

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

4.00pm 9 MARCH 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Simson (Chairman); Barnett, Carden (Opposition Spokesperson), Duncan, Kennedy, Morgan, Smart, Watkins and Young

Sussex Police: Chief Superintendent Bartlett; Sergeant Castleton

Communities of Interest: G Brooker, SCLAT; J Stevens, City Councillor Tenants Representative; T Harmer, SCLAT; F Matyzak MBE, Racial Harrasment Forum and Whitehawk Community Project; C Cooke, St James's Street LAT; Sylvia Harman, Bevendean LAT; Bill Gandey, Bevendean LAT; Georgie Sanders, Brighton and Hove Independent Mediation Service; C El-Shabba, Whitehawk Crime Prevention Forum; P Tilley, CUSF

Officers: Judith Macho (Assistant Director, Public Safety), Linda Beanlands (Head of Community Safety), Simon Court (Senior Solicitor) and Jane Clarke (Democratic Services Officer)

PART ONE

38. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

38a. Declaration of Substitutes

38.1 Councillor Barnett declared that she was substituting for Councillor Janio.

38.2 Councillor Watkins declared that he was substituting for Councillor Elgood.

38b. Declarations of Interests

38.3 Councillor Duncan declared a personal interest in item 49 as he is a member of the Sussex Police Authority.

38.4 Councillor Carden declared a personal interest in item 50 as he is a member of the East Sussex Fire Authority.

38c. Exclusion of the Press and Public

- 38.5 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Community Safety Forum considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).
- 38.6 **RESOLVED** – that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

39. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 39.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2008 are approved and signed by the Chairman with the following amendment:

Minute 30.1 - "*Councillor Kennedy* raised the issue of the new Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Officer post, and asked the Head of Community Safety for confirmation that the post had been appointed."

40. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 40.1 The Chairman notified the Forum that a meeting had been scheduled for 11 March 2008 to meet with the Chairmen of the Local Action Teams, which would be held in the Brighthelm Centre. The meeting was to ensure that consistency was being achieved across the teams in the city and to review terms of reference for LATs.

41. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 41.1 There were none.

42. COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

- 42.1 A Forum member referred to the bad weather that had been experienced recently in the city and asked how the police and the authority had coped with emergencies during this time.
- 42.2 The Assistant Director of Public Safety stated that the Civil Contingency Service had picked up the potential risks involved during this period and ensured that a proper response was achieved from all services. She had not received any reports back from services about particular problems that had been experienced and noted that the police and the Highways Team had liaised very closely to ensure the safety of everyone in the city.
- 42.3 Councillor Duncan noted that the emergency response during this period had been discussed at a recent East Sussex Fire Authority meeting and stated that it had been agreed that land rovers would be made available from the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service for use by other authorities if the need arose.

42a. Written question received from Councillor Ben Duncan

42.4 “As a local Councillor I have had a number of queries raised with me regarding the taking of photographs by police officers in relation to members of the campaign group ‘Earth First’. I wondered if the police representatives could update the forum on procedure for monitoring such activities?”

42.5 Chief Superintendent Bartlett from Sussex Police stated that the Police had a duty to ensure that protests in the region were conducted lawfully. They also had a duty to protect the rights of citizens not involved in the protest to continue their daily activities without detrimental impact.

He stated that an operation had taken place in February 2009 in the London Road area to overtly gather intelligence on an event known as Winter Moot. The operation had been conducted by the Public Order Intelligence Unit, which had gathered intelligence from a website indicating that direct action was going to be taken about a particular issue. Chief Superintendent Bartlett noted that two large protests had taken place in Brighton and Hove last year that had caused significant problems and there was concern that attendees at the Winter Moot were intending to take part in unlawful direct action in a similar way.

Chief Superintendent Bartlett stated that the level of public concern this operation had created had not been anticipated, but that a conscious decision had been made to conduct the operation in an overt manner in order to lessen the intrusive impact. Any photos that were not connected with unlawful activity were disregarded.

He stated that greater consultation would take place for future operations of a similar nature, but that it was necessary to continue with such operations for the purpose of intelligence gathering. He confirmed to the Forum that the operation had been conducted in a correct and lawful manner.

42.6 Councillor Duncan referred to a recent article in a newspaper highlighting that photographs that were unconnected with crime were being stored. He asked for assurance from the Police that people from Brighton & Hove would not remain on databases simply because of lawful political activity. Chief Inspector Bartlett confirmed that anything unrelated to the Operation was destroyed by Sussex Police.

42.7 A Forum member stated that it was essential for Sussex Police to conduct such operations to prevent activist groups from escalating into something more violent.

42.8 Councillor Watkins stated that he was very concerned about the amount of information that was being stored and asked the Police Authority members who sat on the Forum to raise this issue and report back to the Forum.

43. LETTER REGARDING THE USE OF 'MOSQUITO' DEVICES IN THE BRIGHTON & HOVE AREA

43.1 Councillor Mitchell addressed the Forum and asked the Forum members and the Police for their views on the use of ‘Mosquito’ devices in Brighton and Hove.

- 43.2 The Chairman stated that there was cross-party support for control of these devices and felt there were better ways to deal with anti-social behaviour. She noted there had been a notice of motion from Cabinet to regulate these devices.
- 43.3 Sergeant Castleton addressed the Forum and stated that these devices were a negative response to anti-social behaviour and there was no evidence that they decreased this type of behaviour in the areas they were situated.
- 43.4 Councillor Duncan recognised that the Council had no powers to regulate these devices, but asked whether environmental health and safety legislation could be used to control them. The Assistant Director of Public Safety addressed the Forum and stated that this legislation did not cover the use of 'Mosquito' or similar devices, but that the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership was beginning to make a significant difference and therefore there would be less need to use such devices.
- 43.5 A member of the Forum asked whether planning regulations could be used to prevent the devices being installed. The Assistant Director of Public Safety felt that they would not need permission to install these and therefore were not covered by planning laws.

44. SCRUTINY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND OLDER PEOPLE

- 44.1 The Head of Community Safety presented a report on the Scrutiny of Community Safety and Older People and stated that this was the first issue that had been referred from the Community Safety Forum onto an Overview & Scrutiny Committee agenda.

She stated that meetings to discuss the issues were taking place on 24 April at the Valley Social Centre, 22 May at Hove Town Hall and 3 July at Brighton Town Hall. As many agencies and community organisations as possible were being invited to submit information.

- 44.2 A member of the Forum asked whether the focus on tackling crime should be shifted to a focus on the prevention of crime, which was more in line with Sussex Police policies. The member felt a proactive approach was needed to ensure community safety. The Head of Community Safety stated that all issues around this subject would be discussed and a report would be produced with recommendations for action that could be taken forward by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).
- 44.3 Councillor Barnett asked that a further meeting be arranged in either Portslade or Hangleton to allow people from those areas to attend more easily. The Head of Community Safety agreed and stated that meetings would be arranged in both of these areas.
- 44.4 A member of the Forum welcomed the work being done, but highlighted that safety for disabled people needed to be addressed as well. The Head of Community Safety stated that this piece of work had a specific focus on older people, but noted that work had begun on addressing the issue of community safety for those with disabilities and those who experienced hate crimes, which was recognised as a highly important piece of work and would be taken forward later on in the year.

- 44.5 A member of the Forum welcomed this information and asked that GEMS was included as well when taking forward the work on community safety for those with disabilities and those who experienced hate crimes. The member asked whether baseline levels of crime would be established before work began on this report. The Head of Community Safety confirmed that baselines would be established and where possible targets would be set and recommendations produced.
- 44.6 Councillor Watkins stated that the scrutiny panel set up to examine Community Safety of Older people was time and financially limited and noted that this was a large subject to scrutinise. He asked for assurances from the Chairman that full support would be given to the recommendations and outcomes. The Chairman agreed and stated that she fully supported the scrutiny of this issue.
- 44.7 A member of the Forum raised the issue of material being accessible for older people and the Head of Community Safety stated that all literature about the subject would take into consideration its target audience and be accessible for all.

45. CRIME TRENDS AND PERFORMANCE IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE

- 45.1 Sergeant Castleton presented the Crime Trends and Performance in Brighton & Hove report and stated that 15 other authorities were used as a benchmark to compare figures for performance in Brighton & Hove and this was done on population size.
- 45.2 Councillor Duncan welcomed the overall reduction in crime figures but asked why acquisitive crime seemed to rise continually at each quarter, and asked if this was an effect of the economic crisis. Chief Superintendent Bartlett stated that Sussex Police shared the concern of Members that the economic crisis could be fuelling certain types of crime, but noted that this increase was against a backdrop of significant decreases over a number of years in levels of acquisitive crime. He stated that Sussex Police was keen to work with businesses in the city to ensure as much economic stability as possible, but was aware of the risks associated with the crisis.
- 45.3 Councillor Kennedy asked about domestic violence figures and noted that a problem had been reported regarding the reliability of domestic violence incident data. She asked for a further explanation of this. Sergeant Castleton replied that there had been an issue with the robustness of the data being produced and the way in which it was recorded, but he was now confident this had been resolved.
- 45.4 Councillor Kennedy agreed this was a complex area and noted that there could be difficulties in recording data accurately. She referred to a report in the papers that stated that women were being warned by the Police if they became involved with someone who had committed a domestic violence offence, and asked if this practise was being introduced by Sussex Police. Chief Superintendent Bartlett stated that this issue was about disclosure to vulnerable persons, and noted that child sex offender protocols similar to this were being established. He felt that if these protocols went ahead, similar ones were likely for domestic violence offenders.
- 45.5 A member of the Forum stated that violent crime in the St James's Street area was increasing year on year and asked if any targets would be set as part of the next

Policing Plan. Chief Superintendent Bartlett agreed that there was much that could be done to reduce crime and the CDRP would be setting appropriate targets.

- 45.6 A member of the Forum was concerned that Brighton & Hove was being measured against many London Boroughs, who possibly received more money to tackle crime. The Chairman stated that this was why it was important to consider the Crime Trends and Performance report against previous performance reports for the area first.
- 45.7 The Chairman asked why non-domestic burglary figures were not included in the report and Chief Superintendent Bartlett stated that this report was a snapshot of crimes across the city. He agreed that there were many more crimes that could be included, but did not want to overburden the Forum with information. Sergeant Castleton stated that an audit of all crimes was conducted yearly and this information could be included in an annual report to the Forum.

46. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE

- 46.1 The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator and Sergeant Castleton presented a report on Anti-Social Behaviour Update to the Forum and stated that the team used a balance of enforcement and support to deal with the problems of anti-social behaviour. Sergeant Castleton stated that the Anti-Social Behaviour Team had achieved a nineteen per cent reduction in this area but perceptions of levels of crime for anti-social behaviour were still high.
- 46.2 Councillor Morgan stated that a lot of the issues dealt with in the report were familiar to East Brighton and the New Deal Partnership had pioneered much of the work now conducted by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team. He was pleased to see this work was being rolled out across the city.
- 46.3 A member of the Forum asked if there were 'hot-spots' in the city where a high level of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders were issued and Sergeant Castleton replied that levels of orders issued depended on where Police operations were being conducted.
- 46.4 A member of the Forum noted that several activities were organised for young people, but not for the ages of between 8 and 11 years and asked why this was. Sergeant Castleton agreed and stated he would like to see more activities for all young people. The Head of Community Safety stated that this was a target age group and new developments would be extending activities to them. The Chairman noted difficulties in that Youth Workers were not currently permitted to work with those under 11 years of age.
- 46.5 Councillor Carden asked for further clarification on which officers could be contacted regarding anti-social behaviour issues and noted there were long term problems with certain people in his area that did not seem to be resolved. The Head of Community Safety agreed to circulate contact information for officers.

Sergeant Castleton stated that the Local Connect policy meant that work would only begin on dealing with residents causing anti-social behaviour if they had resided in the area for more than six months. He noted that it could take some time to get plans into motion and that as soon as positive results were achieved the Team would stop working

with those residents. If they lapsed into anti-social behaviour again, the process would be restarted. He agreed that more work needed to be done with local communities to help reduce this problem.

- 46.6 A member of the Forum raised the issue of 'studentification' in certain areas and asked whether this was linked to an increase in anti-social behaviour. It was noted that this had been recognised as a problem for a long time and Police Officers were employed at the universities to help deal with this. The Chairman agreed that this was an important issue and stated that more information would come to the Forum regarding this.
- 46.7 Councillor Young referred to the letters written by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team to the parents of young people engaged in anti-social behaviour, and asked how effective these are. Sergeant Castleton replied that in most cases they worked very well and the vast majority of parents would deal with the problem at home without the need for further involvement by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

47. POLICING DIVISIONAL SERVICE PLAN

- 47.1 This item was deferred at this meeting.

48. PUBLIC REASSURANCE AND PROFILING THE WORK OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

- 48.1 The Head of Community Safety stated that a dedicated public relations officer had been appointed to increase the profile of the CDRP and a new publicity campaign had begun. Posters that profiled the work of the CDRP were being placed in high-profile areas around the city.
- 48.2 The Chairman stated that she fully endorsed the campaign and Councillor Kennedy agreed it was an excellent initiative, but asked for more information on what was occurring in the City Parks Team, as they were greatly affected by crime and disorder. The Head of Community Safety agreed and stated she would feed this back to the campaign.
- 48.3 A member of the Forum asked if telephone numbers as well as email addresses could be included on the posters, as not everyone had access to computers or the internet. The Head of Community Safety understood this was an issue but stated that the campaign did not have the resources to staff a dedicated telephone line for the calls that would be generated by this, which was why the decision was made not to include a telephone number.

49. SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY: MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 23 OCTOBER AND 18 DECEMBER 2008

- 49.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes are noted.

50. EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY: MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2008, 15 JANUARY 2009 AND 5 FEBRUARY 2009

- 50.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes are noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.10pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of