

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

4.00pm 8 DECEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor G Theobald (Chairman); Carden (Opposition Spokesperson), Elgood, Janio, Kennedy, Morgan, Smart and Young

Sussex Police: Chief Superintendent Paul Pearce, Chief Inspector Laurence Taylor, Sergeant Peter Castleton, Mr Mark Rowe, Head of Finance, Mr Paul Price, Consultation Officer

Communities of Interest: Derek Peacock (St James Street Area Action Group), Faith Matyszak MBE (Racial Harassment Forum and Whitehawk Community Development Project), John Stevens (Leach Court Area Housing Panel), Bill Gandey (Bevendean LAT), Ted Harman (Stanmer and Coldean LAT), George Brooker (Stanmer and Coldean LAT)

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

27. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

27a Declarations of Substitutes

27.1 There were none.

27b Declarations of Interest

27.2 As a statement of Personal Interest Councillor G Theobald declared that he was a member of the Sussex Police Authority.

27.3 As a statement of Personal Interest Councillor B Carden declared that he was a member of the East Sussex Fire Authority.

27c Exclusion of Press and Public

27.4 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 100(1) of the Act).

RESOLVED – that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

28.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2008 are approved and signed by the Chairman.

29. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

29.1 The Chairman referred to a question raised at the last meeting regarding the voting rights of the Community Safety Forum. On the advice of solicitors he advised the Forum members that the function of the Community Safety Forum was to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment, and if appropriate, to the Cabinet, in relation to matters that require council decisions. This meant that no formal voting was required on resolutions of the committee, but the Chairman could take an *indicative* vote if he so wished. The Chairman highlighted that the Council's Executive was not bound by any resolutions made by the Community Safety Forum.

29.2 The Chairman went on to say that in January the Forum would scrutinize older people's safety and consideration was currently being given as to who should be involved at this stage.

30. COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

30.1 A Member raised the issue of the new Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Officer post, and asked for the Head of Community Safety for confirmation that the post had been appointed.

30.2 The Head of Community Safety informed the Forum that the post had been filled recently and the post holder was currently working closely with the Community Safety Team and the Anti-Victimisation Unit.

30.3 A member of the Forum asked about the theft of blue badges from motor vehicles, which was an issue that had been raised at the last Forum. It was stated previously that the victims of this crime would be able to use their Crime Reference Number to avoid being issued a parking ticket whilst waiting for their new badges to arrive. The Forum member asked the Police how people would know that if their badge was stolen they could use their Crime Reference Number. Sergeant Peter Castleton replied that when a Crime Reference Number was given, the officer issuing the number would be able to provide further information on how this could be used.

30.4 A question was raised about whether the new City Park Ranger positions would also be able to monitor behaviour around the war memorials in the centre of the city, and in

particular the ones on the Old Steine, which were suffering from particularly bad anti-social behaviour. The Chairman replied that this was more likely to be dealt with by the Police as it would be unlikely that the Park Rangers would patrol outside of the park areas. However, the Chairman was happy to recommend that the Park Rangers liaise closely with the Police to manage people in the area more effectively.

31. PRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION WITH SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

- 31.1 Mr Mark Rowe, Head of Finance for Sussex Police and Mr Paul Price, Consultation Officer for Sussex Police addressed the Forum and presented a report on the Revenue Budget 2009-10 and 2011-12.
- 31.2 Mr Price began by noting that the Revenue Budget was going out to consultation and a survey had been placed on the internet to consult with residents of Sussex. There was also a panel of residents from across the region, including many Neighbourhood Watch members who were being consulted with directly.
- 31.3 Mr Rowe went on to detail the current financial landscape for Sussex Police and noted that the largest amount of income for the organisation came from the Central Government grant and the Council Tax.
- 31.4 The three year settlement for the period 2008 to 2011 showed that Sussex Police could expect a 2.5 per cent increase in grant year on year, but it was noted that this was below average and that some Police Authorities could expect to receive up to 3.8 per cent.
- 31.5 It was noted by Mr Rowe that the grant formula used by Central Government appeared to be unfair to 'shire' authorities and at present grant payments were protected by the grant floor arrangements. These arrangements were under threat from 2011 onwards however. It was also noted that Sussex Police had challenging efficiency targets to achieve that added to the funding problem.
- 31.6 Mr Rowe went on to highlight the priorities for the coming budget period and felt that more needed to be spent on the terrorism agenda and local policing.
- 31.7 He noted that consultation with the population and stakeholders was greater now than it had ever been and that year on year levels of confidence in Sussex Police were improving. This was resulting in greater visibility, accessibility and familiarity and improved levels of public satisfaction, which was a key target for the organisation.
- 31.8 Councillor Young asked if the grant funding from Central Government fell, would this result in a rise in the Council Tax levy to compensate. Mr Rowe replied that this could be the case, but efficiency gains would be sought first to cover any funding gap.
- 31.9 The cost implications of the recent green paper titled "From the Neighbourhood to the National – Policing our Communities Together" was highlighted by Councillor Smart and Mr Rowe noted that the Police Authority would look to the government grant to fund the initial costs of implementing these initiatives.

- 31.10 Increased staffing levels were noted as a potentially large cost increase and Mr Rowe agreed, recognising that there would be an increase in frontline staff of 29 FTE posts in 2008/9 and 31 FTE posts in 2010/11. A member of the Forum asked how many of these posts would be positioned in Brighton & Hove and Mr Rowe replied that he did not know. The Chairman undertook to ask this question at the next Police Authority meeting he attended.
- 31.11 Councillor Morgan asked whether Sussex Police had always received below average funding and how the area compared with other Police Authorities. Mr Rowe replied that it had always been a low baseline for this area and that other Authorities such as Surrey had increased Local Council Tax funding by up to 50 per cent to compensate for this.
- 31.12 The Chairman noted that Sussex Police was subject to other costs such as preparing for the terrorism risks associated with Gatwick Airport, Newhaven Port and the regional proximity to London and felt that this expenditure was often forgotten by the general populace. It was noted by Councillor Morgan that Sussex Police charged Gatwick Airport for the service they provided, so this would lessen the overall cost.
- 31.13 The Chairman thanked Sussex Police for the budget presentation.
- 31.14 **RESOLVED** – to note the contents of the report.

32. CRIME TRENDS AND PERFORMANCE IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE

- 32.1 The Head of Community Safety addressed the Forum and advised them of a correction to the performance report that had been dealt with on the last agenda. There was an error in the calculations for one of the statistical results, which had resulted in the percentage for overall crime being recorded as falling by 22 per cent. In fact this percentage should have been recorded as an 11.3 per cent reduction.

The Head of Community Safety apologised to the Forum members. She confirmed that the total number of crimes in the report was accurate and the general conclusions of the Forum for that item were unaffected. The Head of Community Safety offered to distribute the corrected report to the Forum members if they so wished. The Chairman thanked the Head of Community Safety for the updated information and agreed that the conclusions of the Forum remained unchanged.

- 32.2 Sergeant Castleton addressed the Forum and presented the latest Crime Trends and Performance in Brighton & Hove report. He began by informing the members that information had been omitted in the report before the Forum, but confirmed that an amended report which included information on Domestic Violence Crimes and Incidents, Racist and Religiously Motivated Crimes and Incidents and Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Crimes and Incidents would be sent out with the minutes of the meeting.
- 32.3 Sergeant Castleton stated that overall crime was down by 9.5 per cent when comparing figures from April to October 2007 and April to October 2008. Serious Violent Crime reduction was targeted at 10 per cent but had only fallen by 2 per cent. Domestic Burglary was up by 20.5 per cent, and Theft from/of a Motor Vehicle had also increased by 14.6 per cent. Sergeant Castleton noted that acquisitive theft was a particular problem across the area and this could be due to the current economic situation. He

also stated that Theft from a Motor Vehicle was extremely variable depending on whether certain individuals were currently in the area or not.

- 32.4 Despite some disappointing results, Sergeant Castleton reminded the Forum that it was important to consider long term trends when scrutinising levels of crime, which had been falling in Brighton & Hove over the past 20 years. It was noted that there had been a spike in Serious Violent Crimes, but Sergeant Castleton felt that this was possibly due to a reclassification of certain crimes and the police would be watching this closely.
- 32.5 Bicycle theft was increasing but Sergeant Castleton believed this was due to the increase in bicycle usage within the city in the last few years.
- 32.6 Domestic Violence was noted to be an on-going concern for Sussex Police and it was believed to be regularly underreported. Sergeant Castleton lastly noted that Hate and Religiously Motivated Crimes had fallen, which was due to the work that had been done in the city to reduce this, and Hate Crimes were comparatively small for the size of the population.
- 32.7 Councillor Morgan welcomed the statistics but noted that they needed to be read with caution as if the baseline for a particular crime was low, then there would only need to be a few extra incidents of this crime across the city for the statistics to rise dramatically. He noted that Domestic Burglary for example would have been far higher 15 or 20 years ago compared with today's figures.
- 32.8 Mr Peacock asked about the peak in Violent Crimes and noted that if this was due to a reclassification of certain crimes which raised these statistics then it should not register as a spike but as a permanent rise. Chief Superintendent Paul Pearce felt that the spike was due to backdating of crime figures for this area that had now levelled off.
- 32.9 Councillor Kennedy raised concern over the rise in Incidents of Domestic Violence and was worried that this crime was spiralling. She asked if there were any initiatives in place to limit and reduced this.

Chief Superintendent Pearce stated that Domestic Violence was not spiralling, but was unfortunately always recorded at a high level. It was noted that Sussex Police had recently visited neighbouring authorities to assess how they dealt with this type of crime and measures had been put in place to ensure that where possible a statement from the victim was taken immediately to help lower the possibility of withdrawal the following day. It was also recognised that the Magistrates Court would now prosecute without a witness statement if they felt the evidence was strong enough.

The Head of Community Safety added that a comprehensive plan had been put in place in the city to deal with this type of crime. Multi-agency risk assessment panels were being developed in conjunction with the Police and a very high arrest rate of around 90 per cent was being achieved. The Head of Community Safety recognised that there was still a lot of work to do in this area in terms of introducing common risk assessments across all agencies, but tremendous progress had been made in the last 18 months.

- 32.10 Mr Peacock asked what the breakdown was for same sex domestic violence and although the Police did not have the figures to hand the Head of Community Safety

stated that a part-time advisor for LGBT domestic violence had been appointed and these figures could be distributed to the Forum members.

- 32.11 Councillor Janio asked whether the Police felt that national targets distorted the priorities of the Police and asked how well Brighton & Hove was performing compared to other areas. Sergeant Castleton replied that there was some element of national targets interfering with local priorities, but noted that the recent Green Paper went some way to rectify this. When comparing the area nationally, it was noted that Brighton & Hove was one of the lowest burglary risks in the group of families used to assess this information, and with an average or below average crime risk. There were clear comparative graphs demonstrating this information. Sergeant Castleton offered to distribute this information to the Forum and the Chairman welcomed this.
- 32.12 Councillor Young asked about the high incidence of repeat offenders for Theft from a Motor Vehicle and asked what could be done to reduce this. Chief Superintendent Pearce noted that this crime was mostly committed by drug users who would re-offend as soon as they were out of prison. Councillor Young asked why these people were not receiving rehabilitation in prison and the Head of Community Safety noted that ongoing work was being conducted by the CDR Partnership which had a range of packages to help prolific offenders. The initiative did not target offenders whilst in prison but was initiated immediately on their release, and was immensely successful.

32.13 **RESOLVED** – to note the contents of the report.

33. REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

33.1 **RESOLVED** – to note the contents of the report.

34. ACTION TO DEAL WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND UPDATE ON LONDON ROAD - ORAL PRESENTATION

- 34.1 The Head of Community Safety, Linda Beanlands, addressed the Forum and presented a report on Action to Deal with Drug and Alcohol Related Anti-Social Behaviour and Update on London Road.
- 34.2 She began by stating that “hotspot” areas had come out of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 which gave local authorities powers to tackle street drinking. The power was introduced in Brighton & Hove in 2003 and money from the Trailblazer fund allowed the Council to appoint street outreach workers for joint patrols and also allowed the Council the option to tackle begging.
- 34.3 A snapshot of figures showed that there is an immense throughput in the city as street drinkers arrive from outside areas and are quickly relocated or placed into treatment.
- 34.4 Further work being done in the city included finding appropriate hostels for those street drinkers who could not be treated for alcoholism and work being done by the Council’s solicitors to investigate further powers to use Anti Social Behaviour Orders.
- 34.5 Lastly, the Head of Community Safety noted that there was a need to re-design signs in the city starting with the hotspot areas and work had already begun to achieve this.

- 34.6 The Assistant Director of Public Safety, Judith Macho, then addressed the Forum and stated that specialist work was currently being done in London Road and the Council was aware of the need to involve and listen to the community. There was a formal LAT meeting on 10th January 2009 to discuss local concerns and more specialist meetings to talk about regeneration issues, crime reduction measures and licensing issues were being set up.
- 34.7 The Assistant Director of Public Safety highlighted the need to increase cooperation with the business community in London Road and to extend initiatives such as improved lighting, increased CCTV coverage and repainting certain areas. There was also negotiating taking place with the Police for a satellite station on London Road.
- 34.8 Councillor Morgan raised concerns over displacement of antisocial behaviour from London Road to other areas and asked if officers and the Police were considering this. He also asked what areas were included in the London Road hotspot.
- 34.9 The Head of Community Safety replied that both the Police and the Council were aware of the potential problem of displacement and had set up joint patrols in 2003. Offenders in the London Road area were carefully tracked and monitored to ensure that if they were moved on from the area, they were not creating problems elsewhere. It was noted that the Level was included in the London Road area and work would be commencing to improve this area.
- 34.10 A member of the Forum asked if the three day centres that provided services for street drinkers and homeless people were still open, and the Head of Community Safety replied that two of the centres were commissioned by the Supporting People service. One had now closed.
- 34.11 A Forum member highlighted the growing problem of alcoholism in young people and asked what was being done to improve this situation. The Head of Community Safety recognised that this was a particular problem and stated that the Council now had a joint-service patrol and that action was taken quickly when this was identified. Sergeant Castleton agreed and noted that the Police were working with groups that targeted young drinkers to engage with them and improve the situation.
- 34.12 **RESOLVED** – to note the contents of the report.

35. PROGRESS UPDATE ON LOCAL ACTION TEAMS IN THE CITY - ORAL PRESENTATION

- 35.1 Chief Inspector Laurence Taylor addressed the Forum and presented an oral report on Local Action Teams in Brighton & Hove.
- 35.2 He began by stating that since April 2008 district boundaries for neighbourhood policing had been removed. A single point of contact for each Local Action Team (LAT) had improved processes and 41 new neighbourhoods had been created to reflect areas rather than political boundaries.

- 35.3 In each of the 41 neighbourhoods there were two PCSOs and one Support Officer and the key focuses were now on addressing issues that created problems early on and engagement with the local neighbourhood.
- 35.4 Chief Inspector Taylor stated that LATs were vital in finding out what was important for the area and LAT work was now creating priorities and charting progress.
- 35.5 Councillor Morgan recognised the excellent work that was being done by LATs in his ward, but noted that the PCSOs seemed to waste a lot of time in transit, especially when returning to the Station for rest breaks. He asked if it was possible to provide satellite stations in local areas that would provide hot food, drink and toilets for PCSOs.
- 35.6 Chief Inspector Taylor agreed that this was a problem, particularly in the North and East of the city. There was a requirement for the PCSOs to return to the Station but Community Outlets were in use across the city to provide services for staff and volunteers. Chief Inspector Taylor noted that there was a need to identify new sites however.
- 35.7 Councillor Carden noted that there had been a dedicated Police Constable for each area in the past which had worked particularly well in terms of continuity and acquiring local knowledge and wondered if this was still the case. Chief Inspector Taylor noted that unfortunately there was not enough staff to provide a dedicated Police Officer to each area, but that Police Officers would cover a group of areas exclusively.
- 35.8 It was noted by Forum members that there was significant work being done by LATs, and new teams were being formed but there was a lack of publicity to match this and Chief Inspector Taylor agreed but highlighted to Forum members that a city-wide review of Action Teams was being undertaken to ensure that each team was locally sustainable in their objectives. He noted that representation was crucial but that effectiveness was also necessary and questioned whether there would be the same number of LATs after the review.
- 35.9 A Forum member asked whether the Police felt that PCSOs should have increased powers of arrest, and it was noted that the type of ground level policing that PCSOs performed was vital to communities. Chief Superintendent Pearce noted that the PCSO service was welcomed by all interested parties who were incredibly positive about the service but the success of PCSOs depended on their not having powers as this would result in increased levels of paperwork, taking them away from the communities they served and thereby negating the positive effects so far experienced. He stated that it was crucial to keep PCSOs free to serve communities at ground level.
- 35.10 **RESOLVED** – to note the contents of the report.

36. SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2008

- 36.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes be noted.

37. EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2008

37.1 **RESOLVED** – that the minutes be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

