

## Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

### MINUTES

A meeting of the **Community Engagement Committee** was held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010 in the Conference Room, Devon and Cornwall Police Authority, Endeavour House, Woodwater Park, Exeter, starting at 10:00hrs.

#### Present:

Chairman: Mr M Hicks

Members: Sir Simon Day, Mrs L Dunn, Mr M Hodge, Mrs J Owen, Mr D Percival and Mrs L Williams, Mrs J Zito.

#### Officers in attendance:

##### Police Authority

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

##### Constabulary

ACC P Netherton, Ms G Sims (Consultation Manager).

#### PC/378 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr B Preston, Mr M Clayton and Ms V Goodwin.

#### PC/379 Declarations of Interest

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

#### PC/380 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- An extra item had been added to the agenda to discuss the areas of the Risk Register that were the responsibility of the Community Engagement Committee to oversee. This would be a standing item for all future meetings.
- The Chief Constable had informed the full Police Authority meeting in April that he did not wish to be part of the Joint Partnership Strategy. Therefore the Police Authority would continue on its own. ACC Netherton explained that because of the changes in structure in the Force it was difficult to determine how to engage with partners at this stage, but the issue would be revisited later. They had created a pledge that anti-social behaviour should be owned by the Local Authorities, which the authorities had agreed to in principle. However, some Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) had not yet met to formally agree the pledge. It was good that the Police Authority was involved in the CSPs to promote the pledge commitments. Most anti-social behaviour was about dog fouling, noise, parking etc. that were not police issues. Members asked that a list of those authorities that had signed up be provided to the committee. Neighbourhood Police Teams were being encouraged to train PCSOs to be able to identify the responsible officer in a local authority if told of concerns about, for example, litter. Once the problem was dealt with the local authority should feed this back to the PCSO who can then contact the complainant. This mechanism was working well in East Devon.

#### PC/381 Minutes

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### Matters arising:

- PC/371 (11<sup>th</sup> bullet) – members requested further information on the comparison between the police and other blue light services for performance in dealing with 999 calls. ACC Netherton agreed to provide this.

- PC/371 (12<sup>th</sup> bullet) – members asked if a timescale had been agreed for the Force to move to the national 101 non-emergency telephone number. The response was that it was for the Home Office to progress the contracts for costs and servicing before Devon and Cornwall put the proposal to the regional call handling working groups. The more forces that sign up to it the cheaper the system was likely to be. There had been some trials but they had included the local authorities on the same number. These had not been very successful as the local authorities were not set up to deal with so many calls, so the number will now just be used for police non-emergency calls.
- PC/374 (2<sup>nd</sup> bullet) – all local authorities had been represented at the recent meeting about public confidence and had generally been very positive. The Force was writing monthly to Chief Executives and Leaders to highlight the disparity between confidence in the police and confidence in the local authorities. The Police Authority had also written to the authorities and had received a response from Plymouth City Council.

### **PC/382 How the Constabulary communicates with local communities**

The Assistant Chief Constable introduced the item in the absence of Ms Goodwin:

- The 'Not in my lifetime' campaign had been launched. This included images on cash machines telling customers that the Devon and Cornwall region was the 4<sup>th</sup> safest place to live and posters saying that anti-social behaviour reports had reduced.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- Members were disappointed that the Police Authority had not been included in the formation of the strategy. There were elements they were not happy with. It was decided to cover the campaign in greater detail at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** to discuss the communication strategy more fully at the next meeting.

### **PC/383 The Authority on Facebook**

The Policy Officer gave a short presentation to give members a basic understanding of the Authority's use of Facebook and future plans. The points highlighted included:

- Social networking sites were the cultural norm among certain demographic groups, namely 18-40 year olds; more than a third are 18-24, a profile not reached by the Authority's other mechanisms.
- The Authority is utilising a 'Profile'. This allows two-way communication. Any updates to the site automatically copy into a user's Facebook account.
- The Facebook site now had 126 friends many of which have no direct connection with the Authority.
- Every Tuesday a piece of 'trivia' is posted on the site, i.e. little sound bites about the Authority.
- A set of Friendship rules had been developed that included rules about being respectful and the fact that the Authority would not respond to specific cases just general issues.
- It was anticipated that in future the site could be used for online polls or consultations. When there are sufficient 'friends' it could host an online PALM.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- There was concern that 'friends' could post items on the site that were unsuitable or illegal such as racist remarks or comments about particular police officers. The Assistant Chief Executive assured the committee that the site was regularly monitored and anything unsuitable could be deleted. If a person persistently broke the rules they would be deleted as a friend. However, members were not satisfied that this major risk to the Authority's reputation was being sufficiently mitigated where there were many other work pressures. The Assistant Chief Executive agreed to provide the necessary assurance for members.
- When a person joins Facebook they have the option of providing information about their age, gender, marital status, ethnicity etc. This allows the Police Authority to be able to identify the profile of its 'friends', if required.

- Recently a 'friend' had contacted the site with concerns about how a particular incident had been handled. This had received a response and the person thanked us for restoring their confidence in policing.

**RESOLVED** that members receive assurance that officers are mitigating and managing the risk to the Authority's reputation if unsuitable items are posted on the site.

### **PC/384 Constabulary's Confidence Action Plan and Policing Pledge Update**

ACC Netherton introduced the report that updated members on the action being taken by the Constabulary to increase public confidence. The points highlighted included:

- Confidence had not fallen any further since the previous report but the Force was continuing with the action plan. The NPIA was due to write a report on the figures.
- A joint communication group had been set up to co-ordinate media reports and newsletters between the local authorities and the police. This was raising the profile of the target within the local authorities.
- The action plan originally had more than 60 actions. This was felt to be unwieldy so the actions were now being prioritised. The plan included work to deliver improvement in effective partnership mechanisms to progress how the police and local authorities deal with anti-social behaviour. This had been picked up in the NPIA inspection.
- The focus was on the targets being set within the Local Area Agreements; planning meetings were setting targets for next April.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- Although the latest BCS figures had improved a little this was still a major area of concern. It was agreed that members should be given a copy of the NPIA report.
- There should be a joint partnership strategy between the Police Authority and the Force within a year once the blueprint was known. The challenge was to push partners to work more effectively together particularly on issues such as anti-social behaviour. Police Authority members should reinforce this at CSP meetings.
- Members were concerned about recent press reports that the Force was intending to close several police stations. ACC Netherton explained that they were looking at the numbers of visitors to police stations; there are some that only get two or three callers per week. People were being consulted as to what would best suit their needs. Other options were being considered such as putting SEOs outside Tesco or on the mobile library to listen to the public's concerns. However, their job description currently ties them to a particular police station and certain hours. There was a need to negotiate change with these staff; currently vacancies were not being filled until the way forward is decided. Members accepted this explanation but were very displeased that they had not been made aware of this review until reading the press coverage. ACC Netherton agreed to bring a paper on the review to the next meeting. In the meantime members asked that a brief statement should be sent by midday the next day to include in the members' newsletter for information, as a member had already been contacted by the press over the issue. Police stations needed to be considered in the overall context of accessibility, which is now higher than before with the development of Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

**RESOLVED** (i) that the Committee notes the report, current performance and action plan and will receive regular updates on performance against the confidence action plan.  
(ii) that a report on the review of station enquiry officers be brought to the next meeting.

### **PC/385 The Authority's Policing Pledge Scrutiny Plan**

The Policy Officer introduced the report that presented the Authority's "Policing Pledge Scrutiny Plan" submitted by the Performance Management Committee for this committee to consider its delivery. Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- A major issue uncovered in consideration of Pledge Point 1 and 10 was that of incivility by officers. An update planned for the September meeting was leaving it too long. This was an issue that should be tackled quickly. ACC Netherton explained that all complaints about incivility were investigated to try to resolve them at the first point of contact. Information about what the officer was doing e.g. speed checks is passed to the Inspector. If a particular officer consistently receives complaints about incivility immediate action is taken by the line manager.
- Members asked for assurance on how the COG monitors the pledge, the reliability of the data and the systems and processes in place. ACC Netherton responded that the Pledge is stated in four top objectives. It is a clear element in the scorecard at BCU and LPA level but it was not always easy to see how some points are measured. They do not have a specific pledge monitoring group but all the themes are put with existing groups. There is an update on all pledge points at the Public Services Strategy Group.

- RESOLVED**
- (i) that an overview be provided by the Force in relation to the performance against all Pledge Points at the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010.
  - (ii) that the results of the Police Authority's consultation following all events (Policing Pledge 8) be considered at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
  - (iii) that assurance be provided from the Professional Standards and Complaints Working Group in relation to improved performance against Points 1 and 10 to the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010.
  - (iv) that an update be provided by the Performance Management Committee that assurance has been obtained in relation to improved performance against Points 5 and 9 to the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010.
  - (v) that an update be provided by the Human Resources Committee that assurance has been obtained in relation to improved performance against Point 3 to the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

### **PC/386 Police Authority Liaison Meeting Review**

The Policy Officer introduced this item that provided feedback to the Committee from the first meeting of the PALM Task and Finish Group. Issues discussed by members in consideration of this item included:

- PALMs were just one strand of community engagement and different options had been discussed at the meeting. The group recommended that three different models should be progressed in different areas for a 12-month period.
- Model 1 was to run focussed PALM style meetings to discuss strategic issues. It was proposed that the LPA commander would attend rather than the neighbourhood team. Different communities could be invited e.g. the deaf or the elderly.
- Model 2 would maintain the existing PALM meeting in Plymouth.
- Model 3 was to stage a BCU wide conference style event in Devon to discuss specific issues.
- PALMs had been established at a time when people did not have such good access to the police. They entailed a lot of cost and effort in advertising the meetings and sending out posters. The Authority needed to look at how resources were used and obtain value for money. The meetings tended to be about police issues rather than Police Authority issues. Although they would continue in Cornwall they would be a very different style of meeting.
- There was concern that a single meeting in Devon for such a large county would not be sufficient and involve lengthy travelling. But as it was for a year trial only two or three original PALMs would be lost.
- One member did not support the replacement of PALMs in Devon with a single conference style meeting.
- There was little feedback from members chairing PALMs and it was difficult to identify where issues raised at PALMs had affected the decision-making of the Police Authority. Most of the issues raised were about operational police work.

- RESOLVED**
- (i) that three models be piloted for a twelve month period from September 2010

**Model 1** – Cornwall BCU run strategic focussed PALMs and communities of interest focus groups.

**Model 2** – Plymouth BCU continues as current.

**Model 3** – Devon BCU hosts strategic BCU wide conference.

NB Sir Simon Day wished it to be noted that he voted against resolution (i)

(ii) that the proposed feedback mechanism be accepted.

### **PC/387 Understanding the Constabulary's Research Methods**

The Consultation Manager introduced the presentation to provide members with an understanding of the social research methods used by the Constabulary and the variety of statistics available. Points highlighted included:

- Surveys carried out included 3700 telephone surveys of victims, people involved in road traffic collisions and reporters of anti-social behaviour, 200 postal surveys of official complainants and qualitative research at events, schools etc.
- The results were used to monitor satisfaction and compliance with the policing Pledge.
- A staff consultation was carried out three times per year to monitor progress against internal targets.
- A mosaic technique was used that provided personal profiles by postcode.

Issues discussed by members in consideration of this item included:

- Members raised the issue of incivility complaints and how they were monitored. The Force responded that victims were asked how they had been treated and whether or not the officer was polite. There was a new post in the Consultation Unit tasked with concentrating more on qualitative work.
- Caution was needed in the treatment of results from the Mosaic technique (personal profile by postcode). It relied on postcode areas and often one side of the road in a particular area could be very different from the other.
- Members wanted assurance that results from the surveys were fed back to the Neighbourhood Police teams. The Force replied that issues of concern in an area are fed back to the teams.
- Members were concerned that victims of crimes such as rape, domestic violence and child abuse were not surveyed as it was thought to be too sensitive. Members wanted to know how satisfaction with performance in these crimes was measured. It was important to approach partners to get information from these difficult to reach victims. How can the Force assess satisfaction with the performance of family liaison officers if it relies on information from the officers themselves? With these more serious crimes it was even more important to get it right. The Consultation Manager agreed that it was a gap and would look at ways of addressing it however, the criteria set by the Home Office say these crimes should be excluded.
- Members wanted assurance that all the information collected was pulled together into a coherent message for staff. The Force responded that factors affecting satisfaction and confidence together with quotes from the interviews all go on the intranet. They agreed to give more information about the process at the end of the meeting.
- Members asked if there was any debriefing process for staff. The Force responded that there was always a supervisor on hand in case someone gets a particularly upsetting call.

**RESOLVED** that further reports on the survey results be brought to a future meeting.

### **PC/388 The Authority's 2010 Consultation**

The Policy Officer introduced the report outlining the 2010 consultation questions and preliminary responses. Issues discussed by members during consideration of this item included:

- The consultation had started and would be used at all engagement opportunities (PALMs, community events, panels and focus groups).
- The questions were designed around Pledge Point 8 – provision of updates on progression local crime and policing issues.

- At the Exeter pride event only 47% of people questioned had seen any police provided information and 67% wanted to see this information – 28% monthly and 27% quarterly.

**RESOLVED** to note the report and receive an update report at the end of the consultation period.

### **PC/389 Risk Register**

The Policy Officer presented this item that would be a standing item on future agendas. Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- There were two risks allocated to this committee to oversee. If possible each risk must be treated but in some cases if this was not possible it must be tolerated. The Police Authority must act in ways to reduce the risk if possible.
- The concern about the partnership risk was whether the authority was clear about its role. The Partnership Strategy had been amended to include this but would require continual monitoring.
- The register required updating following the discussion on the review of PALMs. The Force and the website would have to be updated on the decision.

**RESOLVED** to amend the 'action taken' against both risks allocated to the Committee to reflect current activity.

### **PC/390 Briefing Sheets**

**RESOLVED** that the list of briefing sheets pertaining to the Community Engagement Committee be noted.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1300 hours.