

Minutes of the East Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Public Meeting

Park Avenue Hotel, Belfast
Wednesday, 23rd March, 2016

Political Members

Councillor Carole Howard (Chair)
Councillor Sonia Copeland
Councillor Aileen Graham
Councillor Deirdre Hargey
Councillor Tommy Sandford

Independent Members

David Geddis (Vice-Chair)
Jonathan Currie
Lisa McMaster

Designated Organisations

Yvonne Cowan, H&SCT

Chief Inspector David Moore, PSNI

Staff Present

Glenn Thomas, Safer City Coordinator
Andrew Charles, Anti-Social Behaviour Officer
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer

Apologies

Councillor Niall O Donnghaile
Michael Roberts, NIFRS

1. Welcome and Routine Matters

- i. The Chair welcomed members of the public and DPCSP Members to the meeting and advised that without prior consent, no audio or visual recordings should be made.
- ii. On behalf of the Partnership, the Chair passed on her condolences to the family of Prison Officer Adrian Ismay.

2. Presentation by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI)

- i. Mr Jimmy Moore, Area Manager, gave a presentation on the Probation Board's work in relation to Public Protection.
- ii. The audience received information on the Board's role in making local communities safer by reducing offending behaviour and reducing victims, and how this is done through challenging and changing offenders' behaviour.
- iii. The presentation encompassed details of PBNI caseload and resources, community service, partnership working such as 'Reducing Offending in Partnership' and evidence regarding the effectiveness of PBNI programmes.
- iv. Mr Moore also provided information on a range of topics including appropriate accommodation, domestic abuse, electronic tagging, pre-sentence reports, sex offenders, victims, violent and female offenders.

3. Questions and Comments in Relation to Public Protection

- i. During the presentation, Mr Moore advised that 50% of female offenders had issues with alcohol while 40% misused drugs. He added that self harm and literacy were also big issues for this group. In response to a question about how these figures compared with male offenders, Mr Moore advised that of the 4,300 supervised offenders (both male and female), 73% had substance misuse issues. He added that an estimated 60% of those in prison had dependency issues.
- ii. A member of the public working for Start 360 advised that drug and alcohol services are provided in each prison and that they try to ensure that services are offered in custody and the community, alongside PBNI, to prevent isolation.
- iii. With regards to literacy levels, Mr Moore provided details of the Inspire Women Project which provides supervision for female offenders returning to the community in order to establish links and offer resettlement opportunities during the period of adjustment. He added that a women-only space is provided to meet the needs of female offenders where a range of focused programmes can be offered by female staff.
- iv. With regards to linkages with other services, Mr Moore advised that opportunities to improve skills are sought and that PBNI welcomed the opportunity to link with a range of other resources.
- v. A Member commented that the PBNI budget was small in relation to the work that was done, that NIACRO budgets had also been cut, and now FASA had ceased operations. She asked how this impacted upon services given the large number of people with substance misuse issues.
- vi. Mr Moore advised that in the past, 20% of the PBNI budget was allocated to voluntary and community services, a model which was of great interest to other probation services. With regards to mental health services, he advised that PBNI did have a team to deal with such issues, however in general clients were referred to specialists for support.
- vii. In response to a question about the readiness of communities to accept offenders back into society, Mr Moore advised that PBNI could only do so much however the strength of relationships between statutory agencies and communities helped with this transition. He suggested that community service was a good example of how PBNI found appropriate ways to reintroduce offenders back into communities.
- viii. It was suggested that the rehabilitation that is offered to offenders as part of their transition could also be useful to communities in helping them to understand the process of reintegration.
- ix. With regards to sex offenders, Chief Inspector Moore advised that while the reintegration was difficult, in general they posed a low level risk to communities. Mr Moore added that it is preferable to have such offenders in a controlled environment where they can be monitored and supported. He also stated that the record of interagency approaches to offenders was very positive.
- x. Further questions were asked about the resettlement of sex offenders near schools and churches. Chief Inspector Moore advised that all sexual offenders must register

with the police, and that if this is not done, they would be sought as a priority. Mr Moore added that information is shared between agencies regarding placement of offenders. He cautioned that there are 3 categories of sexual and violent offenders and so it was important not to group all offenders into the same bracket.

- xi. Using the example of domestic violence, he advised that officers could not continuously monitor offender's homes however addresses were flagged. He added that the increase in reporting of domestic violence was seen as positive as the crime was previously hidden behind closed doors. He added that each incident was considered in terms of threat, risk and harm and that the police had a pro-arrest policy with regards to domestic violence.
- xii. Mr Moore added that PBNI had access to PSNI call outs relating to their clients and so a record of contact could be demonstrated in Court should re-victimisation occur. He added that often victims do not wish to proceed with convictions which is why an average of 34 incidents occur before prosecution.
- xiii. In response to a question regarding abuse of the elderly, Chief Inspector Moore advised that while this goes on, there were not many reports. He pointed out that this may be due to lack of reporting.
- xiv. To conclude the discussion, the Chair asked both the PBNI and PSNI representatives to outline what their most challenging issue currently was.
- xv. Both agreed that the ever changing financial situation was having an impact on services as officers sought to do the same work with reduced budgets. It was agreed that a partnership approach to issues was key, alongside the sharing of information.
- xvi. The Chair thanked the speakers for their comments.

4. Other Questions and Comments

- i. A member of the public (who stated that they were from Queens University) questioned how DPCSP Public Meetings were advertised and how many people usually attended.
- ii. The Safer City Coordinator advised that numbers had ranged from 5 to over 100 and that social media, leafleting and sometimes newspaper advertising was used to promote the events. He added that the Partnership welcomed suggestions on how the meetings could be promoted further.
- iii. It was suggested that the DPCSP needed to get the word out to the community as the meetings offered a great opportunity for ordinary people to become involved with community safety and policing issues.
- iv. The Safer City Coordinator advised that DPCSP Public Meetings were just one forum in which the public could become involved. He provided those present with information on local 'Partners and Communities Together' (PACT) Meetings which, in general, had much more community buy-in at a local level.

- v. The Chair advised that a previous event had been held in relation to business related crime at the request of local shops keepers however the number of people attending was still low.
- vi. The Safer City Coordinator added that staff were willing to make presentations to community groups, schools and universities about the work of the Partnership, and particularly welcomed the opportunity to engage with hard to reach groups.
- vii. The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer provided contact details to a number of members of the audience who stated that they were students from Queens University in order to facilitate further communication. They were further advised that a meeting of the Ormiston PACT would be held in the Park Avenue Hotel on 24th March at 7pm, a meeting that they would be very welcome to attend.
- viii. Following a request, the Safer City Coordinator confirmed that minutes from the meeting would be made available online once the Partnership had approved them at the next meeting in April. He added that staff and representatives from various agencies would also be available to answer specific queries after the meeting.
- ix. Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.