

Minutes of the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee

Lavery Room, City Hall
Thursday, 15th October, 2015

Political Members

Councillor Matt Garrett (Chair)
Councillor Janice Austin
Councillor JJ Magee
Councillor Stephen Magennis
Alderman Jim Rodgers
Alderman Guy Spence

Independent Members

Debbie Hammill (Vice-Chair)
Mary Lambe
John Loughran
John MacVicar
Michael O'Hara
Susan Russam

PSNI Representatives

Superintendent Darrin Jones

T/Superintendent Bobby Singleton

Staff Present

Alison Allen, Safer City Manager
Lorna Somers, Safer City Assistant Manager
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer

Apologies

Councillor Declan Boyle
Carmel McKinney
Anne-Louise Toal

1. Welcome and Apologies

- i. The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted the apologies provided.

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. The Chair advised Members that they were required to declare any material interests that they may have in relation to any items on the agenda.
- ii. No declarations of interest were recorded.

3. Matters Arising/Chair's Business

- i. The Chair reminded Members that the NI Policing Board were holding training on the role of the Policing Committee on Tuesday, 20th October, and asked Members to confirm their attendance with the Partnership Support Officer.
- ii. The Safer City Assistant Manager advised Members that a reminder about the training would be emailed to all Members.

4. Update from PSNI Representatives

Parades and Events

- i. T/Superintendent Singleton provided Members with an overview of the policing operations that had been put in place to deal with various events and parades over the summer months.

- ii. Members were advised that there had been intensive community engagement in the run up to 13th July parades however due to violence in the Woodvale Road area, the policing operation was unfortunately intensified. It was noted that 15 Officers were injured during the disturbances.
- iii. Members were further advised that the Police Ombudsman was investigating incidents in line with procedures following the deployment of the water cannon. T/Superintendent Singleton added that he considered it worthy of note that the professionalism of Officers had prevented further escalation of violence and that calm had been restored quickly.
- iv. In reference to August's Internment parade which broke its Parades Commission determination, T/Superintendent Singleton advised that the PSNI stopped the parade at Hillview and that the subsequent violence had resulted in 9 Officers being injured.
- v. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that a great deal of engagement had been carried out with communities and relevant groups in advance of the Henry Joy McCracken parade which coincided with 2 others parades, however frustration had been expressed regarding the use of barriers during the policing operation.
- vi. Members were advised that an Officer had been injured during a protest that was held at a PSNI recruitment day at Belfast Metropolitan College's, Millfield Campus. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that the turnout of 275 people had been pleasing as the police were particularly keen on attracting recruits in that area.
- vii. With regards to continued vandalism of a memorial monument at White Brae on the Ligoniel Road, Members were advised that a 37 year old had been charged in relation to 18 attacks from 2011 onwards and had subsequently been convicted.
- viii. T/Superintendent Singleton advised Members that 3 arrests had been made in reference to the murder of Gerard Davidson, all of whom had since been released unconditionally. Members were advised that 17 arrests had been made in connection to the murder of Kevin McGuigan however the investigation was ongoing. 1 person was charged with an unrelated burglary.
- ix. It was also noted that the police continued to be deployed at the Twaddle Avenue protest which was now into its 800th day.
- x. Superintendent Jones advised Members that the PSNI had also been involved in the safe delivery of a number of high profile events across the City including the Tall Ships, Tennent's Vital and NI Gran Fondo cycling event.
- xi. Alderman Guy Spence and Councillor Matt Garrett declared an interest in the Tall Ship Event given their place on its Board.
- xii. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that between 35,000-40,000 people had attended the Tennent's Vital concerts in August. He noted that the events involved a significant commitment from the organisers, PSNI, Council and other health care providers who worked together to ensure the safety of those attending.
- xiii. Members were advised that Halloween and Sports Personality of the Year would be the next 2 major events for the PSNI at a city wide level.

Policing Structures

- xiv. Members were advised that the PSNI had recently gone through significant organisational change in order to maintain a resilient, flexible and responsive force. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that this included a change in boundaries to mirror those of the Council's District Electoral Areas (DEAs) and to fully realise the Paton Report's vision of community policing.
- xv. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that the model appeared to be working well however changes were still ongoing. He noted that while it would take a while to fully bed in, this was not an excuse for poor service.

Statistical Report

- xvi. Superintendent Jones provided Members with an update on performance against the Northern Ireland Policing Plan measures from 1st April 2015 to 10th October 2015.
- xvii. Members were advised that many of the targets were being achieved including 3 out of 4 relating to increasing outcome rates for hate crimes. Superintendent Jones noted the positive reduction in the number of incivility allegations which were down by 32%.
- xviii. Members were advised that there had been an increase in the numbers of domestic burglaries, particularly where older people were the victims. Superintendent Jones advised that there was no indication that they were being targeted specifically, however additional patrols were being put in place in hot spot areas across the City.

5. Members Questions and Input

Drugs and Alcohol

- i. A Member questioned why the outcome rate for drug offences had risen however the number of seizures had fallen.
- ii. Superintendent Jones advised that many arrests could be linked to just one find, and there were also cases where drugs were handed in but no arrests made. He also advised that the number of finds could go up and down as they were intelligence led. It was also noted that there had been an increase in heroin finds which in turn were linked with an increase in thefts.
- iii. In response to a query about what the Council's Licensing Committee could do to assist in tackling young people drinking on buses before concerts such as Tennent's Vital, T/Superintendent Singleton advised that work had been done with Roads Policing and that the problem had decreased in recent years. He suggested that the media could be utilised in advance of future events to raise awareness of the dangers involved in drinking to excess given that many young people needed medical treatment as soon as they left the buses.

Neighbourhood and Local Policing Teams and Burglary

- iv. A Member commented that engagement with Neighbourhood and Local Policing Team Officers in West Belfast had suffered since the changes in structures, particularly in areas that had moved into the Belfast boundary in April, 2015. The Member added that Officers were not responding to calls as promised and it appeared that the PSNI were

now 'fire fighting' issues rather than taking a long term approach due to limited resources.

- v. The Member also raised concerns about joy riding, increases in domestic burglary, and high levels of domestic violence.
- vi. In response to queries regarding policing teams, T/Supt Singleton advised that 130 Officers were working out of Woodbourne Station and if this level of resourcing was not being experienced by communities, it would need to be tackled. He suggested that there was a need for familiarisation events between communities and the new Sergeants in order to re-establish good working relationships.
- vii. Superintendent Jones advised that there was a link between the death driving and increase in burglaries. He added that domestic violence was a social issue, and that while an increase in reporting was positive, the PCSP could perhaps lend support to further targeted campaigns.
- viii. With regards to older people being the victims of burglary, Supt Jones advised that the PSNI were now operating a tiered response with a higher level of support offered to elderly victims. Members were further advised that as an extension to the Neighbourhood Watch Service 'Cocoon Watch' had recently been launched which offered a further level of support to victims from designated people within their community. T/Supt Singleton advised that the PSNI would be bringing a proposal to the (D)PCSPs in the future to support the delivery of enhanced crime prevention packs.

Communication

- ix. The Chair welcomed the suggestion of holding familiarisation events and suggested that these could be facilitated as part of the DPCSP Public Meetings that would be taking place in November. He also suggested that the PSNI should consider how they communicate with the public, for example through local newspapers.
- x. T/Superintendent Singleton advised that due to turnover of staff the PSNI were reluctant to print the name and number of specific Officers, but they could certainly provide a single number for each geographical area in order to provide a consistent local contact. In response to a query about Officers running out of business cards to give to victims of crime, Superintendent Jones advised that Officers should have a supply of cards, however due to the large number of staff team changes, this would now need to be followed up.
- xi. A Member provided his thanks to T/Superintendent Singleton following a recent incident at City Hall which he felt had been well handled. He also advised that he had received complaints about the dangerous driving of unmarked police cars.
- xii. Superintendent Jones advised that each car has a chip which makes a record of the driving which can then be analysed against calls for service. He added that complaints were taken seriously as Officers should be setting an example to others, noting that he was not aware of any recent complaints.
- xiii. Another Member reiterated previous comments regarding falling confidence within communities, this time in North Belfast, with crime seeming to be increasing as there are fewer foot patrols and Officers are not leaving vehicles to tackle offenders.

- xiv. The Member added his support for the arrests relating to the vandalism of the White Brae memorial and an improved marching season. He did caution on the use of the Tactical Support Group as this can be seen as 'over the top' by residents.
- xv. In reference to these discussions, a Member requested that a breakdown of figures relating to stop and search powers was provided at the next meeting.
- xvi. Several other Members voiced their support for the policing operation that had resulted in the White Brae memorial charges.
- xvii. A Member commented upon the communication methods used by the both the PSNI and the PCSP and suggested that community papers were often ignored in favour of daily papers, TV, radio and billboards. He used the 'Drug Dealers Don't Care' and PSNI Recruitment Campaign as examples of when local communication methods would have been most effective.

Parades, Flags and Bonfires

- xviii. In response to a question regarding recent protests in the City Centre, T/Superintendent Singleton advised that 2 protests were held on the Saturday in question and under Article 4 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order, the PSNI imposed 2 protest zones. He added that scuffles had broken out when one group refused to follow the orders however a breach of the peace was avoided. He also clarified that the City was secured due to public statements which had been made by a group, meaning that the PSNI had to prepare for all eventualities.
- xix. A Member queried what lessons could be learnt from the summer's parades, bonfires and flag issues. He also acknowledged the time taken by Chief Superintendent Grimshaw and T/Superintendent Singleton to attend community meetings.
- xx. T/Superintendent Singleton stated that a political consensus on how to deal with flags, bonfires and parades would be useful as legislation was needed. He reminded Members that the PSNI did not have a statutory responsibility for many of the issues raised and they often detracted Officers from day to day policing.

Requests for Information

- xxi. A Member requested further information on the breakdown of domestic violence figures between male and female victims and figures relating to human trafficking. She advised that these would be useful in understanding how the Men's Advisory Project and PCSP Human Trafficking Projects were effecting reporting. She also requested information on the number of paramilitary attacks, including an area breakdown.
- xxii. Another Member suggested that further narrative on the figures, as well as a geographical breakdown would be useful.
- xxiii. Superintendent Singleton agreed to look at the presentation of figures ahead of the next meeting.

6. Any other Business

- i. A Member commented that it reflected badly on the Members of the Policing Committee that the statutory partners of the PCSP had been made to wait outside the room for over 30 minutes while the Policing Committee concluded. He suggested that

consideration should be given to extending the length of the meeting or allowing statutory partners to observe the meeting.

- ii. The Chair reminded Members that it had been agreed at the first meeting of the PCSP to hold the meetings separately but agreed that some alternative would be needed.