

Minutes

CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW

**MINUTES OF THE CRIME & DISORDER JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW HELD ON TUESDAY
24 AUGUST 2010, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING
AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.30 PM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

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, Mrs C Street and Ms S Yapp

1 WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Paul Rogerson and Julie Burton.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 AUGUST 2010 TO BE AGREED

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2010 were agreed.

5 RESULTS OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER BOARD QUESTIONNAIRE

Members discussed the results from the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB) questionnaire which had been sent out to Board Members to drill down further into the operation of the Board. Members were asked to look through and highlight any gaps or concerns.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities commented that the responses from the Board were very positive. She advised that Thames Valley Police (TVP) were looking at restructuring through a consultations paper 'Policing in the 21st Century.' This was likely to result in a streamlining of their partnership reporting framework. Currently, there are 16 police command areas throughout Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Oxford and Slough.

Highlights from Questionnaire Results:

Question 4 - major achievements

Major achievements included:

- Reducing Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC)
- The introductions of the I: on Bucks website
- The introduction of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model

A member commented that there had been great success in reducing serious acquisitive crime (SAC) and this should be highlighted in the review report. The Chairman stated that the I: on Bucks website should be more widely publicised as it was a very useful tool.

Question 5 – Development of the Board

Responses clearly showed that the Board had developed well. Some of the responses indicated that the Board had historically focused on the 'safer' element of its remit and needed to rebalance this by moving forward on the 'stronger' element, which included prevention, anti-terrorism, community cohesion and resilience. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities agreed and stated that the Board had traditionally focused on the safer element as the priority had been to reduce crime rates.

The Board was now looking to achieve a greater balance and move forward on the stronger element. To do this, membership of the Board would need to include individuals from local authority cohesion and equality posts.

Question 6 – Major obstacles

One respondent stated that the BCU Commander changed every 18-20 months and, in their opinion, this caused a lack of continuity. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities responded that in actual fact the BCU Commander had only changed 3 times in the last 6 years and this stability had helped to reduce crime. But, in addition to this, Paul Emmings, the current Commander for Buckinghamshire had also made dramatic improvements in one year.

Question 7 – Member appointments to the Board

Members agreed that the Board was clear about how members were appointed and the process for this was included in the terms of reference. Board membership was at strategic level i.e. Chief Executives.

Question 8 – How are decisions recorded?

The questionnaire results confirmed that decisions were recorded in the minutes which were typed on a laptop at the meetings. The minutes were sometimes circulated within 20 minutes after the meeting to all members. This was considered a very efficient method.

Question 14 – How is it demonstrated that the partnership adds value?

The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities stated that the Board added value as it allowed information to be pooled together in one place and because the Board allowed members to put out consistent messages.

Question 16 – Is the Board’s work sufficiently accessible to the public?

There was only one elected member on the Board in the form of the Police Authority representative, but it was felt that opening up the membership wider to other elected members within all the district areas would make the Board too big. After a discussion, members agreed that the nature of the Board’s work did not lend itself towards further public accessibility. The Chairman commented that if the partnership was performing well, it was being successful and its job had been done.

Question 19 – Any other comments

Overall it was felt that the questionnaire results were both consistent and helpful. The Chairman thanked the members of the Board for responding. It was agreed that the questionnaire results should be reflected in the final report.

6 INTERIM REPORT : KEY AREAS AND DRAFT FINDINGS

The interim report resulting from the review had been circulated and members agreed that it had captured the key areas. Areas for recommendations were discussed and key points resulting from the discussion are summarised below:

Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB)

- **Board Membership**

Members discussed whether or not they should recommend that a member of the judiciary should sit on the Board. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities felt that there was already sufficient links with the judiciary through the Bucks Commanders. Members were assured that Board members would liaise with other relevant agencies as and when required and so they decided not to include this as a recommendation.

- **Partnership Arrangements**

During the evidence gathering process, members had heard from two of the Local Area Police Commanders that they found the partnership reporting arrangements confusing – made worse by Buckinghamshire being a two-tier area. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities advised that the police consultation document referred to above was very likely to resolve these issues. Although members agreed not to include this as a recommendation – they requested that the views of the two Commanders be reflected in the final report.

- **Focus of the Board**

Members agreed that there should be a recommendation that the Board develops a great emphasis on its ‘stronger’ element.

Communications

- **Community Messages**

There was a discussion about two messaging services, Police Community Messaging (PCM) and Ringmaster. A member stated that PCM was very good as it aimed to give positive community safety messages as well as the more traditional ‘warning’ messages.

Members agreed that the review recommendations should publicise PCM and that it on Bucks should be promoted to residents via local members. They also thought there should be a

recommendation about positive messages being included in local forums such as Parish magazines. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities stated that Sergeants wrote a neighbourhood update for TVP and that this same piece was used for several purposes.

Members discussed whether street signs should be used for community safety messages. They were advised that this already happened but that also putting up too many signs could have the opposite effect of making people think the area was unsafe. Signs such as the 'Police Operation in Progress' ones could be very effective in reducing crime and were used tactically in the area.

- **Role of Members**

The Chairman reminded the group of the role that members had as community leaders. Members expressed the view that they were not always included in community safety information that was circulated – and that it would be useful to receive relevant briefings in this area. It was felt that the link between the police and elected members could be strengthened.

The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities stated that members had a role in reflecting the public position and should be provided with briefings at appropriate times e.g. following local elections. Partners could be invited to member briefing events to pass on relevant information.

Members agreed that there should be a recommendation that elected members be informed automatically when the partners are circulating information at a local level and they should seek out elected members as key contacts for communication.

Victims of Crime

It was agreed to include a recommendation that the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group should write to Dominic Grieve MP and Attorney General, expressing the group's support for a single point of access for victims of crime.

Good practice

Many areas of good practice were covered in the interim report such as, Have Your Say events, community safety messages on billboards and a Victim Support project funded by Buckinghamshire County Council. All members agreed that examples of good practice should be highlighted in the full report.

7 DISCUSSION : THE BIG SOCIETY

Members discussed a recent published article on 'The Big Society' by Sara Thornton, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police, which advocated getting more people involved locally in community safety.

A member stated that many volunteers did a great job but did not receive enough recognition. The Acting Head of Service for Localities and Safer Communities responded by saying that volunteers were highly commended for their achievements through local ceremonies – the police were also recognised when they had acted for going beyond the call of duty.

A member referred to Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and Neighbourhood Watch and questioned how enthusiasm and interest could be maintained for both. They were advised that Neighbourhood Watch was likely to be re-invigorated through the emphases on developing a

big society. It was felt that Neighbourhood Watch really did reduce the fear of crime, partly because it put people in touch with their neighbours.

Members agreed that the final report should reflect the ethos behind plans for a Big Society.

The Chairman felt that there was inconsistency with the NAGs but he had been pleased to hear from the Bucks Commander during the review that he intended to address this.

8 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 13 September 2010, 10.00am – 1.00pm, South Bucks District Council, Room 6.

CHAIRMAN