

Minutes of the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee

Conor Room, City Hall
Monday 16th January, 2017

Political Members	Independent Members
Councillor John Hussey (Chair)	Susan Russam (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Janice Austin	Debbie Hammill
Councillor Matt Garrett	Mary Lambe
Councillor Brian Heading	John Loughran
Councillor JJ Magee	John MacVicar
Councillor Geraldine McAteer	Carmel McKinney
Alderman Jim Rodgers	
Alderman Tommy Sandford	
PSNI Representatives	
Chief Superintendent Chris Noble	Chief Inspector David Shanks
Staff Present	Apologies
Alison Allen, Safer City Manager	Councillor Nuala McAllister
Denise Smith, Safer City Coordinator	Michael O'Hara
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer	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. Minutes

- i. The minutes of the Belfast PCSP Policing Committee Meeting held on 14th November, copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken as read and agreed as correct.

4. District Support Team (DST) Presentation

- i. Chief Inspector David Shanks provided Members with an update on the work of the District Support Team (DST) which was established under the new Service First arrangements to provide a proactive response to crime.
- ii. Members were advised that work was based on Service and District priorities and ranked according to threat, risk, harm, opportunity and immediacy.

- iii. Chief Inspector Shanks provided details, including outcomes, of two operations lead by the DST, Operation Envimo and Operation Condensor, which tackled the heroin trade.

Members Comments

Drugs

- iv. In response to a query regarding what areas of the city heroin arrests were being made, Chief Inspector Shanks confirmed that the city centre and nearby parks were the most common areas, however following focused operations in these areas, dealing had been seen to move to train stations.
- v. A Member questioned what advice the PSNI would give to the public who witnessed drug dealing. Several examples were provided of dealers openly offering the sale of drugs to passers-by in the city centre.
- vi. Chief Superintendent Noble and Chief Inspector Shanks urged the public to report incidents to the PSNI but to be careful when engaging with dealers and users given the risk of needles. Photos could be taken if safe to do so, as this would assist the PSNI in building an evidence base. Chief Inspector Shanks advised that the PSNI was tackling drugs proactively as well as reactively with covert operations aiming to remove dealers from the streets rather than simply displace the problem.
- vii. A Member suggested that the statistics associated with drug searches, finds and arrests should be publicised in order for the public to see the action being taken by police. Frustrations with regards to the wider Criminal Justice System were noted, particularly the number of drug offenders receiving bail.
- viii. In response to a query regarding how Belfast City Council staff were trained and protected when dealing with drug litter, the Safer City Coordinator advised that protective clothing, equipment and disposal methods were used and training was provided to those involved. She added that staff were also made aware of the dangers of engaging with drug users and dealers, and to always consider their own personal safety.
- ix. The Safer City Manager advised that a specific contractor was in place to deal with drug finds and that this was available to all statutory partners.
- x. At the request of a Member, Chief Superintendent Noble agreed to see if the PSNI had a breakdown of outcomes of those arrested for drug offences, for example, the number released on bail.
- xi. A Member noted an incident of drug dealing in South Belfast and questioned whether resources could be targeted following community concern.
- xii. Chief Superintendent Noble advised that calls should be made to 999 or 101 if drug dealing was being observed, and the Local Policing Chief Inspector informed as they had the ability to bid for DST resources should an area of concern arise.
- xiii. Members discussed the positive campaigns that were being delivered, such as 'One Pill will Kill' in North Belfast. It was noted that pills and prescription drugs should not be forgotten about as the focus on heroin increased. A Member voiced concern about children mistaking drugs for sweets as discarded bags had been found across the City.

Rape/Violent Crime

- xiv. A Member asked whether statistics relating to rape could be separated from overall violent crime figures.
- xv. Chief Superintendent Noble advised that rape statistics were available however it should be noted that the figures were highest in South Belfast due to the night time economy and caution should be used when connecting crimes with particular dates and attributing causes to these incidents as a result. He agreed to look into the query further.

5. Date of Next Meeting

- i. Members were advised that the next meeting of the Policing Committee would be held on Monday, 13th March.