and Magistrates and Judges had been encouraged not to send people to prison and that this might be a contributory factor as to why crime had increased.

During discussion the following comments were noted –

- (1) that it would have been beneficial if the Police representatives had remained in the meeting for the discussion of this item and that they should be asked to attend future meetings. The Chair commented that the Committee would need to identify topics, which would benefit from Police attendance, and notice given in advance of the meeting.
- (2) that the issues raised relating to the increase in crime would be more meaningful if they were discussed in conjunction with the later agenda item, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership performance (agenda item 5).

The Community Protection O&S Committee -

- a) Notes the Performance Report submitted by Community Protection Directorate for the full year 2006/07
- b) Endorses any proposed remedial actions.

(The Committee then considered agenda item 5, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership performance because of its relevance to the above item. The minutes of this meeting reflect the order of the items as listed on the agenda)

(b) Trading Standards

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Adult and Community Services which highlighted the full year performance of the Trading Standards Service against its published service plan and in accordance with County Council performance management procedures following a corporate template.

Mark Ryder highlighted that –

- (1) Trading Standards met all its key CPA measures in the environment block.
- (2) Overall satisfaction levels in respect of Consumer Direct was 1% short of target and remedial action was being taken to address this issue.
- (3) Trading Standards underspend of £54k at the end of the year was planned to achieve developments in 2007/08.
- (4) that 78 Police Community Support Officers had received training/education on doorstep crime

Mark Ryder then answered Members' questions on –

- Abattoir visits
- Monitoring of animal movements
- Farm visits

The Community Protection Overview & Scrutiny Committee –

- (1) notes the performance of the Trading Standards Service, and
- (2) endorses any proposed remedial actions

5. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships Performance Report (CDRP)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, which contained a summary of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships' performance against targets.

Kate Nash highlighted that –

- (1) there had been an increase in crime across the county but referred to paragraph 7 of the report, benchmarking, which showed that Warwickshire was in the middle range for similar force areas.
- (2) the Home Office had shown concern about the increase in crime in Rugby and Warwick. Action plans had been put in place to target this increase. The Police were confident that this action would result in a downturn in crime.
- (3) there was no absolute reason why the increase in crime had occurred. A new strategy had been introduced in an endeavour to deal with serious violent crime and this was to identify and arrest people earlier in the evening. The last two months' figures had shown a reduction in serious violent crime but common assault had increased.
- (4) Criminal damage and theft from vehicles was a problem across the county.

In response to Members' comments and concerns expressed during discussion of item 4 (a) above Kate Nash said that since the 2003 baseline a reduction in overall crime had been achieved and some projects had been successful but the work put into these initiatives was not sufficient meet CDRP targets and, whilst not complacent, where preventative measures had been put in place, there had been a reduction in crime.

She added that the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) had identified that 13% of offences in Warwickshire were committed by people who were on bail - this was over twice the national average. The LCJB was developing an action plan to address this.

(At this point the Chair left the meeting. Councillor John Wells took the Chair).

Discussion followed during which Members expressed concern and disappointment about the increase in crime in individual areas. In reply to questions Kate Nash said that Government funding for "Strong and Safer Communities" was channelled through the County Council to each CDRP (£110k for Rugby). In every category of crime, Rugby had performed worse than any other area in the county.

A Member said that despite assurances that crime had reduced from the 2003 baseline he believed that year on year the trend was upwards and he could not relate the report figures to those in the previously discussed Community Protection Directorate's performance report, agenda item 4 (a).

Members suggested that more detailed statistics on crime figures would be helpful for them to be re-assured about improvements between 2004-7. Kate Nash advised that this detail was available but that it was the CDRPs responsibility to analyse their own performance. She said that scrutiny of Community Safety was an issue about which Members might wish to carry out a joint scrutiny exercise and that this could be a matter for inclusion in the Committee's future work programme.

Councillor John Vereker proposed that Acting District Commander Bill Musgrove should be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to discuss the increase in crime in Rugby. Other Members expressed the view that the Magistrates should be again invited to a future meeting to discuss concerns about sentencing and the impact on crime figures.

Following further discussion the Committee -

- (1) Notes and expresses concern about crime reduction performance across the county and notes the targets set for 2007/8.
- (2) Notes the benchmarking against most similar force areas for the last three months.
- (3) Asks that the Acting District Commander for Rugby be invited to the next meeting to answer Members' concerns about the increase in crime.
- (4) Agrees that the Chair/Spokesperson and relevant officers consider further how the Committee might scrutinise community safety and CDRP performance.
- (5) Agrees that the Chair/Spokespersons consider Members' suggestion that the Magistrates be invited to attend a future meeting of Committee.
- (6) Ask Kate Nash to write to the Magistrates and the Criminal Justice Board about the current bail policy.

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

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee agreed the table setting out provisional items for future meetings and noted the LAA targets for which this Committee has the lead responsibility within the Council.

(b) Forward Plan – Items Relevant to this Committee

The Committee noted the Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee.

7. Any Other Items

There were no items of urgent business.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 4:35 p.m.