

Brighton and Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Community Safety Forum

Date: 23rd April 2007

Report of: Head of Community Safety

Subject: Safety on Buses

Wards affected: All

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Community Safety Forum of actions which are planned to be taken by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership to maintain and increase actual and perceived safety on buses.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Community Safety Forum note the action to be taken during coming months with the objective of increasing safety on buses.

3.0 The scale and nature of the problem

3.1 At the meeting of the Community Safety Forum in October 2006, the Forum were advised of the extent of actual and perceived safety on public transport. Much of that information had been drawn together within the Brighton & Hove Crime and Safety Audit carried out in 2004. The audit had explored the perception compared with the actuality of risk experienced when someone leaves their home and undertakes a journey on public transport and noted that both national and local research and surveys recorded gender differences in perceived levels of safety – and differences according to times of day and night. Surveys confirmed that young people had the same concerns as adults and that physical security measures made a difference and were valued.

3.2 The incidence of recorded offences that occurred on buses from 2003/04 and earlier data showed that in that year there were over 100 offences recorded, 30% of which were theft and 37% were recorded as violent crimes. Data also confirmed that more offences took place between Wednesday and Friday and a peak between 3 and 4 pm (when children finish school and between 6 and 7 pm (returning home from work) and between 9 pm and midnight. The age range of victims and offenders was at its highest for 15 –19

year olds, with the younger age groups (10 – 14 year olds) and the 20 – 29 year olds being the next highest. This analysis of recorded crimes on buses matched reported experiences – that it is the younger age group that cause problems both within the groups that they are travelling with and to other passengers.

3.3 Recent data analysis of the recorded level of incidents for the period January to September 2006 shows 126 recorded incidents, not unexpectedly, the highest proportion of which take place within routes which are in the Regency, East Brighton, St. Peters/North Laine and Queens Park wards. This more recent data, shows that it is the younger age group of 11 to 15 year olds who are most likely to be at risk and that males are more likely to be victims. As with the earlier data, violent crime and theft are the most common type of offences recorded.

3.4 This and other up to date analysis has been the basis of work undertaken by a steering group of officers which has included representatives from Brighton & Hove Bus Company, the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, the LGBT Safety Officer, the Children & Young Peoples Trust, the Environmental Improvement and Anti- Social Behaviour Teams, the Police and others. While 126 recorded crimes and incidents in a nine month period in 2006 is of course of concern, a main concern of that group of offices has been the extent to which recorded crimes and incidents are an accurate reflection of the level and type of day to day experiences of all of those who travel on buses. The ASB Team are aware of offences and intimidation caused by groups of unknown people and that many of those incidents are not reported. Spectrum has also communicated its knowledge and awareness of the concerns and experiences of the LGBT Community: Count Me In findings (with a sample of 1145 LGBT respondents) showed that 10% of LGBT people are deterred from using public transport. We are also concerned about incidents that appear to target foreign students and/or are motivated by racist or religious hatred and for those people who may be vulnerable because they are older or have a disability.

3.5 The Steering Group agreed that besides developing solutions to more effectively deal with perpetrators of actual offences, they also wish to tackle anti-social behaviour which is sometimes motivated by the desire to provoke confrontation and at other times may be 'showing off'. Whatever the motivations, the incidents cause fear of crime in fellow passengers. The behaviour can include loud, foul or sexually explicit language as well as threatening behaviour to other children and passengers.

3.6 Perpetrators may feel that such verbal attacks will go unreported and undetected. Drivers are not in a position to witness or take action and nor are passengers inclined to make a complaint to the driver in the majority of incidents. CCTV although invaluable and a tremendous resource which provides evidence with a theft, criminal damage or an assault, does not record verbal attacks or generally intimidating language or behaviour. Resources do not exist for the bus company to have a conductor or warden present or for the police to deploy officers across the city. Accurate and good quality intelligence

is a prerequisite to informing and prioritising the deployment of police or other enforcement resources – and we do not have that.

3.7 We concluded therefore, that we wished to develop a solution to the lack of a facility for witnesses or victims to discreetly or otherwise report incidents or anti-social behaviour on buses and to change what we see as the ‘permissive atmosphere’ which allows perpetrators to potentially target passengers with intimidating or abusive behaviour. Solutions therefore, needed to include a mechanism through which reporting – in confidence and in safety – could be a basis of bringing about that change in atmosphere as well as the means through which we could target resources and appropriate enforcement and preventative interventions. The following therefore are the range of solutions that the Steering Group are now developing. An allocation of £10,000 from the Home Office is helping to fund the development and introduction of the new reporting system, the publicity and campaign materials and planned targeted interventions later in the year.

4.0 Action being taken to increase safety and perceptions of safety on buses

- Developing a text based reporting system for both victims and witnesses. This will be a confidential and discreet mechanism to report incidents and experiences as they happen without having to confront the perpetrator. The information will be received by our existing Call Centre and which is already geared up to assessing, referring and responding to those who report incidents. Information on the buses and/or the ‘tip off’ on the text line will ask for information to include bus route, time and details of incident (description/name of offender if known) including if it is believed to be motivated by homophobia, transphobia, racism or religious hatred. The text sender will receive an immediate or fast response which advises of the action that will happen as a result of the text. That action may range from the report providing important evidence or intelligence which helps establish patterns of behaviour by particular perpetrators to describing how enforcement or other actions can be targeted and deployed.
- Information about the new text based reporting system and about a wider campaign will be communicated on the back of bus tickets, posters in and outside of the buses, on bus stops and elsewhere throughout the City. Successful actions taken against perpetrators will be well publicised. The publicity will be complemented by work in and around schools and colleges. The overall aim is to engender a message of respect for others while travelling on buses, to clearly communicate that causing offence and offending will not be tolerated, that there is increased surveillance and intelligence gathering and that action will be taken against perpetrators. We will also include messages that emphasise the low likelihood of being an actual victim.

- Work with schools and colleges is to be expanded. With their co-operation, guidance is to be provided which encourages positive behaviour on public transport, demonstrates respect for others and which aims to reduce bullying and make the journey to school and home as pleasant as possible. The information which will be appropriately designed and attractive for young people, will tell them what will happen if they do not behave sensibly and safely and will give advice about how bad language and 'playing about' can cause distress and fear in others. Brighton & Hove Bus Company are to participate in that work.
- Brighton and Hove Bus Company aim to sustain their investment in CCTV and their 'Response Teams' and are to enable their bus drivers to work more closely with our Anti-Social Behaviour Team in order that drivers are more aware of the value of sharing information and of the support and solutions that are available to tackle anti-social behaviour as well as crimes on buses.
- Our Anti-Social Behaviour Team work is to work even more closely with the Business Crime Reduction Partnership and Brighton & Hove Bus Company to target offenders who commit offences. Offender Profiles are developed, exclusion notices are obtained to prevent travelling on buses, photos of known offenders are shared with the Bus Company in order that those can be enforced and further incidents prevented and serious offences are dealt with by the ASB Team and the police. Targeted operations by the police and ASB Team will include those young people who are also committing offences on buses

5.0 The Steering Group will continue to expand its expertise in developing initiatives with the aim of increasing safety and perceptions of safety on public transport and to more effectively target those who are most vulnerable.

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