

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

MINUTES

A meeting of the **Community Engagement Committee** was held on Tuesday 20th July 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: Mrs J Owen, Mr D Percival, Mr B Preston and Mrs J Zito.

Officers in attendance:

Police Authority

Miss J Norris (Assistant Chief Executive) – item 1 only, Ms E Macaulay (Policy Officer), Mrs G Clifton (Administrator).

Constabulary

Ms S Brooks (Performance and Planning Manager) – items 1 to 9, Mr P Davies (Supt Confidence and Neighbourhood Policing), Ms V Goodwin (Corporate Communications)– items 1 to 9, Ms V Hollinshead (Project Team), ACC P Netherton, Ms G Sims (Consultation Manager) and Ms T Young (Professional Standards Department).

PC/391 Appointment of Chair

Mr M Hicks was nominated by Mr B Preston and seconded by Mrs J Zito.

There were no other nominations.

All members agreed to the appointment of Mr Hicks as Chair of the Committee.

PC/392 Appointment of Vice Chair

Mrs J Owen was nominated by Mrs J Zito and seconded by Mr B Preston.

There were no other nominations.

All members agreed to the appointment of Mrs Owen as Vice Chair of the Committee.

PC/393 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Clayton, Mrs L Dunn, Mr M Hodge and Mrs L Williams.

PC/394 Declarations of Interest

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

PC/395 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements.

PC/396 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

PC/397 Emergency Services Call Handling Statistics

The Performance and Planning Manager introduced the report that provided the Committee with some comparative data of police performance on call handling in relation to other emergency services. The points highlighted included:

- Because of the variations in IT, boundaries and performance indicators it was not possible to get an accurate comparison with other blue light services.
- The Force was in a very healthy position with regard to call handling but the recording crimes were less so. This was being addressed; a fax and email system had been introduced as there were often long

delays in telephoning in the reports at peak times such as shift end or meal times. A 'skeleton' crime could be rung in on the Airwave system to obtain a crime number so the incident could be recorded after attending.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- Although it was not possible to compare the Police Service with other emergency services because of the different boundaries, it should be possible to compare Devon and Cornwall Police with other, similar forces for issues like crime recording performance. The Force responded that it was not possible to get a true comparison with other forces as each had different levels of resources and numbers of incidents but Devon and Cornwall did perform well nationally for 999 call response.
- More information on the statistics discussed at the meeting would be useful. The Force agreed to provide these and a future report (for the next meeting) would include information on performance and demand at a regional level.
- Currently there were nine vacancies in the crime recording department that were in the process of being filled. More details about the performance in this area would be brought to the next meeting.

PC/398 Complaints against the Police in Relation to Incivility

The report gave details of complaints of incivility from the public using the 'complaints against police' process dealt with by the Professional Standards Department. Complaints of incivility had increased and were the second highest volume of complaints. It was felt these should be the most preventable of all complaints.

Issues raised by members during consideration of this item included:

- A meeting was planned to discuss this issue with the Professional Standards Department. Members of the Professional Standards and Complaints Committee regularly dip sampled complaints files and incivility was a common complaint. However, there was little evidence in the files that lessons had been learnt or the issue addressed with training. The Force responded that all staff were trained and a briefing regularly provided to BCUs to ensure action was taken. There was a correlation between the score on 'satisfaction' and the number of complaints in an LPA. It was the responsibility of the LPA Commander to deal with the issue.
- Complaints are recorded on the basis of the allegation not the evidence. They are usually resolved at a local level and there are few repercussions.

PC/399 How the Constabulary Communicates with Local Communities

An oral overview was presented about the methods used by the Constabulary to communicate with communities in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The positive stories relayed by the Facebook and Twitter sites had increased media coverage of the Force.
- Each Neighbourhood Policing Team had a communications officer now instead of at BCU level.
- The newsletters were being reviewed because of the budget cuts. The third distribution company used to deliver the recent newsletter were more efficient than the previous two. The newsletters were expensive to produce so the Force was looking at the Mosaic data to identify the areas that would benefit most from the communication. In urban areas Neighbourhood Watch members or police staff could be used to deliver them to reduce costs but this was not feasible in rural areas.
- A strategy and tool kit were being developed for communication with hard to reach people e.g. children and vulnerable adults. This would be presented to the Committee concentrating on a theme of young people at the next meeting.

NB Ms Goodwin and Ms Brooks left the meeting

PC/400 Assistant Chief Constable (Territorial Policing) Update

An oral update was given covering important items that had arisen since the committee papers had been prepared. Issues raised during consideration of this item included:

- The latest British Crime Survey figures showed that for the year 2009-10 crime had dropped by 10%, robbery by 6% and burglary by 16% (nationally burglary dropped only 7%).
- The key issue was confidence; there had been a 2% rise in the joint target with the Local Authority. Devon and Cornwall was mid-table for this measure with eleven forces lower and six about the same. For the 'old' measure of confidence in the police only, Devon and Cornwall was second best in the country. The confidence target was being abandoned by the new Government and so would not be measured in the same way. The Force would have to renegotiate the target with the Police Authority. Although the measure would not be used formally the ethos and the policing model would remain.
- The policing pledge was also being scrapped. Of the 10 elements some were traditional promises but others were bureaucratic to measure e.g. 80% visibility for police officers. The Committee felt that visibility was important to the public so some measure would still be useful. This could be estimated by recording absences from duty for court attendance etc. but the Force did not want to implement a complicated system for measurement.
- The Government was stripping out the measurement culture but it was not yet known what would replace it. In the interim the Force would discuss with the Performance Management Committee which pledge points the Police Authority still required an update on.

PC/401 Overview of Force Performance against the Policing Pledge

The report updated members on the current performance in relation to the Policing Pledge. Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- Pledge point two – providing information on Neighbourhood Policing Teams could be easily achieved by displaying poster in shop windows. This had been tried but shops often remove the posters after a short time. The Force was endeavouring to get pictures of the beat officers with their contact number etc.
- Neighbourhood Policing Teams are prioritised when filling absences but as there would be no more recruitment for possibly 18 months the resources would have to come from the front line pool and be carefully managed. The People Gold Group identify where jobs can be filled and manage the process.
- The Blueprint project was reviewing staff cover; there would be seminar for the Police Authority on 22nd July 2010. The first issue the project considered was a risk analysis on harm. It might be that as a result the Public Protection Units might increase in size as they are high harm, high risk and high frequency. It was not known if the funding for PCSOs would continue; more would be known after the October budget.
- The diversity unit had commissioned a report on crime and reporting for disabled people which would be available soon. The Estates Department would be asked for a report on disabled access to all police buildings.
- More flexibility was needed with re-routing emails and messages for absent officers. Members of the public were encouraged to use the Neighbourhood Policing Team's generic email address via the website.
- The Proctor training had been delivered to call centre staff to help them identify a caller that is vulnerable or upset. This would then become a priority visit within an hour compared with more routine calls that are visited the next day or given an appointment. Beat officers are expected to feed back if the call is wrongly assigned. Supervisors dip sample calls and monitor performance. It was hoped to install a system eventually that would identify telephone numbers as coming from a vulnerable address.

PC/402 Neighbourhood Policing Stock Take

An oral update was given following the Police Authority's recent stock take of the Force. Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The regional Chief and Chairs Group had decided not to continue with the ACPO stock take. It was deemed not necessary following the HMIC inspection of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. However Devon and Cornwall Police are to use this as a self-assessment tool.
- Mrs Owen volunteered to be the Lead Member for Neighbourhood Policing, which was seconded by Mr Preston. The Territorial Policing Department had a Neighbourhood Policing lead who would liaise with force-wide initiatives.

RESOLVED that Mrs Owen would be the Lead Member for Neighbourhood Policing.

The Committee was updated on the Station Enquiry Officer (SEO) review. Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- There were 58 public contact sites staffed by dedicated SEOs. Some sites were busy while others had a very low footfall so the opening hours were being looked at.
- There had been both internal and external consultation. Members of the public and Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators had been asked for their preference in opening hours and beat officers were tasked with asking the members of the public they encountered.
- The review was looking at the estate holdings as a whole; it was not about closing Police Stations but about using the property and staff more efficiently.
- There was currently no mobility clause in the SEO contracts that allowed them to cover other stations. Stations tended to be open nine to five and rarely were they open in the evening or at weekends.
- More crimes are reported in towns than in rural areas so in rural areas the SEOs deal with other work within the station.
- Domestic abuse training (DASH) had been given to staff of all agencies including local authorities as a standard risk assessment tool. Incidents reported would be passed straight to a Police Officer.
- Mr Hodge had been designated Lead Member on the review and has regular meetings with the team.
- A draft proposal for the review would be brought to a Police Authority meeting before implementation. It was anticipated the implementation would start in October 2010.

PC/403 Draft Annual Report

The Police Authority has a statutory duty to release an Annual Report. The draft was provided for the Committee to comment upon and provide direction of the general themes. Issues discussed by members during consideration of this item included:

- The report applied to a period when targets existed that had now been abandoned; the report should reflect this.
- Further commentary was needed on the target to achieve a reduction of at least 15% in serious violent crime.
- Two members (Mrs Dunn and Mrs Williams) had offered and were nominated to help the Police Authority officers with the final draft.

PC/404 Consultation Update

The paper provided an update on the current feedback from community consultation events. Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The consultation was carried out face to face. The question about information received from the police did not include direct contact with the police or press articles.
- There had been no events in Cornwall during June but some were planned for July. The Authority did not attend County Shows due to the high costs. In future other events might be attended and road shows done at supermarkets etc.

PC/405 Review of Committee Risks

The item considered the risks allocated to the Community Engagement Committee to allow the Committee to make recommendations to the Risk Review Group of any suggested changes. The comments from the previous meeting had been incorporated. The Police Authority would be reviewing the whole Risk Register when the new software was implemented.

PC/406 Briefing Sheets

There had been no briefing sheets pertinent to the Community Engagement Committee since the last Committee meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1230 hours