

# Agenda

## *CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW*

**Date:** Tuesday 24 August 2010  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** Mezzanine Room 3, County Hall, Aylesbury

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN		
2 APOLOGIES / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP		
3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 AUGUST 2010 TO BE AGREED		1 - 8
5 RESULTS OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER BOARD QUESTIONNAIRE		9 - 12

**Context:**

Part of the remit of the review is to ensure that the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board is discharging its crime and disorder functions. In May 2010, members received a briefing from Susie Yapp – Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities, who explained the structure of the Board, its role and the key partnership priorities it is working towards.

Members agreed that the briefing would be followed up by the use of a questionnaire for Board members, based on one originally used by Bracknell Forest Borough Council. The results of the questionnaires have been compiled into one document which is attached to the agenda.

**Purpose:**

For members to consider the results with a view to highlighting any gaps or concerns they want to see taken forward into the final report.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**Papers:**

- Questionnaire summary.

**6 INTERIM REPORT : KEY AREAS AND DRAFT FINDINGS****13 - 22****Context:**

The review is now at the stage where members need to reflect on all the evidence that has been heard and agree on what they consider the main findings to be. The agreed areas will form the basis of the review report.

**Purpose:**

Members are asked to consider the key areas and findings contained in the interim report attached and advise if these are the correct ones or if they feel, based on the evidence heard, that others should be included. The Chairman will also be asking members to consider what action they would like to see taken in the form of recommendations relating to these.

**Papers:**

- Interim report: Key areas and draft findings

**7 DISCUSSION : THE BIG SOCIETY****23 - 24****Context:**

At the last meeting of the Task and Finish Group, an article by Sara Thornton – Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police was circulated. The article asks if the thinking behind the new Government's plans for a 'Big Society', where volunteering is encouraged and more power is devolved to local people, could help keep people safe. Members asked for the article to be added to the agenda for discussion.

**Purpose:**

Members are asked to consider the content of the article and discuss if any of the ideas it contains should be reflected in the final report.

**Papers:**

- Article taken from The Daily Telegraph, 30 July 2010

**8 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Monday 13 September 2010, 10.00am – 1.00pm, South Bucks District Council – venue to be confirmed

The next meeting will be for members to finalise the draft report resulting from the review, and to agree reporting arrangements.

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If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

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## Members

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



# Minutes

## *CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW*

**MINUTES OF THE CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW HELD ON TUESDAY 3 AUGUST 2010, IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.15 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) and Mr J Wertheim (Chiltern District Council)

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Ms N Ahmad and Mrs C Street

#### **1 WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

#### **2 APOLOGIES/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies were received from Paul Rogerson and Arif Hussain.

#### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2010 AND 6 JULY 2010 TO BE AGREED**

The minutes from the meeting were agreed held on 29 June 2010 and 6 July 2010 were agreed.

#### **5 FEEDBACK FROM INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL AREA POLICE COMMANDERS**

Members reported back on their interviews with their Local Area Police Commanders. The interviews are summarised below:



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



## **Meeting with Gilbert Houalla – Local Area Commander for High Wycombe, Bill Bendyshe-Brown and Paul Rogerson**

- Gilbert was in the process of introducing a new regime focused on reducing fear of crime
- Anti social behaviour (ASB) was a key priority for Gilbert that was being addressed by prioritising calls and responding quickly to them.
- Although figures showed that detection rates were increasing which was very positive, a member had expressed concern about the other 80% which were not detected. Although the member acknowledged the good work of the Police in this area, he pointed out that residents would not necessarily be reassured by this percentage. In this context it would be better to show actual numbers. Gilbert explained that the 80% figure included criminal activity where the perpetrators were known but there was insufficient evidence to convict them.
- Gilbert stressed that he wanted to focus on the fear of crime but not to the detriment of tackling crime.
- Messages were sent out through Community Messaging about the arrests that have been made. There was a discussion about the fact that these kinds of messages could add to the fear of crime as they implied that the area was unsafe. To help combat this, it was important that positive messages were also used.

## **Meeting with Ian Hunter – Local Area Commander for Chiltern Julie Burton and John Wertheim**

- Members were impressed by the effort Ian and his team were putting into reducing the fear of crime.
- He told members that people in the Chilterns area thought there was much more crime occurring than was actually happening; for instance in the Chilterns there is less than one house burglary a day.
- Ian spends a lot of time reassuring people that the rate of crime was not as high as people thought. He did this partly through attending talks with forums such as U3A, older people groups and youth groups.
- He had produced a document called 'The Realities of Crime' which contained crime rates for the area. Feedback to this from the public had been very positive.
- Communication resources in the area were an issue as, for instance, there was no local radio in Chiltern.
- Ian supported that view that members have a clear role in informing people about crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) rates in their local areas.
- There wasn't a problem with ASB caused late night congregation in the area.
- From Ian's view partnership reporting arrangements were confusing. He feels having too many reporting mechanisms results can cause lack of accountability which is made worse in a two-tier structure. Ian finds working through his Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) the most efficient way of taking work forward.

- Members were particularly impressed by the fact Ian responded directly to community safety emails from the public using his 'Have Your Say' mailbox. He also had weekly community safety meetings with Chiltern District Council (CDC).

Members discussed the fact that communication between community safety officers and members could be improved, as members were not always updated with local community safety information on a regular basis. Members also thought there was a role for Cabinet Members in passing on community safety information to other members as they linked with the relevant officers on a more frequent basis.

A member commented that Gilbert Houalla had also referred to communication problems associated with there being no local radio in the area.

The Chairman asked how well the LSPs were working generally as County Councillors are not directly involved with them. They clearly worked well for Ian in the Chilterns area and were also supported in Aylesbury by the Local Area Commander there.

### **Meeting with Richard List – Local Area Commander for Aylesbury Brian Roberts**

- Richard believes that talking in percentages about rates of crime is not as effective as usual real numbers as these have a bigger impact on people.
- His view is that the best way to communicate is through the local papers. Richard publishes his own article in the Bucks Herald every six weeks.
- Mix 96 radio in Aylesbury allows messages to be sent out immediately if required and they have historically provided good coverage for community safety stories.
- Other media possibilities included parish magazines, and publicising positive community safety messages via the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and NAG's.
- Richard's team were focussing on ASB and their PCSOs had been trained specifically to deal with ASB problems.
- Richard was keen on using the LSP to solve problems in that area. His view is that the setting and achievement of local targets is key to reducing the fear of crime.
- He is also very active within Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) and is a regular attendee at their scrutiny committee.
- Richard does not see ASB caused by late night congregation and the proximity of food outlets as a problem in Aylesbury Vale.

A member commented that in Wycombe it was the location of food vans which allowed people to congregate. In Aylesbury these have been pushed out of the centre which seemed to be working well.

Members discussed the forthcoming opening of the new theatre in Aylesbury raising concerns about how worried people might be about going into the town centre at night. Richard had advised that the District Council and the Police were working together to put out positive community safety messages on billboards to help reassure people.

## **Meeting with Paul Cook – Local Area Commander for South Bucks Trevor Egleton and Alan Oxley**

- Crime rates were higher in South Bucks due to its proximity to Slough and the motorway. However, Paul and his team were putting a lot of work into getting the rates down and this which was proving to be successful. For instance there had been a major impact on targeting criminals from Slough and this had reduced burglaries.
- Fear of crime was exacerbated by the fact that the area received London news with 'big headline' crime stories. This was hard to combat with limited communication resources.
- Paul described how he had developed good relationships with police in Slough, the District Council and the local Community Safety Partnership Manager.
- There were not many problems in relation to extended drinking hours except for the Revolution Bar in Beaconsfield. He explained that the policing of this is very well controlled. Police are present when people are entering and leaving the bar to discourage ASB caused by late night congregation.
- The communication and management of the fear of crime was being partly addressed through the 'Have Your Say' events.
- Messages are sent out to Neighbourhood Watch members who pass these on to other people. Paul advised that South Bucks has a big Neighbourhood Watch community.
- Paul was supportive of using forums such as Neighbourhood Watch and other local resources such as parish magazines to promote positive community safety messages, as well as the warning type messages that were traditionally used.
- The Local Area Commander advised that his main was to have an impact on reducing the fear of crime rather than spending time trying to measure it.

A member suggested that there should be a 5 year rolling target for public confidence as that would show trends and would therefore be more meaningful.

A member commented that community safety messages also need to be communicated to younger people and this could possibly be done though the work of the PCSOs.

The Policy and Partnerships Officer confirmed to members that areas of good practice would be highlighted in the final report.

## **6 VICTIM SUPPORT - PRESENTATION**

### **VICTIM SUPPORT – PRESENTATION - John Hayward-Cripps, Regional Manager South East, Victim Support/Witness Services**

The Chairman welcomed John to the meeting and explained the purpose of the review.

John explained that Victim Support (VS) began in Bristol 30 years ago and developed into a federation of charities. In 2008 the 77 area/county VS charities merged into one large national charity with a single group of trustees. VS has 10 regions coterminous with the Government Offices. Each region has a number of Divisions; Buckinghamshire is part of the Thames Valley division. Thames Valley has approximately 40 staff and 250 volunteers.



VS supports witnesses in all criminal courts and supports victims of crime. The majority of victims are referred by the police but VS also supports victims who have not reported the crime to the police. John explained that 80% of the funding is provided from the Ministry of Justice and 20% was from grants and fundraising. Victim support does not deal with some minor crime such as minor criminal damage or car crime: clarification was given to the effect that as ASB was not a crime VS was not funded for it. However where locally funded there are VS projects provided to support people who are victims of ASB. VS has 2 service delivery arms the Witness Service and the Victim Service.

### **Witness Service:**

- Witness Service staff and volunteers are based in all Magistrates and Crown Courts across the UK; to support all witnesses.
- Pre-trial visits to show witnesses the Court rooms and talk through the process.
- Special measures at Court e.g., giving evidence behind screens, video link etc.
- Support for young witnesses where projects exist through home visits.

### **Community**

- Referrals primarily from TVP - currently 40% of possible level. TVP and VS are committed to improve this and work was being done to increase this to over 85%
- VS will attempt to contact the victim 3 times by phone within 48 hours to undertake a needs assessment and to offer them support.
- A commission service budget provides funding for a wide range of practical services such as, paying for lock changes, removals, money for food if required.
- VS also runs the National Homicide Service where referrals come through the police family liaison officer.
- VS is currently rolling out a set of enhancements to the service provided including weekend working.
- Victims are offered emotional support by specially trained volunteers and are supported for as long as they need support.

Following the presentation members asked questions. The questions and answers are summarised below:

#### **A member questioned whether the media exaggerated crime?**

The media does exaggerate crime as they want to have strong stories. However everyone has a responsibility to promote positive stories.

#### **People get a lot of calls if they report a crime, such as calls to see if they would benefit from counselling. This adds to the fear of crime and stops people from wanting to report a crime.**

The Criminal Justice System can be very confusing and we are trying to make it much simpler so that victims can benefit from one point of contact. The feedback we received from victims is that they are confused by the system and struggle to find out about their case.

#### **80% of funding received is from the government grant, has this increased?**

Yes this has increased so VS can improve and enhance the services that are offered to victims and witnesses. As we now phone people directly the number of people that require our services has increased. The services offered and provided depend on the needs of the victim. We offer to meet the victim wherever they may feel comfortable.

**It would be ideal to have one point of contact that the victim could call rather than many different agencies.**

We are working with the Ministry of Justice, Courts and the CPS to streamline the Criminal Justice System including having a single point of contact.

**The Chairman could write to the Attorney General to support this view...**

The Chairman said that this would be taken on board at the next findings meeting.

**How much focus is given to victim support and how much to witness support?**

Within Thames Valley there are more volunteers working within the Witness Service rather than the Victim Service although we are currently increasing the number of Victim Service volunteers through recruitment and training.

**Fear of crime generally is perpetuated by media stories but what is the view of people who have actually experienced the crime, do they have a fear of crime? And does it go after they have had support?**

This is a very complicated area. Initially those who experience crime want the crime to stop and the criminal to be caught. There is also research that some victims want the criminal to be punished so that they are less likely to commit an offence on another person. The fear of crime can be reduced through the support VS can provide but the fear of crime is dependant on a number of factors and is different for individual people.

**The government making cutbacks, does this mean the Ministry of Justice will also have cutbacks and how sure are you that the budget will not be cut?**

The Ministry of Justice is making similar cuts to other ministries. I cannot be sure that the VS budget will not be cut, I am not aware of any cuts at this time but I do not know what will happen next year.

**How do you publicise the services you provide?**

Over the last four months we have had a large media campaign in order to get the charity into the media this will continue and will include with details of our services. We work closely with the police to ensure victims are all aware of VS.

We have recently rebranded and have a new logo. We decided not to change our name as there was not an overriding reason to do so and it was an established name within the Criminal Justice System.

**Sometimes offenders change their mind and plead guilty at the last minute, how do you support victims when this happens?**

When we are aware of this we ensure the victim is made aware. One of the messages we hear regularly from victims is that they are not kept informed of progress in their case.

**Would you follow this up and explain why the offender has got the sentence they have?**

VS would inform the victim of the process of the Criminal Justice System and support them emotionally through the experience would include all the feelings a victim may have including anger, upset, fear, guilt etc. We do not provide therapy for people, our role is to listen, discuss and support.

**You explained that you are involved in an ASB project in Buckinghamshire; can you tell us more about this?**

This is funded by Buckinghamshire County Council for victims of ASB. We are providing additional training for staff and volunteers in dealing with ASB as this is not normally part of our core work. By skilling up volunteers we will be able to support people who may be repeat victims and/or are vulnerable. This project is currently underway.

### **What triggers your intervention?**

We receive referrals automatically from the Police but all victims can be offered our service. We also receive referrals from other organisations and self referrals as an individual does not need to have reported the crime to the police to receive a service from VS.

### **Do you only deal with major offences?**

We do not deal with car crime or minor criminal damage unless the victim is particularly vulnerable; all other victims are eligible for our services. We will work closely with the Police in Thames Valley and have a database of other services available.

### **You have mentioned the Olympics in your report, do you have enough volunteers to cover this and how would you follow it up?**

As a single organisation our response to major incidents is much easier to arrange as we use staff and volunteers from outside a locality to provide support when needed. We are confident that we will be able to provide support to the likely increase in victims in and around the Olympics and are increasing volunteer numbers where this is necessary.

### **What can Council's do to help reduce the fear of crime?**

Ensuring all agencies within the Criminal Justice System put the needs of victims and witnesses high on their agenda and by arguing for victims and witnesses have a single point of contact throughout the process. Also by ensuring that positive messages relating to crime, victims and witnesses in particular are actively put into the media.

The Chairman commented on the importance of not 'scaring' people with the wrong statistics or sensationalised stories. Another member stated that numbers are better than percentages when talking about incidents. Members expressed their support for having one point of contact for victims / witnesses.

John ended the questioning session by thanking the Council Members. The Chairman thanked John for his contribution to the review.

## **7 REVIEW OF KEY POINTS**

The members discussed who the final report from the task and finish group should be circulated to as so much information had been gathered during the course of the review. The Policy and Partnerships Officer confirmed that the report would be sent to all those that had contributed to the review.

The Chairman circulated an article recently published in The Daily Telegraph by Sara Thornton, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police. The focus of the article was on how principles behind the Government's drive for the development of a 'Big Society' (i.e. increased volunteering and greater local devolution of power) could help bring policing closer to people and help them to feel safer. It was agreed that the article would be discussed at the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

Key points identified were as follows:

- The fear of crime was exacerbated by the media.

- Taking action to reduce fear of crime is more important than using valuable resources to measure it.
- The final report should include examples of best practice found during the review.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 13 September 2010, 10.00am – 1.00pm, South Bucks District Council – venue to be confirmed

The next meeting will be for members to finalise the draft report resulting from the review, and to agree reporting arrangements.

**CHAIRMAN**

### Safer and Stronger Board Questionnaire Results

#### 3. Please describe your name, role on the board

- Questionnaires show representation from Voluntary and Community sector, Primary Care Trust (PCT), Health, Wycombe District Council, Bucks Fire and Rescue,

#### 4. Please provide a few examples of the Board's major achievements

- I have only just joined the Board so I cannot comment.
  - Integrated Offender Management (IOM), I: on Bucks, Partnership working to reduce the fear of crime and communicating relevant messages to the public to help reduce crime. Joint Strategic Assessment with Thames Valley Police and all the Community Safety Partnerships.
1. Increasing the focus of Performance Management on crime rate, in particular serious acquisitive crime and seeing a significant fall.
  2. Developing an increased focus on integrated offender management approach to tackle the "whole life" approach to the management of crime.
  3. Setting up the i-on Bucks website and monitoring and information database to enable professionals and the public to access greater information about crime in their area.
  4. Making linkages with wider partnerships in, e.g. voluntary sector, sport etc. to encourage a more holistic view of tackling crime.

- Launch of I: on Bucks. Improvements in dealing with delivering shared outcomes.

#### 5. Where do you think the Board currently is in terms of its stage of development – e.g. early formation, delivering shared outcomes, or fully developed?

- It appears to be unbalanced. I am told that it has always focused heavily on the Safer part of its remit and has given very little attention to the Stronger part. Certainly that was discussed at the meeting I attended. There had been plans to address this, but due to impending funding cuts it was decided that it is not possible to implement these.
- Delivering shared outcomes.
- Delivering shared outcomes – the Board now has a stronger angle on the need for focus on a small number of outcomes to be achieved which will make the most difference to the public.
- (A more "economical" approach to servicing the district council Community Safety Partnerships would assist in efficiency savings).

#### 6. Please describe any major obstacles towards the Board's success

- As answer in point 5 above.
- Difficulties in collecting relevant data to be shared.

- No major obstacles.
  - Change of BCU commander every 18-20 months means a lack of continuity.
- 7. Please describe your understanding of how members are appointed to the Board?**
- PCT has a statutory duty to be part of this partnership.
  - Members are appointed to the Board as a result of their positions in their organisations, e.g. CDRP Chairman, or are nominated by partner organisations, e.g. reps from PCT, voluntary sector, fire and rescue etc.
  - By their constituent authorities.
- 8. How are decisions recorded?**
- Presumably in the minutes.
  - Administrator takes notes of each meeting, including decisions taken which are written up and shared with board members.
  - All meetings are fully minuted; minutes are circulated and distributed widely.
  - By minutes, and agreed as part of action plans.
- 9. Who makes sure decisions are acted on?**
- Chair of the Board.
  - Ultimately this is the responsibility of the Chair of the Safer & Stronger Bucks Partnership Board, but all members are responsible for ensuring decisions in their organisations are implemented.
  - Most actions are delegated to the implementation group, the minutes of which are discussed at the board.
- 10. Please describe your understanding of how the Board is held to account and by whom?**
- I believe it reports to the Bucks Strategic Partnership.
  - Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP, Bucks County Council – Overview and Scrutiny).
  - The Safer & Stronger Partnership Board reports to the Bucks Strategic Partnership, a Member led body which oversees outcomes and steers priorities for the area.
  - By the O&S process of the councils.
- 11. As a Board member, please describe how you monitor and report progress against targets set by the Board**

- As stated at point 4 above, I have only just joined the Board and have not been given an induction so I don't know how this happens or what my role is in this.
- Progress reports are shared and discussed at each meeting. Actions are delegated to the Safer Bucks Co-ordinating Group.
- As CDRP Chair I take issues from my CDRP into the Safer & Stronger Partnership Board and vice versa. My own CDRP's performance management regime, working with other partners, monitors the implementation of outcomes and steers local priorities. Meetings of the community safety managers across the County with the Police feed in to this work as well as the work of the Safer & Stronger Partnership Board.
- Via routine board meetings and where appropriate via LAA meetings/Thematic groups.

**12. Can you describe how issues are raised through the local Community Safety Partnerships through to the Board?**

- Usually the chair of the local CSP puts issues on the Board agenda but any partner could.
- See response to question 11 above.
- Via the implementation group or directly by CEO at the SSPB.

**13. How does the Board agree action on targets that are not likely to be met?**

- Discussion and resulting plan agreed by consensus with delegated actions.
- Through discussion at the meetings, or, if urgent, by email.
- Exception reports are made and commence action agreed.

**14. How do you demonstrate publicly that the partnership adds value?**

- Through the Safer Bucks Plan. Each district has its own Community Safety Plan.
- The SSBPB has significantly increased its focus on communication and publicity to publicise the outcomes for the public as a result of what the partnership is doing.
- Improved visibility of I: on Bucks would help to publicise success and improvements.

**15. How does the public know that the Board achieves value for money?**

- Annual reports.
- Currently limited.

- An evaluation process for board initiatives would help demonstrate Value for Money.
- 16. Do you think the work of the Board is sufficiently accessible to the public?**
- (Two people) Do not know.
  - Improving greater public understanding of crime and disorder in the area is always challenging. Some of the work, by its very nature, needs to be kept confidential but increased publicity assists enormously in the public understanding of the local crime challenges, the significant improvements in crime for example, and challenges the high perception of crime that we have in Buckinghamshire.
  - The SSPB is a private meeting but it does involve members of the police authority who also act in an ambassadorial role with the public to publicise what the board does. CDRPs often (including Wycombe) incorporate local members who add real value in a similar way. Incorporating local members in the SSPB could also assist in improving public accessibility.
  - With only one elected member on the board, this is questionable.
- 17. Do you have any views on how O&S can assist in the development and achievement of the Board's objectives?**
- By asking questions about the balance of its work and focusing attention on the stronger aspect of its remit.
  - By talking about the work of the Board at other committees or meetings.
  - Publicising the work of the Board, and in particular achievements and improvements in crime rates.
  - O&S could play a key role in making C.S. partnerships less bureaucratic and less focused on D.C issues.
- 18. Councils are now required to scrutinise crime and disorder arrangements on an annual basis – particularly in relation to performance. For future reviews, do you have any views on how this could be most efficiently achieved/**
- & SC could come out and visit projects on the ground.
  - I believe the role of scrutiny could be improved by looking at specific targets, rather than wider remits.
- 19. Are there any other comments you wish to make?**
- There is duplication of effort from partners attending each local CSP and the county CSP.



**Overview and Scrutiny Joint Crime and Disorder Review - Draft Findings  
August 2010 – Interim Report**

**Background**

Participating district councils and the county council in Buckinghamshire work in partnership to carry out joint overview and scrutiny reviews, taking it in turn to lead on the areas of work chosen. Topics for joint reviews are ratified by the Joint Chairmen’s Network (JCN), a forum which allows the scrutiny Chairmen of all the various councils to assess and discuss possible subject areas that may be worthy of further examination by overview and scrutiny.

With the approval of the JCN, this year’s review has been led by Buckinghamshire County Council, with welcome participation and keen support from Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils. The work was carried out by a time limited Task and Finish Group who have been meeting and gathering evidence between June – September 2010.

**Remit of the Review**

The community safety focus of the review was chosen in recognition of new powers given to councils to scrutinise crime and disorder issues, which came into force in April 2009. The new powers came from provisions made in the Police and Justice Act 2006.

The JCN approved the original remit of the review, which was to scrutinise how members of the overarching Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board in Buckinghamshire are discharging their crime and disorder functions, and to identify areas for improved partnership working.

Members subsequently agreed to use a case study approach for the second part of the review which has involved examining partnership working in the context of reducing the fear of crime in Buckinghamshire and communicating safety messages to residents.

Members chose to hone in on this area, as tackling the fear of crime is a key priority in the Safer Bucks Partnership Plan for Buckinghamshire 2010 and, as highlighted in the most recent Place Survey, although crime rates continue to fall overall in Buckinghamshire, residents still rate feeling safe in their community as a key priority. Members acknowledge that public confidence is increasing, but it is not doing so at the same level as crime rates are falling.

**Membership**

The membership of the Task and Finish Group is as follows:

Trevor Egleton (Chairman)	Buckinghamshire County Council
Brian Roberts	Buckinghamshire County Council.
Julie Burton	Chiltern District Council
John Wertheim	Chiltern District Council
Alan Oxley	South Bucks District Council
Bill Bendyshe-Brown	Wycombe District Council
Paul Rogerson	Wycombe District Council

## **Methodology**

The review was carried out using the following methods:

- Desktop Research
- Evidence gathering meetings throughout June, July and August
- Questionnaire submitted to members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board
- Influencing Perception Conference – June 2010
- Research using various media articles and community newsletters.

Information has been submitted from the following partners:

- Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board Members
- Bucks Fire and Rescue
- The Probation Service
- Buckinghamshire Community Safety Partnerships
- Thames Valley Police
- Victim Support – South East Region
- The Police Authority through the Local Member representative.

To ensure a balanced view, the Task and Finish Group has received community safety information from across Buckinghamshire and has conducted meetings in all district areas of the county.

## **Draft Findings and Key Areas**

Members are now at the stage where they are considering draft findings and key areas resulting from their investigations which will lead to a number of recommendations. Once these have been agreed, a report will be drafted and agreed by members at their final meeting on Monday 13 September, and will be discussed at the Joint Chairmen's Network meeting the following day. The report and recommendations will then be taken through the relevant reporting mechanisms which will include the participating council's overview and scrutiny committees and executive committees.

The draft findings and key areas resulting so far from the review are as follows:

### **Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB)**

The SSBPB is the countywide community safety partnership for Buckinghamshire. Its membership includes representatives from the District Councils and District Community Safety Partnerships, Police, Bucks Fire and Rescue Service, Probation, Health and the Voluntary Sector.

At the Task and Finish planning meeting on 14 May 2010, members received a briefing from Susie Yapp – Acting Joint Head of Service, Localities and Safer Communities and Board member – on the workings of the Board and its governance arrangements. Susie explained the role of the Board, which broadly speaking is to ensure community safety targets contained in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) are met and that community safety priorities are agreed for the area. The Board establishes the priorities by carrying out a community safety partnership assessment. In terms of meeting targets, the Board is able to hold partners to account with regard

to their contribution to reducing crime and disorder, and is able to deploy resources to meet local priorities.

Each local district area has its own Community Safety Partnership through which local community safety concerns are raised. The Community Safety Partnerships report to the Board, which in turn reports to the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP). Members have learnt that the districts areas compile their own Community Safety Plans, which are refreshed annually as a result of data from the joint partnership strategic assessment. The Board also carries out an annual review of Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) priorities.

When asked about the Board's recent key achievements, members were told how concerted efforts had brought about a significant fall in Serious Acquisitive Crime rates in Buckinghamshire. Levels are higher in South Bucks, but this is an historical situation exacerbated by its close proximity to Slough and the M40, which results in increased levels of cross-border crime.

Another welcome achievement is the introduction of a new, countywide Integrated Offender Management (IOM) project. The aim of this is to reduce re-offending in the area by partners working intensively with offenders; helping them to make lifestyle changes and making them aware of the repercussions of their behaviour.

In addition to the information provided by Susie about the operational aspects of the Board, members agreed that a questionnaire originally produced by Bracknell Forest Borough Council should be sent to Board members to find out more about the workings of the Board.

At the time of writing, a number of responses to the questionnaire were still awaited as many people were away on annual leave. An updated summary of responses will be circulated at the Task and Finish Group meeting on 24 August.

### **Areas to consider for possible recommendations**

**Board Membership** – Members questioned if there were any gaps in the membership of the Board. This seemed satisfactory other than in relation to the Judiciary. Members heard that although there were links to the Judiciary through Police Basic Command Units (BCUs), this was an area that needed to be strengthened. Members felt that it would be beneficial to have a representative from the Judiciary on the Board as the area of work it covers is so closely linked to the workings of the Board.

**Partnership Arrangements** – Members heard from the Local Area Police Commanders that the reporting arrangements they go through in relation to the partnership can be confusing. They would like the process to be streamlined so that local issues are agreed and acted on efficiently. Two of the Local Area Commanders indicated that their preferred way of working is through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). One Local Area Commander stated that one of the best ways of reassuring the public about crime is to set local targets and ensure local community safety concerns are responded to quickly.

**Focus of the Board** – Through the results of the questionnaire, members have heard that the Board has historically focused heavily on the 'Safer' (i.e. reducing crime rates) part of its remit and has given less attention to the 'Stronger' (i.e. fear of crime) element. Apparently, there had been plans to address this, but budget constraints and a future threat to resources is making this refocus uncertain.

## **Communications**

Throughout the review, members have heard about the importance of communications in helping to reassure members of the public about levels of criminal activity in their area. There continues to be significant disparity between people's perception of crime levels and actual crime rates. For instance, during an evidence gathering meeting with the Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern, members learnt that in that area (with approximately 90,000 residents) there is less than one house burglary per day, and less than two thefts from vehicles. When asked by the Local Commander, people living in that area assumed the figures were much higher.

Similarly, members learnt that crime figures for Aylesbury consisted of 10 – 15 crimes per week across the whole of the Aylesbury Vale area. When asked, people thought these figures were more likely to be around 100 per week. During the course of their investigations, members have discussed with partners whether it is most useful to use figures or percentages when describing activities to the public. These discussions have led members to believe that is preferable to use actual numbers of incidents as these seem to be more meaningful and tangible for people.

The Police advised members that there is an assumption that crime is carried out by people coming into Buckinghamshire from outside of the area. Whilst this is true for a small proportion of crime, most is carried out by people who are locally born and bred, and most crime is carried out by a relatively small number of people who are persistent re-offenders.

More problematic for partners, is trying to reassure people about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). A member of the Task and Finish Group described his view that fear of crime may fall into two categories: fear of crime in the home, i.e. burglaries, and fear of crime in the street i.e. muggings and ASB. He proposed that whereas people can protect themselves at home to a certain extent by locking up properly etc. they expect to be 'protected' on the street and this can lead to feelings of vulnerability.

The Police reported to members that there are concerted efforts taking place throughout the County to deal with ASB. For instance, the Police have specific ASB teams assigned to deal with ASB incidents and a priority system that ensures calls are dealt with swiftly. The Police Commander for Buckinghamshire spoke to members about ASB problems that can be associated with people congregating late at night due to the proximity of food outlets to premises that have extended drinking hours. Aylesbury Vale has managed this by pushing the food outlets out of the main town area. South Bucks deals with this by carrying out 'tactical' policing, which involves having a high visibility at peak times in the evening, greeting people as they enter and leave pubs and clubs, and working closely with taxi drivers and food outlet owners during those times.

The role of the media in sensationalising criminal cases is an area that has caused a great deal of interest during the review. Members learnt of problems that are caused by the fact that areas such as Wycombe and South Bucks receive London news rather than local news. This gives residents in those communities an incorrect picture of their local area with a distorted view of criminal activity, which will inevitably be higher in a city.

Members have learnt from the Police Communications Officer that once someone is afraid of crime, they are likely to remain afraid. Overall, Police work received 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 as the media will continue to report about crime, it is important to provide reassurance by balancing this with good news stories featuring activities that are being carried out to tackle crime.

The Police have spoken to members about the difficulties they have had in persuading local newspapers to publish positive community safety stories. They are making headway thanks to a determined effort but it is slow progress. Mix 96 has been more supportive of reporting good news stories in the Aylesbury Vale area. The representative from Victim Support highlighted to members his view that everyone has a personal responsibility to promote positive stories, and that Councils could provide most help by helping to ensure positive community safety messages are reported in the media.

The Police Communications Officer has reported to members that where communication levels are higher (i.e. Aylesbury), public confidence is also higher. People want to know that the particular issues for their area are being tackled – and this brings about feelings of reassurance. He also informed members that Buckinghamshire has the fewest community safety communication resources in the Thames Valley area.

Members are aware from their discussions that many partners are involved with carrying out community safety activities – but their activities may not be as visible as the Police. For instance, members heard from the Director of the Probation Service who talked in detail about the Service's remit. The biggest role that Probation has in terms of reducing fear of crime is in helping to reduce re-offending rates. Probation activities include:

- Treatment packages for offenders who have substance misuse or mental health problems
- Supporting victims of domestic violence and proving them with a clear structure of how the perpetrator is being dealt with
- Providing un-paid work in the community as part of the 'making good' agenda.

### **Areas to consider for possible recommendations**

**Community Messages** - The view of most partners is that local methods are proving to be the most effective and efficient ways of communicating messages to residents. One of the methods that has proved successful for the Local Area Commander for the Chilterns area, is the production of a fact sheet which he has called 'The Realities of Crime' and which was distributed through the 'Have Your Say' mailbox. The Local Area Commander received very positive feedback directly from residents to the fact sheet. He backed up this information by responding directly to members of the public who had contacted the mailbox with community safety concerns.

Through their evidence gathering, members know that there are many good news community safety stories in Buckinghamshire – and there are very positive messages about crime rates that together could give a more realistic picture of the real scale of crime in Buckinghamshire. To help combat the negative and more sensational type of messages that are often reported in the press, it is important that these are highlighted to the public. Alongside this, the Neighbourhood Watch 'Ringmaster' system used to historically for warning messages (i.e. 'look out for red van in your area) could be used to report on success.

Media methods that could potentially be used to better effect and which were raised a number of times throughout the review are Parish magazines, Neighbourhood Watch magazines, the new county and district magazines, and information provided through the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs).

The Local Area Police Commander for Wycombe advised members that reducing crime levels won't necessarily reduce the fear of crime unless you have a good communications strategy. He reported that a Communications Plan is being developed for the Wycombe area to provide a clear focus for messages. Members may wish to consider how best to support this view.



A member of the Task and Finish Group has referred to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham who are putting community safety messages on highly visible sites such as lampposts. Could the use of a strapline such as 'Targeting ASB' make more of an impression on people in Buckinghamshire?

**Role of Members** – As Leaders in their local communities, members have expert knowledge about the concerns of local residents. When asked, partners felt that members could play a key role in becoming actively involved with delivering community safety messages to their local electorate. Partners have expressed the view that members would need to be appropriately briefed with key messages targeted to their local area. Member may want to consider how this could be achieved most efficiently.

One source of information that may help inform members is if they sign up to the free community messaging system which provides information to subscribers about crime and police activity in their area via phone or email. It also includes information on what the police and partners are doing to bring offenders to justice or combat anti-social behaviour. Link for reference:

<http://www.tvpcommunitymessaging.org/rmwebportal/startup.aspx>

There could also be a role for local members in lobbying the media with a view to helping to promote the inclusion of positive news stories in local newspapers such as the Bucks Free Press or Bucks Herald.

### **Victims of Crime**

During their evidence gathering meeting on 3 August, members received a presentation from the Regional Manager South East, Victim Support / Witness Service. He advised that Victim Support helps witnesses in all criminal courts and

supports victims of crime through two delivery arms. The sorts of activities the organisation carries out are as follows:

- Emotional support by specially trained volunteers
- Some practical services such as paying for locks to be changed
- Carrying out needs assessments on potential clients
- Pre-trial visits to show witnesses the Court rooms and talk through the process
- Special measures at Court e.g., giving evidence behind screens, video link etc
- Support for young witnesses where projects exist through home visits.

In terms of lessening the fear of crime, the Regional Manager explained that initially those who experience crime just want the crime to stop and the criminal to be caught. He referred to research which supports the view that some victims want the criminal to be punished so that they are less likely to commit an offence on another person. The view of Victim Support is that fear of crime can be reduced through the support their organisation offers, but that it is a complex area as fear of crime is dependent on a number of factors and is different for individual people.

A key point from the Regional Manager's presentation was the view from victims that the Criminal Justice System can be very confusing and they frequently struggle to find out information about their cases. Victim support is working with the Ministry of Justice, Courts and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to streamline the system. Victims of crime can receive calls from a wide variety of people involved in the criminal justice process which is very disconcerting for them. Victim's Support's goal is to ensure a single point of contact is established for them. The view of Task and Finish members at their meeting was that the review should take appropriate action to support this move.

### **Areas to consider for possible recommendations**

The proposal at the Task and Finish Group meeting was that the Chairman should write to Dominic Grieve, MP for Beaconsfield, on behalf of the Task and Finish Group expressing members' support for a single access point for victims and witnesses.

### **Good Practice**

Throughout the review, members have heard of areas of good practice in terms of community safety and helping to address the fear of crime taking place across the county. A selection of these is as following:

- 'Have Your Say' events organised by the Police in high footfall areas to provide a visible, reassuring presence, and to find out what the community safety issues are for people in their local communities.
- A Victim Support project funded by Buckinghamshire County Council for victims of ASB. They are providing specially trained volunteers to support people who are repeat victims or who are particularly vulnerable.
- Partnership working between Aylesbury Vale District Council and the Police to put community safety messages on billboards outside the new theatre to reassure people that Aylesbury was a safe area to come to – at night as well as during the day.

- Community safety packs for rural areas provided by Bucks Fire and Rescue at the 2009 Buckinghamshire County Show, which included a rural risk management strategy for farmers and businesses.
- Monthly meetings with the Police and the media to help foster partnerships
- 'We asked, You said, We did' communication initiative carried out by the Police.
- Cross-border, intensive partnership working in South Bucks carried out by the Local Area Police Commander for that area and his team, which has helped lead to a reduction in crime rates.
- Community Safety Partnership banners used in Wycombe High Street to promote messages and advice.
- Community Safety Information (CSI) magazines produced by the Community Safety Partnerships.
- Use of branding to show that the Police and Councils are working together i.e. 'Working Together for a Safer Chiltern'.

### **Areas to consider for possible recommendations**

Members may wish to discuss how they can support the good practice they have discovered through the review. For instance, they may want to consider how best practice could be show-cased – is this something the Board could progress? Could Partners' websites be used for this purpose?

### **Early Conclusions**

Levels of public confidence in Buckinghamshire in terms of community safety are increasing but are not in line with overall falling crime rates. Feeling safe in their community continues to be a very high priority for residents. Fear of crime is an individual experience and hard to measure. Much work is being carried out by partners in Buckinghamshire to help reassure residents, but this is often not reflected in the media who tend to publish alarming stories about crime. This is made worse in Buckinghamshire as many of our areas receive London news, plus the Thames Valley Region is under-resourced for Communications.

Communicating clearly with the public, using numbers not statistics, is the best way to help reassure them. Use of local media is the best way of getting messages across, but members also have a role as Community Leaders in delivering community safety messages.

The Safer and Stronger Board is well structured with clearly defined priorities. There may be small adjustments needed to its focus and membership, and a need to reflect Police concerns about streamlining partnership arrangements with them.

As part of the discussion on the 24 August meeting, members will be considering an article recently published by Sarah Thornton - Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, about Government's plans for the 'Big Society', and how the police may use



ideas behind this to help keep people safe. The final report produced about the review will need to reflect any conclusions reached from this discussion.

### **A caveat**

Members understand that the government has retracted the national indicator set and realise that partnership arrangements may need to change in light of new policy and funding constraints. For example, LAA arrangements are due to end in March 2011 and the new public sector landscape, as well as the uncertainty around how decentralisation and localism will work in practice, means that recommendations made as a result of the review are done so at a time of significant change. An example of this is the removal of the public confidence target. This means that the police will no longer have to measure performance against this target and may choose to direct their resources elsewhere.



# **‘The Big Society can help us bring policing closer to the people’**

By Sara Thornton

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Last Monday, the Prime Minister outlined his vision of a Big Society, where volunteering is encouraged, power devolved and provision diversified. On Tuesday, reports from the Audit Commission and Inspectorate of Constabulary argued that the police could cope with cuts of £1 billion – approximately 12 per cent of their budget – but that beyond that, services to the public would be affected.

It is every chief constable's worst nightmare to be asked to deliver the same service with only three quarters of the officers and staff. But could the ideas behind the Big Society be a way to develop a new and cheaper approach to keeping people safe, to make our forces less reliant on professionals, more local, and less bureaucratic?

In my own force, Thames Valley, we have been gradually building up our special constabulary. But we also rely on more than 600 volunteers, who staff the quieter stations, look after our dogs, give chaplaincy support and help with the admin. While many are retired, more than 100 are under 24. And in smaller communities, where the police station is more valued than used, volunteers can keep them running when no business case could be made for full-time staff: the police point in Sandhurst, near Bracknell, is run completely by volunteers, and recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Volunteers can also take a more active role. Over the past few years, we have developed Neighbourhood Action Groups, in which local people work with neighbourhood policing teams to agree priorities. In Banbury, the group has organised litter picks to clean up problem estates. In Slough, where street prostitution was a real problem, the Neighbourhood Action Group went on patrol with residents. In rural Oxfordshire, a group has been helping farmers and doctors to make emergency plans for floods or snow.

By listening to communities in this way, we can act on their concerns. For example, while the police are often accused of persecuting motorists, we found that in 175 of the 263 neighbourhoods in the Thames Valley, stopping speeding was considered a priority. Where the problem is not severe enough for formal enforcement, we have a number of speed indicators that can be used by local people, working with officers. In one area, local schoolchildren helped man the speed check, and wrote the warning letters. There were a few red faces in the cars driving away.

The police do have a good track record in using volunteers and encouraging local participation. But there may never be a better time to step up our efforts. For me, three steps need to be taken. First, the Government could help increase the number of special constables by allocating grants for additional training and uniforms, and encouraging employers to provide support. Also, volunteering can be a bureaucratic process because of the checks that are required – so there might be scope to take a more proportionate view of the risk.

Second, we need to give people the confidence to tackle anti-social behaviour. In Germany, two thirds of citizens would intervene in public; in this country, two thirds would not. Referring everything to the police, and the legal system, is not the answer to every problem – nor is it affordable.

Finally, we need new ways to harness the experience of officers and the desire of communities to engage with policing. Volunteers, Neighbourhood Watch, Horse Watch, Countryside Watch, Neighbourhood Action Groups and the special constabulary are good examples of local participation. But the Big Society concept is a great opportunity to explore how we can develop different and better ways of keeping people safe.

**Sara Thornton is the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.**