

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

MINUTES

A meeting of the **Community Engagement Committee** was held on Thursday 11th March 2010 in the Conference Room, Devon and Cornwall Police Authority, Endeavour House, Woodwater Park, Exeter, starting at 10:30hrs.

Present:

Chairman: Mr M Hicks

Members: Mr M Clayton, Mrs L Dunn, Mr M Hodge, Mrs J Owen, Mr D Percival and Mrs L Williams.

Officers in attendance:

Police Authority

Ms S Howl (Chief Executive), Miss J Norris (Assistant Chief Executive), Ms E Macaulay (Policy Officer), Mrs G Clifton (Administrator).

Constabulary

T/Supt C Eastwood (Head of Call Management and Communications Unit), ACC P Netherton, Ms A Poole (Head of Performance Analysis), Ms G Sims (Consultation Manager).

At 10.00 hrs members attended a presentation on the Devonport Neighbourhood Team's innovative policing pod (Operation Vocal). This was followed by the formal committee meeting.

PC/366 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr B Preston and Mrs J Zito.

PC/367 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made in respect of any item on the agenda.

PC/368 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman congratulated the Constabulary on the news that they had scored well in the Police Report Cards published by HMIC earlier that day.

PC/369 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

PC/370 Op Vocal

The Assistant Chief Constable supplemented the presentation which outlined the work of the new policing pod in Plymouth.

- The Operation was a technique from the PACT meetings in Plymouth where a particular area was targeted in a way that best suited it. The pod was deployed and officers knocked on the community's doors in areas where there were concerns about public confidence. Officers appeared very enthusiastic about the technique.
- The operation had taken place in an urban environment. Devonport was targeted as a hard to reach area because of the high levels of deprivation. Different tactics were used in rural areas and during the holiday season.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- The Authority needed hard evidence that the cost of the operation was value for money. The test that the operation was cost effective would be to attain a higher level of public confidence in those areas targeted.

However, there was a time lag between the operation and the British Crime Survey (BCS) and the numbers in the sample in a particular area would not be statistically significant. The programme of in-house surveys for the following year was underway. The available resources were finite but samples in those areas could be boosted to endeavour to demonstrate increased confidence.

- RESOLVED**
- (i) to note the report.
 - (ii) to assess whether increased surveys could be done in the target areas.

PC/371 Public Contact Strategy

The Head of the Call Management and Communications Unit (CMCU) introduced this item that was intended to update members on the work being undertaken in the area of public contact. The points highlighted included:

- Two years ago there had been a large scale review of the processes and an action plan produced. This action plan had now been all but fully implemented and centred on the empowerment of staff.
- The call centres in Exeter and Plymouth were staffed 24 hours a day 365 days a year. They dealt with an average of nearly 600 '999' calls per day and 2100 non urgent calls to the 08452 number. The volume of calls was decreasing. The targets of answering '999' calls within 10 seconds and calls to the non urgent number in less than 30 seconds were consistently being achieved. There was an improvement in 'lost' calls. The target for re-routed calls was more difficult to achieve but there had been a significant improvement this year.
- The target to reduce the number of complaints by 10% had been more than achieved as number had gone down by 22.3%. Total number of complaints was 74.
- Ease of contact satisfaction was running at 95.6% compared with the target of 94%. This target had been introduced by the Police Authority as a more meaningful measure than time targets and the Force had shown impressive progress up the national placings.
- The organisational values of the unit were to put the customer at the heart of what staff did. Staff were monitored on a monthly basis so they knew what was expected of them. The key was making better use of the resources available through shift patterns and planning throughout the year.
- Staff were encouraged to identify ways that public confidence could be increased. This could include attending community meetings, items on local radio etc.
- Staff attendance had improved and recruitment and turnover had reduced. This enabled more resources to be put into training the current quota of staff.
- The Home Office was encouraging Forces to adopt the national non emergency telephone number 101. This had a standard charge of 10p regardless of distance or length of call. There were cost implications but the benefits were an easy to remember number and national advertising of it. The system was in place, although some IT was required, and could be implemented in a matter of weeks.
- Voice recognition technology was being considered but the public would be consulted before the decision was made.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- Members queried the evidence for the reduction in call volumes. The 999 calls were fairly consistent in number and the reason for decreasing call volumes was likely to be, for example, people doing their own research on the website rather than ringing up. Of the 999 calls about one third were emergencies. The other two thirds are not necessarily inappropriate and staff will endeavour to provide a service. There was a triage system on the 08452 number to divert calls to 999 if it was an emergency. There had been a national marketing campaign on what constituted an emergency.
- BT handle the 999 initial calls and ask which service the caller wants before putting the call through to the appropriate service. The Police did not know how their performance compared with other blue light services.
- A discussion was held in relation to the use of the 101 non emergency number and the possibility of it becoming the national non emergency number to replace the 0845 number. The Authority will be notified as soon as the decision is made to move to the national number. However, the Home Office contract for

the number is due to be renewed shortly; it was unlikely that Devon and Cornwall would sign up until the new contract conditions are known.

ACC TP raised the issue of recent press speculation over the constabulary changing its name to police. This is not the case. Devon and Cornwall Constabulary have been using Devon and Cornwall Police as their title in certain circumstances for a while. This is not a formal name change rather the use of the term most used by the public (people search for police on the internet rather than constabulary and look for signs that say Police rather than Constabulary). The Committee was shown the new signage for the new station at Bodmin last year and signage change will be a gradual process as signs come for replacement thereby reducing cost.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

PC/372 – Result of the Confidence Surveying by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)

The Head of Performance Analysis introduced the report that gave details of the results of the surveys on public confidence. The points highlighted included:

- This was a new framework from the Home Office for all forces to use. The first results had been published and the survey would be carried out every year. Different forces used different methods; Devon and Cornwall used a telephone survey many forces still used letters.
- On the chart of results tabled at the meeting the blue bars showed the number of people who responded 'Agree'. This was the standard measure and the figure that was published. The results from the Isles of Scilly were not statistically significant as only 20 people had been surveyed.
- Although not published the purple bars (those who responded 'Disagree') was an important measure. Torbay had the highest number of 'Agree' but also had the highest number of 'Disagree'. This differed from North Devon that had the highest number of 'Don't Knows'.
- Devon and Cornwall's survey followed the standard question with an open question – "Why do you say that?" Of those who responded 'Neither agree nor disagree', 25% said it was because there was no anti-social behaviour where they lived and 13% said they'd had a mixed experience and saw this as a balanced view. Some 'Don't Knows' also said they had no issues, therefore it is difficult to decode the response to deal with this.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- The BCS does not offer a 'Don't Know' response and the method of survey is different – a face to face interview lasting two hours compared with Devon and Cornwall's much shorter telephone approach. It was not possible to determine whether the size of the gap between the two methods' results was comparable with other forces as they each used different methods.
- A total of 600 people are interviewed in each CDRP area. Figures are somewhat skewed by the Unitary Authority in Cornwall compared to the ten separate areas in Devon. It was intended to reduce the number of areas in Devon by combining some, to allow an increase in people surveyed in other areas.
- CDRPs were soon to be renamed Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

RESOLVED to note the content of the report

PC/373 Devon and Cornwall Policing Plan

Agenda item 9 was taken before agenda item 8 as two members of the Constabulary had to leave for another meeting. The report presented the final draft of the forthcoming three-year Policing Plan for members' comments.

- A small group had considered the plan and provided feedback. The changes would be made and the plan would be referred back to that group to sign off before being finally approved.
- The insert agreed by the five Police Authority collaboration programme had been coloured blue to show that it had come from outside Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.
- The foreword from the Chief Constable and the Authority's Chief Executive was currently being written.

RESOLVED that the plan be signed off by a group of members following the recommended changes.

ACC Netherton and Ms A Poole left the meeting.

PC/374 Police Confidence Conference and the role of the Police Authority in improving confidence

The Chairman gave an oral update on the outcome of the recent conference and asked members to consider ways that public confidence in the police and local councils could be improved. Issues discussed by members in consideration of this item included:

- The conference consisted of a worthwhile presentation followed by a series of workshops. The workshops dealt with the types of issues that reduced public confidence but were not about policing e.g. dog mess, litter. There had been much discussion about illegally parked cars and the lack of police response to the issue as it was a council responsibility.
- Members would like to know if any of the Local Authorities had not sent a representative. The Policy Officer agreed to check the delegates list and bring the information to the next meeting.
- The Chief Constable had written to the Chief Executives of all the Local Authorities. A follow up letter from the Chair of this Committee would be sent to the leading members of each authority.
- The Committee should be kept informed of what work is being done between the Force and the local authorities. Exeter City Council was due to meet the Chief Constable to push this forward and it had gone to a scrutiny committee but this was only known through attendance at a CDRP meeting. It would also be useful to see which areas are not being as efficient in this matter as some others are.
- It was necessary to communicate with different levels in the authorities to see what work was being done already. Many of the delegates from the local authorities had been anti-social behaviour officers or public relations staff. This low level was not likely to be influential to the policy and direction of the authorities.
- Members would like to see the 'products' of the conference i.e. notes and a list of actions proposed.
- The Assistant Chief Constable would be asked to present to the next meeting any new initiatives in place as a result of the conference.

RESOLVED

- (i) that members be provided with the delegate list from the conference
- (ii) that the Chair would write to leading members of local authorities to encourage work to improve public confidence
- (iii) that members be provided with the outcomes from the conference
- (iv) that the Assistant Chief Constable be asked to present to the next meeting any new initiatives in place to deal with anti-social behaviour.

PC/375 Draft Partnership Strategy

A draft version of the strategy was presented to members for comment. Issues discussed by members in consideration of this item included:

- This was a high level document not a checklist. There would be more detailed supporting documents.
- The intention was not to dictate to BCUs which partnerships they should form but the Authority did need to ensure they were value for money.
- The document outlined reasons to form partnerships and reasons why we might come out of some. It also stated that members were expected to feedback on the activities of their partnerships, a mechanism that does not exist at present.
- A briefing sheet was being produced for use at partnership meetings to explain to partners the difference between the Police Authority and the Police. An up to date list would also be produced detailing which groups each member sits on.
- More information might be needed on what members are there to do for each partnership.
- Any further comments on the document were required by the end of March 2010.

RESOLVED that members provide any further comments on the document before 31st March 2010.

PC/376 Local Impact of the Association of Police Authorities (APA) publicity campaign

The Policy Officer introduced the report that gave an overview of the activity and impact of the Authority's news release. Issues discussed by members during consideration of this item included:

- All Police Authorities had been asked to issue a synchronised press release across the country. This Authority had used the results of the 'Daisy' consultation. Two papers had published the release and two radio interviews were done. There was no interest from news websites.
- It was not likely that this would be a regular initiative; we would rather concentrate on local stories than manufactured ones.

RESOLVED to note the report.

PC/377 Briefing Sheets

There were no briefing sheets.

The next meeting would be held on 13th May 2010 at 10.00 hrs at Endeavour House.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1235 hours