

# Minutes of the West Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

## Special Meeting of the DPCSP

1st Floor Conference Room, Cecil Ward Building  
Thursday, 16th October, 2014

### Political Members

Alderman Frank McCoubrey (Chair)  
Councillor Tim Attwood  
Councillor Steven Corr  
Councillor Máire Hendron

### Independent Members

### Statutory Designated Organisations

Carole Carville, PBNI  
Aideen McLaughlin, YJA

Inspector Mike White, PSNI

### Staff Present

Alan Wardle, Safer City Coordinator  
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer

## 1. Welcome and Purpose of Meeting

- i. The Chair welcomed Members and outlined the purpose of the meeting.
- ii. Members were advised that the meeting had been called in response to concerns from a DPCSP Member about ongoing anti-social and criminal behaviour in the Lower Falls/Ballymurphy area and the lack of community confidence in the PSNI, DPCSP and other agencies to tackle the problem.

## 2. Lower Falls/Ballymurphy

### PSNI Comments

- i. The PSNI advised that there were issues with vehicle crime, anti-social behaviour and assaults in the area however they believed that crime was underreported.
- ii. Inspector White made reference to a previously held oversight group which had included Social Services, NIHE and the Youth Justice Agency and suggested that a similar multi-agency approach should be led by the West Belfast DPCSP in order to tackle the issues in the Lower Falls/Ballymurphy area.

### Current Issues

- iii. A Member advised the Partnership that the area was currently experiencing threats of violence from 5 armed groups and that while police had been in the area, when they were called away, the clashes resurfaced.
- iv. It was also noted that despite an abundance of youth workers in the area, they were not tackling the young people becoming involved in the disturbances. Members were further advised that the local Community Safety Forums no longer had coordination and so local information was not being passed onto agencies as it had previously been.

- v. In response to a query regarding where the problems were emanating from, a Member advised that there was a core group that had never been tackled as well as a larger group of young people that had latched on to this group. He suggested that diversionary work would assist in removing some of those responsible from the situation.
- vi. It was suggested that some of these young people had been referred to the Youth Engagement Programme (YEP) however this had not seemed to resolve the issue.
- vii. The Chair asked if the resources available in the area had been mapped in any way, for example community groups, centres and services.
- viii. The Safer City Coordinator advised that he hoped to scope services once the area had been mapped with the help of the Council's Safer Neighbourhood Officers. He added that the DPCSP still had a role in working with the existing Community Safety Fora in order to maintain contacts with the community.
- ix. It was agreed that the Community Safety agenda should be driven by the DPCSP and a Member referred to the positive changes that had come about following the DPCSP's role in the Divis Intervention and Finaghy Road issues.
- x. Carole Carvil, PBNI, advised that the Probation Board continued to work with many clients in the area and had been witnessing a huge increase in the use of heroin which could not be ignored. She asked for details of those causing concern to be passed to her and advised that Probation Officers would intervene where possible, adding that the process of recalling an offender to prison was a quick one.
- xi. It was suggested that the current method of focusing on hotspots should be amended to look at prolific offenders who moved to new areas when displaced. Aideen McLaughlin, Youth Justice Agency, agreed and advised that YJA was focusing on high risk young people and their parents. She suggested that additional support could be garnered from Extern's Family Support Service which was in need of referrals from West Belfast.
- xii. Members agreed that a presentation from Extern would be helpful in understanding the services that they offered.

#### Drug Misuse

- xiii. Members discussed the impact of drug misuse on the problems mentioned and agreed that there was work to be done with GP surgeries regarding prescription drugs as well as the use of legal highs and illegal drug taking in parks.
- xiv. Inspector White advised that the PSNI were currently looking at 15 addresses in relation to drugs searches. He added that it was becoming clear that drug use was escalating however no heroin had been recovered in searches to date.
- xv. A Member advised that if the community were to gain confidence in the criminal justice system and convictions were secured; reporting of drug dealing would vastly increase. He added that confidence would also be improved as connectivity between the PCSP and community improved.
- xvi. It was suggested that the Courts Service needed to be involved in these discussions as the public's frustrations around convictions were often mistakenly taken out on the police.

- xvii. Inspector White advised that the PSNI took time to build up a picture of drug dealing before carrying out searches in order to obtain a positive search result. He added that Neighbourhood Teams were included in the searches where possible.

#### Building Community Confidence

- xviii. The Youth Justice Agency and PSNI confirmed that they would be happy to take part in community events in order to create opportunities for interaction. Inspector White confirmed that the police's mobile police station continued to be deployed and was receiving positive feedback.

#### Next Steps

- xix. The Safer City Coordinator advised Members that he planned to bring a proposal to the next meeting of the DPCSP regarding a West Belfast wide conference with anti-social behaviour service providers to look at what is being delivered and what is needed. He suggested that this would provide accountability in the sector and produce a strategy with defined roles, joint responsibility and a clear focus for tackling anti-social behaviour in West Belfast.
- xx. Members were also advised that links with the Community Safety Forums were to be rejuvenated and their presence made more apparent, which in turn would have an impact on those involved in anti-social behaviour.
- xxi. The Safer City Coordinator suggested that the theme of the next public event should focus on anti-social behaviour and be held in the Ballymurphy area. He cautioned that the purpose should be to support the community rather than an opportunity to attack the various statutory agencies.
- xxii. Inspector White supported the proposals and asked that regular multi-agency meetings be held alongside the development of the strategy.
- xxiii. Members also agreed with the Safer City Coordinators approach, reaffirming that the Community Safety Forums were key.
- xxiv. The Chair suggested that all relevant partners should be included in the discussions including local drugs teams, churches and schools.
- xxv. The Safer City Coordinator also advised Members that a Community Safety leaflet was being developed and would be ready for distribution within the next 6 weeks.
- xxvi. Aideen McLaughlin suggested that the Youth Justice Agency could be involved in the delivery of the leaflet as such actions assisted in gaining community confidence.

### **3. Close**

- i. The Chair thanked Members for their attendance and reminded those present that the next meeting of the DPCSP would be on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> October at 5.30pm in the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cecil Ward Building.