

**Minutes of the West Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Policing Committee Meeting**

**Balmoral Hotel, Belfast
Wednesday, 23rd October, 2013**

Political Members

Councillor Marie Hendron (Chair)
Councillor Attwood
Councillor Matt Garrett

Independent Members

Harry Connolly (Vice-Chair)
Breige Brownlee
Bernie Reilly
Ann-Marie Weir

PSNI Representatives

T/Chief Inspector Mike White, PSNI
Inspector Alan Swann, PSNI

Sergeant Christopher Robinson

Staff Present

Glenn Thomas, Safer City Co-ordinator
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support
Officer

Apologies

Councillor Steven Corr

1. Welcome and Routine Matters

- i. The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted the apologies provided.
- ii. Ann-Marie Weir, the Partnership's new Independent Member, and Alistair Charles, the incoming Safer City Coordinator for the West Belfast DPCSP were welcomed to the meeting.
- iii. The Chair thanked Glenn Thomas, the outgoing Safer City Coordinator for his work with the Partnership and wished him well in his new role with the East Belfast DPCSP.

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. The Chair asked Members to declare any material interests which they may have in relation to any item of business to be considered during the meeting.

3. Minutes

- i. The minutes of 29th August, copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken as read and agreed as correct.
- ii. A Member enquired as to why the Statutory Designated Partners were not in attendance, given the discussions which had taken place at the last meeting.
- iii. The Safer City Coordinator advised Members that to his mind this had not been agreed by Members but following this proposal agreed to contact the Designated Bodies.
- iv. A second Member agreed with this course but asked that the legislation governing the operation of the Policing Committee be considered before any further action is taken.

- v. The Safer City Coordinator agreed to check on any legislative stipulations regarding attendance of Statutory Designated Bodies at Policing Committee meetings and report back to the Members via email.

4. Update on Policing in West Belfast

- i. The Area Commander provided Members with an update on policing in West Belfast stating that overall crime had decreased by 1.9% when compared with figures for the previous year to date.
- ii. Members were further advised that domestic burglary was down by 16%, non-domestic burglary had increased by 9%, anti-social behaviour was down by 1.3% and violent crime, both domestic and non domestic were down by 17% and 16% respectively.
- iii. Members were advised that figures in relation to drug seizures and arrests were down however there had recently been 10 successful searches which had resulted in seizures of cannabis, cocaine and the closure of a cannabis factory. T/Chief Inspector White added that further searches were planned as part of Operation Torus and that this was likely to have a positive impact on the figures.

5. Members questions in relation to Policing

Operation Torus / Drug Seizures

- i. A Member questioned the Area Commander on his analysis of Operation Torus, in particular as to whether it was having the desired effect and at what level of the drugs hierarchy arrests were being made.
- ii. The Area Commander advised that the majority of seizures were of cannabis, one of which was a large find and another, a growing factory. He advised that small quantities of class B drugs were being found and that no class A drugs had been found however community intelligence was suggesting that it is present and so the timing of operations is crucial.
- iii. A Member advised the Officers that communities felt that there was a lack of feedback from the PSNI after drugs were handed in. He added that the information would be useful to community groups who were working in the field.
- iv. The Area Commander advised that a full analysis can take some time however advised that an initial field test can be carried out to give an initial indication and that there was no problem with this being fed back to community groups and representatives.
- v. A Member asked at what level the PSNI's operations, searches and seizures were interrupting the flow of drugs locally and at regional level.
- vi. The Area Commander agreed to speak to Detective Inspector Andy Dunlop regarding this query and report back to Members at a future meeting.
- vii. A Member asked that a presentation similar to that given by DI Dunlop at the Public meeting of the West Belfast DPCSP in June be made available to community groups, such as the Falls Community Council.

- viii. T/Chief Inspector White agreed to speak to DI Dunlop about this and to make contact with the Member in order to arrange this.

Staffing Levels

- ix. In response to a Member's query regarding the return of the previous Area Commander, T/Chief Inspector White advised that T/Superintendent Bond would be returning in December, 2013, however she was involved in a recruitment process and so this may be a temporary measure.
- x. With regards to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT's), Members were advised that NPT Officers had been moved to police public order as a result of issues outside of West Belfast however this would not affect an entire team, just one or two officers from each NPT. Members were further advised that a new Constable was currently being trained to join the Ballymurphy NPT in order to restore a full time presence in the area.
- xi. Members raised their concern that a vacuum in the policing structure would enable other anti-community elements to fill the void and expressed their desire for the situation to be rectified as soon as possible.

6. Policing Committee Proposals

- i. The Safer City Coordinator advised Members that two applications for funding from the Policing Committee budget had been received, copies of which had been circulated via email.
- ii. The applications were received from Andersonstown Celtic and the Oliver Plunkett School and both met the criteria for funding.
- iii. Members agreed to fund both applications at a cost of £1,000 each from the Policing Committee budget of £7,000.

7. Date of Next Meeting

- i. The Safer City Coordinator advised Members that the next meeting of the Policing Committee would be held in January, 2014 however as the Council's Committee Schedule had not yet been published, possible dates would be circulated at a later date.