

Minutes

CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW

**MINUTES OF THE CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW HELD ON TUESDAY
29 JUNE 2010, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT
10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.20 PM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr W Bendyshe-Brown (Wycombe District Council), Ms J Burton (Chiltern District Council),
Mr T Egleton (Buckinghamshire County Council) (C), Mr A Oxley (South Bucks District
Council), Mr B Roberts (Buckinghamshire County Council), Mr P Rogerson (Wycombe District
Council) and Mr J Wertheim (Chiltern District Council)

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms N Ahmad, Mrs C Street and Ms S Yapp

1 WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed Members.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from:

Arif Hussain

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2010 TO BE AGREED

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

5 SETTING THE SCENE

The Chairman set the background and purpose for the meeting as follows:



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



At the joint review planning meeting on 14 May, members decided that, alongside exploring how the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board is fulfilling its crime and disorder functions, they would use as a case study for the review the following topic:

‘How are we working with partners to reduce the fear of crime and improve how we communicate messages about crime levels to residents?’

This topic has been chosen as reducing the fear of crime is a key priority in the recently agreed Safer Bucks Plan, and there continues to be disparity between falling crime rates overall in Buckinghamshire and residents’ perception about the prevalence of criminal activity in their local area.

Purpose

A number of contributors had been invited to talk to members of the task and finish group about their community safety role. They were asked to inform members about current work they are undertaking with partners which is aimed at reducing the fear of crime, and explain how their organisation communicates messages about crime rates to residents. In addition they were asked to identify where they thought improvements could be made to this, and barriers to progress.

First Contributor- Katie Galvin

Katie Galvin, Community Partnership Manager and Martin Holt, Head of Health and Housing from Chiltern District Council (CDC).

The officers explained that their work is based on the Chiltern Community Safety Partnership Plan, which is refreshed annually as a result of the data from the strategic assessment.

For 2010-11 there are 4 priorities, which are to:

- Reduce serious acquisitive crime;
- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)
- Drug and Alcohol misuse and
- Develop effective communication and engagement with local communities to reduce the fear of crime and raise awareness and understanding of crime and ASB matters.

Examples of these are:

- Work together with Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG’s)
- Ensure we can provide local newsletters with relevant local articles e.g. in town and parish magazines.
- Carry out community events
- Role out cop cards, which was a pilot scheme in CDC. Young people in the area get stickers from the Local Community Support Officers. This is to allow the young people to get involved, be safe and increase police involvement. The aim is to collect and count the stickers each week and the school with the most, wins. The scheme allows young people to get involved with the Police and reduce their fear of the Police. This scheme was rolled out across Bucks in 2010.
- Bluetooth messaging; this was used at the Chiltern Show. A message was sent out to everyone with a Bluetooth connection advising them, for example, to lock their car doors and remove valuables from display.

CDC through partnership funding has purchased four gazebos and each Police station has one. This is to promote ‘working together for a safer Chiltern’ and this will be used at events,

all of which are marked with the CDC and Thames Valley Police (TVP) logo. Alongside these they also have banners to encourage people to approach and talk to them. Polo shirts and fleeces have also been printed with the district council and Police logos to promote 'working together for a safer Chiltern'; and people now talk to them more. This logo is also on every dog bin and taxi sign in the district.

CDC regularly holds 'have your say' events across the District and these are publicised in popular, high footfall areas. Neighbourhood updates, and newsletters are produced and we also have postcards, 'you said, we did,' The officers found that the cards are particularly useful to prove to the public that something has been done.

'Operation Confidence,' is a joint scheme between environmental health, Community Safety and TVP. This involves door to door surveys and also ASB patrols in hotspot areas. Once the hotspots are identified, we aim to deliver diversionary activities, which have had a good impact.

Members then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

The Ringmaster messages are sent by email, this is good communication, but it is full of crime and never good news. Is it not possible to get good news?

This may come down to your local Commander. In Chiltern we have tried to change and include positive stories. For example, we recently reported how many offenders had been arrested.

You mentioned the Partnership, yourself and the Police. How do you get help from wider Partnerships? And how many people are you reaching?

We are reaching out further than just locally, this is through our CSI magazine, a monthly newsletter that is sent out to our joint action group, District Councillors, County Councillors, Town and Parish Clerks, Older People Action Groups, NAG Chairs and all neighbourhood updates produced by the Police also go out in the same way.

In relation to the second question, a monthly survey by the Police shows that only 40% of people last year thought the police and council were working well together to tackle crime and ASB. This year we have reached 80%. This is through the Police and Local Council working together well in partnership and publicising what we do.

Would people in the street know who you are?

More people would know of our existence than last year. It's important to develop an understanding of the local area and encourage people to be good neighbours to help build a sense of community. The use of volunteers to help people is important, as is bringing the elderly into the social network.

Is there anything that has been more successful than others? What feedback have you had and how do you act on it?

Ian Hunter (Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern) produces a monthly update and regularly checks the website's on 'have your say' pages. People email through their concerns and Ian Hunter replies, immediately sometimes. People are amazed to get a reply from the Chief Inspector. This will also be reported back in the CSI magazine, under the 'You Said, We Did' article. This is not always about crime but also what has been done about the fear of crime.

What are you doing to address the consistency of NAG's? For example there seems to be reduced officer support for NAG's in High Wycombe. Is this the same for Chiltern?

The NAGs all work differently and in our experience the best ones are chaired independently rather than the focus just being on the Police. We have one virtual NAG in a rural part of Chiltern, which only meets when specific issues have been identified that need to be addressed. The 'Have your say' data is also used to identify issues.

Do you use community clean up schemes in CDC?

Not on a regular basis. Chesham have had paths cleared up, this was carried out by the Probation service, through the community payback scheme and this worked well. This was part of 'Not in My Neighbourhood Week' last year.

Ian Duncan Smith has published a paper about people from broken communities, 90% of people in prison come from the bottom 10% of the community. Do you work with this group of people?

The YOS runs a Youth Inclusion Support Panel for 8-15 year olds, before they get to the final warning stage and enter the criminal justice system. The activities run for 20 weeks and work well. There is also another project we are piloting in Chesham which is run in conjunction with the County Council, secondary schools with its feeder schools. Truanting children are identified and we work with the parents of children in schools and continue with them once they go to community college.

Additionally there is a Family Intervention Project (FIP) that is just being established. It is an intensive project as someone goes round to the home and gets the child out of bed and works with them and the family all day. We only have funding for this until March.

The subject of this review is to reduce the fear of crime; do you have any projects that have a positive impact on doing that?

Projects that include community involvement, especially young people, seem to work well. The 'clean up' initiatives are a good example of this.

How do you get the message across to the older community, do you go round and discuss issues with them?

We hold a lot of talks; one for example, is crime reduction bingo. This is a good way to raise awareness of rogue traders with older people. We also give talks at the U3As .

How many issues have you had to raise with a higher authority. And how are you measuring your success?

We have not had to raise any issues, but we have got funding for Operation Guillotine, to reduce Serious Acquisitive crime. Crime levels are still falling overall in Chiltern. Monitoring is carried out through the partnership plan.

You are doing lots of good work but is the fear of crime reducing in the area?

We try to get the message across that crime is falling by stating actual numbers rather than percentages, such as having less than one burglary a day in the Chiltern area. Police Chief Inspector and CDC Comms Officer have monthly press meetings as we don't have a local radio station or local news, and the news we receive is London news. Our relationship with the press has increased as a result of these positive meetings.

There has been a 16.6% reduction in crime in CDC in the last year.

But what is happening to the perception of crime levels?

We looked at the survey results on the fear of crime in CDC and levels are improving although not keeping pace with reductions in crime levels.

How can local members help get the message across?

This could be done by members digesting the information that's relevant to their wards and using these facts to reassure the public.

Following this question members discussed the use of local newsletters such as Parish magazines in getting important messages across and were advised that there is a Community newsletter database that gives the deadline for articles to be submitted to various publications.

Do you think the fear of crime is based on high profile events?

There is a fear of crime because people do not socialise with neighbours as much as they used to and do not have a strong sense of community. People are also affected by news stories in the national and local media..

The Chairman thanked Katie Galvin and Martin Holt for attending.

Second contributor – Gillian Stimpson

The Chairman welcomed Gillian to the meeting.

Gillian Stimpson, Community Safety Manager, Wycombe District Council (WDC). Gillian gave details of her role and explained that she has been in the role for 17 years and has management responsibility for 16 members of staff. These include a Community Safety Team Leader, a Community Safety Officer, two ASB officers, and two substance misuse officers working with the BME community managed on behalf of the Bucks DAAT. Alongside this she manages the CCTV in the District and also that of South Bucks District and Beaconsfield Town Council. Gillian previously worked as a Police Officer and before coming to work in a management role at WDC.

Communication Methods

Gillian explained that WDC is keen to use a variety of communication methods such as the following:

- Currently they publish a quarterly community newsletter called CSI Wycombe, which includes Community Safety Information. It also contains a broad range of items including updates of statistics so people have the facts about crime and activities that have been carried out. This is printed and displayed in stands across the district and handed out at events. It is then distributed via email to a broad range of groups, including Members, Parish's, partners, housing links and it is also on the Council website to download.
- The Council's website pages for Community Safety are constantly updated with relevant items. For example, last week there were two new entries, one about the Wellbeing events for the elderly next week and the other about the breach of an ASBO where the individual concerned has been sent to prison.

- Last year WDC had a community safety booklet printed for free of charge, which was sent to every household in the District. This is going to be updated in early 2011 with the latest priorities and information about partnerships.
- Banners are used in Wycombe High Street to promote messages and advice. The current banner shows all the crime reductions WDC had last year, this is to emphasise just how safe Wycombe is and these are frequently changed so they become noticeable and not just part of the street furniture. Bus stop advertising is also used on occasions.
- Police Tasking meetings and the Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings take place to target communities where crimes have occurred and mini hotspots have developed. To reassure the community and to provide timely advice the partnership does a cold calling/door knocking exercise to speak to as many residents as possible. To improve this system we now have packs which have a badge with a 'sorry we missed you' message and offering them some advice if something was wrong, like a window being open or property left on display in a car.
- Joint press releases are undertaken between TVP and WDC. There are currently two press releases about ASB cases where an ASBO was gained in one case and breached in another with a prison sentence subsequently given. Updates are delivered to local communities where an ASB matter has been dealt with, to reassure them that the matter has been resolved.
- The Public Safety Team also works closely with key schools to deliver a drama project called Acting Together. The plays produced by the schools are then showcased in the Chiltern Centre.
- A 'name that TAG' project is run, as well as some graffiti projects to help improve the subway under Abbey Way to provide some graffiti panels outside St Johns Church which has recently been purchased by the District as an art centre. This type of activity is then used to issue a press release about the positive work being carried out.
- There have always been items on community safety in 'Community Voice' the WDC newsletter. This has now moved to the District and County Times, but items will continue to be published.
- A lot of joint partnership events are undertaken which aim to reduce burglaries in the Town Centre and on The Rye. There is a mobile Police Station on The Rye for the summer holiday period and partners are in attendance with badged uniforms to ensure they look part of the team.
- A partnership application for a Purple Flag Safe Town Centre at Night award is due to be submitted. If this is successful it will be used as a further communication opportunity to show how safe Wycombe is and will enhance the work being done.
- Have your Say meetings are held by the Police in the 16 neighbourhoods and Council staff attend key ones. WDC now also has four gazebos which are marked with the logo; this is to show that the Police and WDC are working together.
- The World Cup has presented an opportunity to stage further community events as a partnership and in the lead up to the event, packs have been distributed to licensees, providing advice about possible issue that may arise.

- There is due to be a Wellbeing event for the elderly in Wycombe, for which an external acting company has been booked to do some work with the attendees around distraction burglary.

Gillian said that she was fortunate to have a very creative team who always looked for a different angle or opportunity to promote the work done and reassure the community. They have a good relationship with the TVP Crime Reduction Advisor, which is a huge benefit to the partnership.

She went on to tell Members that this year the partnership won a National Community Safety Award for the work that has been done. This was based on the communication methods used and an energetic and innovative approach, demonstrating a real and perceived improvement in people's safety and wellbeing.

Members then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

Do you have an indication of what your budget is?

A lot of the work does not take much funding and you have to work with what you have got. We used to use a lot of pre-printed documents from the Home Office but this has now been archived and we are concerned about how this will impact on our funding. I have a community safety budget and look at how to best use this.

Do the Police contribute to CCTV costs?

The Police contribute where they can but they also have budget pressures and are facing further cuts.

The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities advised that some police funds were being cut at source. It was not clear how changes to the Home Office Area Based Grant (ABG) would affect communications locally.

How are you communicating with Older People Action Groups? (OPAG's)

We don't link with them as a matter of course, but we do visit those in sheltered accommodation and advise them on the precautions they can take. There is also the Wellbeing event which is for the elderly and this is a good opportunity to convey important community safety messages, as 20 different services will be at the event .

There is a lack of support at NAG's, can you comment on this?

We have been advised that we did not need to support rural NAG's unless officer support was specifically needed as they are already well supported and have good links with Parish Council's. We are still attending Town Centre NAG's as the main issues are in the inner centres. We have to target resources where they are most needed. It was our understanding that the Police were still attending the NAGs.

Between 1 April – 8 June there has been only been 1 burglary in the outer Princes Risborough area and 7 motor vehicle thefts.

How often do you meet with other District Council's to share experiences?

We have monthly partnership meetings. We have a good relationship across the County and a cohesive approach to community safety in Bucks. There is a genuine willingness to share ideas for the good of all.

The Partnership is working and that is excellent, have you thought about seeking sponsorship?

For major events we will approach companies e.g. John Lewis. However in the future we will have to be more mindful of using sponsorship. We have been fortunate not to have done it so much yet. If the budget is cut we will have to look at it closely.

The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities advised that local businesses were willing to work in partnership over community safety matters. This was demonstrated by the King Head Public House who were proposing to use standard rather than large glass sizes, and work taking place with a high performance car company on keeping keys safe.

Is there a difference in the perception of crime?

It varies and depends on who you ask, when you ask, and where. It also depends on ethnicity and gender. The elderly have a perceived fear that they will get mugged, but the reality is different as older people rarely get mugged, it is more young men who are the most common targets. There is this perception because if an old person is mugged the story is splashed across the papers. People need to take precautions, for example, not leaving items on display in your car.

A member commented that it was important older people had these messages but that communication methods for this group of people would need to be carefully chosen, as methods such as Twitter will not work.

An officer stated that ACORN provides profiling of people and how people want to receive information. The day of leaflet advertising has now gone, we now have to communicate in a way we have not done before.

A member reinforced the need to challenge the fear of crime; stating that we need to tell people to lock their doors and to take responsibility for keeping their belongings safe.

The Chairman thanked Gillian Stimpson for attending.

Third Contributor – David Carroll

David Carroll, Police Authority Representative.

The Chairman welcomed David Carroll to the meeting.

David thanked the Chairman for the invitation to the meeting and introduced himself. David has worked as a County Councillor for 5 years and was a magistrate for 5 years before that.

He thought the role of Police Authority Representative was not clearly defined when he had first taken up the role but now much progress had been made with improving communication between TVP and Buckinghamshire County Council. His main remit was to hold the Chief Constable to account.

He stated that a letter had been written to Theresa May asking her to explain in more detail what was expected of the role. David had made it his priority to visit the local area and find out what the issues are in terms of community safety. He had also made contact with the local MPs to build up communications.

David advised that there will be £3million reduction in TVP funding next year but on the plus side there has been a 24% reduction in crime in Bucks. His view was that this had come about because the Police Chief had strategically placed certain people in key positions to best effect.. He praised the work of the Bucks Commander who had an 'open door' policy and a willingness to engage fully both with staff and the local community.

David expressed concern that some members were of the view that there was not good Police presence at some of the NAGs and said that he would feed this information back.

He ended his presentation by stating he hoped he had made a good start to his new role and built good relationships.

Members then had a discussion and asked some questions. The discussion, questions and answers are summarised below:

A member commented that Police representation at NAG meetings was very much down to the Local Commander. He expressed his view that further work was needed on Police representation at the NAGS's and how they operated. The Acting Head of Service for Localities advised that TVP were looking to restructure at senior management level but that this could also affect the frontline service. The restructuring would not be in place until April 2011 so there would be no value in scrutiny looking at this before then.

Members discussed the fact that some of the issues raised at NAG's are minor when compared to more serious crime but they still contributed to a fear of crime. An example of this was speeding.

How do issues raised at NAGs get progressed?

If issues could not be dealt with at NAG meetings these should be progressed through to the Local Area Forums (LAFs) to be picked up by either the Local Area Co-ordinator or the Police, whichever was most relevant.

Councillors are not allowed to take Home Office restricted documents away, are these available to you?

We can use restricted Home Office documents under the Crime and Disorder Act S17, to enable us to do our job better but we cannot take these way with us – we just have sight of them.

The Chairman asked members to forward any further questions through to the Policy Officer who would pass them on to David to answer. He thanked David and said that it was very good to have a pro-active member as the Police Authority representative.

David Carroll concluded by stating that the Partnerships were working well and that he was present at the recent protest in Aylesbury which was very controlled and went very well.

6 RE-CAP OF THE MORNING SESSION

The Chairman gave an overview of the key messages from the morning, which is summarised below:

- The work being done is fantastic, but there will be budget constraints in the future which may affect this.
- The Partnerships work is seems to be locally focused and may need to be widened.

- Communication is the key thing and local media do not always seem to cooperate well. There needs to be communication with local residents to dissuade them from fear,...

An officer pointed out from the morning session that CDC and WDC do not have a local radio station, but Aylesbury does. The local news is from London or Oxford. South Bucks does not have a local paper, all the news is from Slough. Therefore, there is not a level playing field for communication.

A Member asked whether there should be a unified logo for all District Councils. Another Member said that would be a good idea and would allow for the possibility of using all the best ideas to have a common theme.

An Officer responded by saying that there is a unified theme 'Together We Can' but this has not been properly marketed, and just having a brand name is not good enough.

Fourth Contributor – Nathan March

The Chairman welcomed Nathan March to the meeting.

Nathan March introduced himself as the Community Safety Partnership Manager at South Bucks District Council. He went on to explain that there was a small team within South Bucks with himself and two other members. He himself dealt with domestic violence and the other members' dealt with Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and Serious Acquisitive Crime.

He explained that he had previously worked as a crime reduction advisor for the Police and dealt with ASB with Aylesbury Vale District Council before then.

A lot of his time is now spent working with the following partnership meetings:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse Board
- ASB Strategy Group
- Safer Bucks Co-ordination Group
- Drug Alcohol Action Team
- Substance misuse
- Police Tasking Meetings
- Joint Action Group Meetings
- Awareness campaigns make sure that some messages are going out and if the Police are doing something with the support of the partnership a joint press release will go out.

The key is to increase the amount of messages that go out and to support partners when they have meetings with residents. It is important to get the message from the Neighbourhood watch meetings so we are aware of what can be done to support the community.

The Member's then asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

Are there any awareness campaigns with the elderly and Schools?

In relation to schools we have held a joint event with CDC concerning cohesion and race and this was attended by four schools. This was a good opportunity to get messages out.

There was a project in Iver, which encouraged different ages to come together. This included a football tournament, and dancing for girls in the community centre. There is also a BMX track in Iver which attracts people from young children to adults. This was set up as Iver is an area for concern.

Many older people are linked with the neighbourhood watch and NAG's. There are regular meetings with specific groups and there are focus groups to which they give their views and opinions. The partnership is there to see what can be done, from dealing with bogus callers to ASB.

We are looking at the reduction of the fear of crime, is there any evidence that the Joint Action Group's (JAG) activities are improving the fear of crime rather than actual crime? And how do JAG's link with other meetings in relation to issues that cannot be dealt with at JAG's?

The fear of crime is difficult to tackle on an individual basis. If someone is the victim of a burglary, they will get support with security to reduce the risk of them being a victim in the future. Giving advice and reducing the risk of being a victim again does reduce the fear of crime. We also make sure we deal with graffiti and drugs appropriately.

Last year a mural was painted on a subway, which looked nice and reduced the fear of crime. Dealing with the fear of crime on a larger scale is harder and the media plays a big part in this, need to get message across to people.

How will you do this?

Monthly meetings with the Police and the media, for example reporting successful ASBO's, send out joint press releases and publishing in parish magazines.

In relation to JAG's, if there is a problem with bogus callers for example, we will tell people about the 'no door stop selling zone' and what it means. If an issue is too big for the JAG it can go to the Community Safety Partnership. If it goes to a JAG and it is a Bucks wide issue it can be looked at by the Safe Bucks Partnership.

The crime figures in South Bucks are worse, is there more pressure to deal with crime rather than reduction of the fear of crime?

Crime has to be dealt with but those successes can be used to reduce the fear of crime. It is much better to have specific stories and tell residents what has been done. Success stories will make people feel safe. More work needs to be done to reduce the fear of crime and we should not lose sight of that.

Neighbourhood watch is detailing crime and could put out positive messages, what happens in South Bucks?

We want to use neighbourhood watch for that, but also for good news and to advertise events. This can be done if the neighbourhood watch administration continue to put out messages, which should include positive messages about what people themselves can do.

We are also training officers locally to use the system so that the three different types of message can be sent regularly.

What is the scope for sharing stories?

It is different in different areas. Aylesbury have their own administrator and CDC and SBDC has an administrator. Neighbourhood watch is dealt with differently in different areas, we use the staff we already have and it is difficult to strike the right balance of sending messages out.

Do you print the CSI magazine?

Yes, that is the newsletter I discussed. At the moment it is sent out electronically to Members so we are improving.

Will you increase circulation? I live in South Bucks and I wouldn't know it's available.

We are improving it and will promote more soon. The ION Bucks website put it on their website each time we publish.

South Bucks suffer from a lot of crime from Slough; would it be better to prevent them or reassure residents?

It has to be equal and if residents listen to advice this can prevent crime, for example in relation to theft from cars. There is a good relationship between Bucks and Slough and our Police have an integrated management of offenders which increases cross border working (Integrated Offender Management).

I like the positive message you have. How successful are you with the media?

We do get articles in the paper but this is not necessarily front page. We are working on ways so that the residents do not forget that the Council and Police are working together.

There are lots of stories that we need to get into the press.

It is not the case that we do not give the information to the press, but they choose what stories go into the paper. Following a recent conference, we are now considering methods such as Twitter as a communication method.

An Officer said that, when High Wycombe won an award it was very difficult to get this publicised.

We have a village website and people read this, you need to have links to the village websites.

An officer responded saying that the Police have a tasking process and there is a JAG.

This is not very active; we take our issues to the LAF.

The JAG is a tasking group not a talking group. The JAG is somewhere where there are resources.

South Bucks had the highest serious acquisitive crime in the County. Facebook is currently a major tool, is this something you can use?

Facebook is something we have discussed, but this is not something we can do as a County and as a District we have concerns, but it will be revisited in 6 months. TVP do use Facebook to publicise ASBO's.

An officer stated that if Facebook proves to be the way to communicate and is seen as the way forward they would need to keep an eye on it.

The Chairman thanked Nathan March for attending the meeting.

Fifth Contributor - Pierre du Bois

The Chairman welcomed Pierre du Bois to the meeting.

Pierre du Bois introduced himself as the Communications Manager at Thames Valley Police and set out his background:

- Ten years media and communications experience (local radio and newspapers in Hertfordshire), four years as communications manager for Thames Valley Police
- Master's degree qualifications in media management and public relations.
- He has two part-time communications officers working for him.

Pierre then went on to discuss the overall picture of crime which he said has been falling steadily for years, as has anti-social behaviour and the public confidence in the Police/Council tackling crime has been rising steadily (71% in May, 64% average, vs less than 60% in 2008).

He said that the fear of crime matters because it affects quality of life (stress, depression, anxiety) and research shows fear is steady even when crime in an area rises. The fear of crime is affected by national events such as knife crime and also vandalism, graffiti and littering.

Academic studies have found once someone is afraid of crime, they are likely to remain afraid, whatever happens. Overall, Police work receives very favourable press but when crime occurs, it is very newsworthy and reporting is often sensational. Tabloid readers are more fearful than broadsheet readers and the media will report about crime anyhow, so we need to balance this with good news about what is being done to tackle crime.

He went on to discuss the issues which are of concern to residents and that neighbourhood surveys show this to be ASB, speeding and parking; but different demographics are worried about different things and there is an overestimation of crime levels. There seems to be a link between perception of ASB and reality.

People want to be listened to and this is done through 'we asked, you said, we did' feedback loop, 'Have your Say' and neighbourhood newsletters. There is less confidence in deprived areas and where there is more communication, there is higher confidence (Aylesbury nearly 90% have confidence, lower elsewhere). However, bad news sells, but the more residents know about what is being done, the more confident will they will have as people want to know that the particular issues for their area are being tackled.

Pierre went on to discuss how TVP communicates. He said that communication and confidence was important and TVP has a two-way approach (Have Your Say, We asked, you said, neighbourhood newsletters) and the communications team produces about 50 positive press releases in Bucks. The main focus is on saying what has been done to address priorities, for example, Facebook and Twitter pages were used to update the public on the EDL protests and this was very successful.

Police officers of all ranks are given extensive media training and act as spokespeople.

Pierre also raised concerns about the barriers to progress, such as the Police communications team which is under-resourced (witness appeals, internal communications). There are also completely insufficient communication resources in Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils which result in a fragmented media picture across the County. The Communications professionals in District and County Councils are not always part of community safety communications work.

Buckinghamshire has the fewest community safety communication resources in Thames Valley. Communications needs to be done by experts to be effective and all communication spends needs to be signed off by heads of communication to avoid waste. Elected members need to emphasise partnership working; think about blogging, Twitter, etc. Junior staff should

be allowed to act as spokespeople, not just Members. Neighbourhood watch also needs to be used as a tool for cohesion.

Pierre invited questions from the Members. The questions and answers are summarised below.

What is the source of the place survey?

It is a consultation by telephone of a random sample of 150 people and they are asked whether they think confidence levels are going up or down.

Neighbourhood Watch varies in different areas, is it a Police or Council activity?

Neighbourhood watch is jointly funded and it should be a partnership activity.

Should we switch the focus of Neighbourhood Watch from emails which warn about white vans to the success stories?

Yes, it's important that success stories are published. t.

Neighbourhood Watch has different methods for different areas, what is the best way forward?

Ian Hunter at CDC sends out monthly updates about crime and crime rates. People are increasingly using our website and use it as a tool to find out about what has happened in crime.

What is the investment in communication?

We have to think outside the box in terms of communication methods, for instance we may need to make better use of social media and the new district magazines. Our resources are restricted as we deal with all the media enquiries. If I could I would deal with public confidence more of the time.

What is the Mosaic project?

It is similar to ACORN. It divides up the UK and gives you specific information about people which can give a good indication of how to market them. For example, Mosaic can identify which groups of people are worried about burglary and show the best way to target them.

Why does TVP have one system of mapping and we have another (ACORN)?

Mosaic is the system that TVP use. In effect, the Council gets the benefit of two systems and therefore has an even better understanding of the local area.

In response to a question from a Member about his reporting structure, Pierre advised that he reported directly to Headquarters and Paul Emmings.

The Chairman thanked Pierre du Bois for his contribution.

Sixth Contributor – Stephen Czajewski

The Chairman welcomed Stephen to the meeting.

Stephen Czajewski introduced himself as the Thames Valley Probation Director.

He explained that the probation service deals with high risk cases, those who have committed serious crimes and those at high risk of offending. There are two main types of offenders that the probation service deals with which are:

- Those who are at a high risk of causing harm and the implications of the previous offences they have committed are serious.
- Those who have a high risk of re-offending and have been through court on a regular basis.

Stephen explained that one of the main roles of his team is to deal with people when they are released from prison. The probation team reports to a board and explains what will be done with the offender once they are released. For example, if the offender has serious mental health problems which have been identified before they are released, they will be entered into the mental health system. The probation service tries to minimise the likelihood of people re-offending when they are released, and identifies measures that will be taken if people do re-offend. This may involve placing the re-offender in a location away from the offending area.

A critical few offenders will be placed in a hostel. Bucks does not have any 'approved' premises so people may be located in Milton Keynes, Berkshire or Oxfordshire. One way the probation service is trying to manage the fear of crime is through the use of an integrated offender management treatment package to stop serious re-offending. Every pound spent on re-offender management saves money spent on prisons, as a constructive lifestyle reduces the risk of re-offending.

We provide constructive activities for offenders but sometimes have to provide an incentive for them to co-operate. This can include treatment or drug/alcohol groups. It can be hard to 'sell' these types of initiatives to the public, for instance there was an article recently in the paper with the headline 'Gyms for crims', but the idea behind these types of initiatives is to provide a constructive lifestyle that leads to a better way of life.

For more dangerous criminals we use Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and these cases are reviewed on a weekly or monthly basis. The public do not see 99% of these types of cases that are managed well but the implications when it goes wrong are massive.

Members asked questions following the presentation. The questions and answers are summarised below.

How do you communicate that you are a safe pair of hands?

We are part of the Ministry of Justice and communications are issued on our behalf at a national level through the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). These describe what the probation and prison service is doing and include general statistics. In the TVP area we have one Communications Officer who does work closely with the Police and joint press releases are sometimes issued, but we don't have a big local provision.

Do many of your offenders have mental health problems?

Many people do fit into this category and we have a programme of treatment packages to help them. We provide a framework and supervise their progress but we also work closely with other treatment providers. Domestic violence is a key issue for us; we provide an assessment of these types of offenders and put together treatment plans for them. There can be 30 reported incidents of domestic violence before a case is taken to court. We work closely with the perpetrator and set out a clear structure of what is happening to their partner or ex-partner.

Members discussed the fact that much of the work carried out by the probation service was carried out in the background and the public would not be aware of the many steps being taken on their behalf to prevent further crime being committed. An officer stated that the service is not publicised because it could be counter productive for instance in terms of people knowing where women's' refuges were located. Unfortunately, people associated the probation service with 'something being wrong' in their local area.

Stephen confirmed that the services work is carried out deliberately behind the scenes because of the process they are a part of. Probation only gets involved once the offender has been through the courts.

When someone commits a crime, do you get involved by where they live or where the crime is committed?

Contact is initially made through the local court. If they are found guilty, we would send a report request to the home area and that is when they would be managed. Sexual offenders and domestic violence offenders are not necessarily returned to their home areas.

In terms of reducing the fear of crime, our biggest influence is over re-offending rates. In terms of community service, we work closely with the NAG's and provide unpaid work for free in local areas as part of the 'making good' agenda. There are sometimes difficulties with this, as the orange uniforms make people highly visible.

How much influence do you have over pre-sentencing reports?

We use the sentencing framework to identify what will be the best type of treatment for that person in prison. We respond to the court's needs, for example, we will look at the suitability for unpaid work. Each report is individual; and we appreciated that it's difficult to reassure people in the street about the fear of crime when offenders have reduced sentences and are back on the street in a relatively small timeframe.

Stephen invited Members to visit the probation service to show them how its work is carried out.

7 REVIEW OF THE KEY POINTS

Members discussed the key points of the review from the day as follows:

The Chairman stated that it was clear that communication has to be focused and tailored through various methods which should include social media techniques. Messages through Neighbourhood Watch also seemed to be an area that could be expanded, as did the use of Parish Council newsletters and websites.

There was some concern expressed that resources for communication were limited and were perhaps seen as an easy area to cut. Members were not clear about how effective messages delivered from County were, and that there could be a need for 'smarter' use of these in future. Overall – the key point was that communication seemed to be at the heart of efforts to reduce fear of crime.

The Chairman thanked all Members and closed the meeting.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6 July 2010, 3.00pm – 5.00pm, Committee Room 1, Wycombe District Council – Evidence Gathering

24 August 2010, 2.00pm -5.00pm, Mezzanine Room3, County Hall, Aylesbury – Findings.

CHAIRMAN