

**Minutes of the East Belfast District Policing and Community Safety
Partnership – Policing Committee, Conor Room, City Hall,
Thursday, 24th January, 2013**

Political Members	Independent Members
Cllr Deirdre Hargey	Mark Houston (Vice Chair)
Cllr Mervyn Jones	Lynda Gibson
Cllr Adam Newton	Olwen Lyner
Cllr Niall Ó Donnaghaile	Andrew Moorhead
Ald Gavin Robinson	
Police Service of Northern Ireland Representative	
Chief Inspector Mark McEwan, Area Commander	
Staff Present	Apology
Phyllis Anderson, DPP Officer Jo Black, Partnership Support Officer	Cllr Claire Hanna

1. Welcome & Routine Matters

- i. An apology was received from the Chair, Cllr. Claire Hanna.
- ii. Mark Houston, Vice Chair, took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- iii. The DPP Officer explained that Chief Inspector Mark McEwan was delayed. The Partnership agreed to take the standing items on the agenda first.

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. There were no declarations of interest.

3. East Belfast DPCSP Policing Committee Meeting Minutes

- i. Minutes of the Policing Committee of the East Belfast DPCSP on 27th November, 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

4. Policing Committee Funding Applications

- i. The DPP Officer reminded Members that at its last meeting, the Partnership had deferred a decision on raising or removing the cap of £500 for Policing Committee funding. She explained that there had been a request from the Neighbourhood Watch Development Officer for £1,500 funding.
- ii. A Member asked if there were consequences to removing the cap on funding.
- iii. The DPP Officer explained there would be no consequences of removing this cap, given that £3,502.50 remained within this budget prior to this application.

- iv. The Members agreed to remove the funding cap of £500 from the Policing Committee budget.
- v. The DPP Officer advised that the Neighbourhood Watch Development Officer had submitted applications to all 4 DPCSPs. In East Belfast there were 54 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes covering over 1,000 residents.
- vi. A Member asked what relation the coupons, detailed under costings, had to the application.
- vii. The DPP Officer explained this was for costs associated with printing.
- viii. The Chair proposed the application was funded to the £1,500 requested. This was agreed by the Partnership.

5. Area Commanders Update

- i. Overall Crime had decreased by 1.1% in the year to date. Burglary had decreased by 23.4%. Non-domestic violent crime decreased by 16.4%. Antisocial behaviour had decreased by 0.5%.
- ii. The Area Commander explained that drugs operations continued to be successful, although reduced in number, due to other policing commitments at this time.
- iii. The Area Commander further explained that policing of flag protests continued to be a fluid situation within East Belfast. He explained that the PSNI were working with the community to assist with the direction and purpose of the protests. The Parades Commission was expected to produce its own report on the protests to date. He explained that hundreds of hours of CCTV footage were being reviewed and that a major inquiry team had been established. He cautioned that although the media may raise expectations regarding quick arrests, this would not necessarily be the case.

6. Members Questions and Input

- i. The Chair explained that the DPCSP had met with the Chief Inspector several times during the period of the protests and wished to record the Partnership's thanks to the Area Commander for his continued professionalism.
- ii. A Member referred to the twice daily protests at the Alliance Party offices and enquired when legally these protests would be considered intrusion. The Chief Inspector explained that as this was a public space people had a right to protest. The Member asked if the public were prevented from entering the offices would the situation be re-evaluated. The Area Commander stated that unless the tactics deployed by protesters changed, the PSNI could not intervene.
- iii. A Member explained from a community intervention perspective that talks were on-going amongst local people.

- iv. A Member enquired if there had been much contact between the PSNI and the ringleaders. The Area Commander explained that ring leaders were difficult to visibly pinpoint.
- v. A Member suggested engagement between the PSNI and the ringleaders could be undertaken on an informal basis.
- vi. A Member enquired if there was a strategy to ceasing police operations whilst another suggested that there was no policing solution to the problem.
- vii. The Area Commander explained that a change in strategy could only be made at Gold Command level, by the Chief Constable or an Assistant Chief Constable.
- viii. A Member enquired if Translink Metro services had contacted the PSNI for security updates or advice to divert services.
- ix. The Area Commander explained there was daily liaison between the Silver Command room and Translink. However the final operational decision for any route diversions or cessation of services rested solely with Translink.
- x. A Member suggested that the PSNI and Translink liaise with Belfast City Council to provide up to date information regarding the on-going situation.
- xi. A Member stated that he had submitted the following questions to the DPP Officer for submission to the Area Commander for response.

7. Written Questions

Question 1

“Can police provide information from Saturday 12th January 2013 on the numbers of baton rounds discharged in East Belfast, the times of each discharge and the areas and direction aimed and fired at? “

PSNI Response

The Area Commander confirmed that there had been six baton rounds discharged in or around Castlereagh Street and the Newtownards Road. He explained that he would not comment further on each operational issue and he advised that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland had been informed, as was the normal process in such situations.

Question 2

“Can the PSNI make available the helicopter footage from Saturday 12th January 2013, from the protestors reached the police lines at Queen’s Bridge, covering the return route of the first group of protestors along Oxford Street and along the Albertbridge Road and footage of the second group of protestors and community representatives coming over the same route, up until the time that Police have released footage to the media in which youths began throwing missiles at police lines on both Castlereagh Street and Albertbridge Road?”

PSNI Response

The Area Commander explained footage on Oxford Street and on the Albertbridge Road had been analysed to determine what attempt had been made to break police lines. It was a matter of minutes in the footage between Oxford Street and breaking of police lines and that this had been released to the media.