

Minutes of the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee Meeting

Lavery Room, City Hall
Tuesday, 26 November, 2013

Political Members

Councillor Janice Austin
Councillor May Campbell
Councillor Patrick Convery
Councillor Matt Garrett
Councillor Deirdre Hargey
Councillor Colin Keenan
Councillor Adam Newton

Independent Members

Frank Mulhern (Vice Chair)
Valerie Allen
Claire Canavan
Liz Groves
Harry Maguire
John MacVicar

PSNI Representatives

Chief Superintendent George Clarke
Chief Superintendent Alan McCrum

Staff Present

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

Apologies

Councillor John Hussey (Chair)
Councillor Máire Hendron
Carmel McKinney

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. No declarations of interest were recorded.

3. Minutes

- i. The minutes of the Belfast PCSP Policing Committee Meetings held on 27th August and 11th November, copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken and read and agreed as correct.
- ii. A Member requested that the breakdown of the injuries sustained by PSNI Officers in A District, as requested at a previous meeting and circulated by email, be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Since 01.06.13 there have been 90 injured officers - 49 officers injured as a result of Public Order. The remaining 41 officers have been injured in the following ways; Slips, trips and falls, injuries from lifting items, RTCs and assaults. Assaults account for half of the 41 injuries

- iii. The Member also commented that, in reference to the minutes which mention rebuilding relationships with police, PCSP and DPCSP Members had not yet been asked to support recent conversations by the police with the community to rebuild

confidence in policing and that this was disappointing as the Policing Committee has statutory responsibility for improving community confidence in policing.

4. Matters Arising/Chair's Business

- i. No additional business was raised.

5. PSNI City Wide Strategic Statistical Report

- i. Chief Superintendent McCrum advised Members that overall crime had increased, particularly in B District, when compared to the previous financial year to date. He added that B District traditionally had higher levels of crime due to Belfast's night time economy and a greater transient population.
- ii. Members were further advised that while these figures showed an increase, the trend in overall crime when considered from the year 2000 was down by approximately 20%.
- iii. With regards to the significant increase in burglary, Chief Superintendent McCrum advised Members that Reducing Offending Teams had been utilised for alternative duties due to the G8 Conference, World Police and Fire Games and the flag related protests that had taken place since December, 2012.
- iv. He concluded by stating that service requests were up significantly which equated to over 2,500 additional calls. Members were also advised that the increase in crime trends experienced recently were beginning to reduce again.
- v. Chief Superintendent Clarke stated that it was often difficult to ascertain the reasons behind changes in crime trends. He added that the reduction in burglary statistics in A District was pleasing and could be an indication that the crime prevention initiatives in place were having an impact.
- vi. He added that the report provided to the PCSP gave information at a Service Level while the DPCSP Members received reports that addressed local policing plan priorities.

6. Members Questions and Input

- i. In response to a query regarding the increase in officer patrol time to 62% in B District, Chief Superintendent McCrum advised that the figure included all aspects of policing including time spent at interfaces and dealing with flag related protests. He advised that the remaining 40% of officer time was spent on preparing files, attending station based meetings and other administrative duties.
- ii. Members were further advised that the national benchmark for time spent on patrol was 55% and that work was ongoing with the PPS to minimise the time necessary to complete prosecution files.
- iii. Chief Superintendent Clarke added that some of the figures would relate to a time before the LOCATE System of GPS tracking was in place and so some occasions of patrol work may not have been captured. He also advised Members that a further briefing could be provided to Members of the LOCATE System.

- iv. A Member questioned whether the reduction of crime figures in A District was linked to Operation Echinus, and requested that further detection rate figures were included in future.
- v. Chief Superintendent Clarke advised that the figures could not solely be attributed to a particular operation and cautioned against relying on detection rates when considering that crime is known to be underreported.
- vi. In response to a Members query regarding an increased policing presence in the City Centre, Chief Superintendent McCrum assured Members that additional patrols would be carried out through over time and extended hours and so would not impact local policing.
- vii. Members agreed that they were content with the information provided in the report and asked that such statistics were brought to Policing Committee Meetings in the future.

7. Public Meeting on Parades and Protests

- i. The Vice-Chair reminded Members of the North Belfast DPCSP's request that the PCSP host a public meeting on the theme of parades, protests and public order and further advised that a meeting had taken place with the NI Policing Board to ascertain their views on such an event. He advised that the Policing Board felt that an event, given the time of year, could be contentious but would be supportive of smaller, targeted consultations which would open such conversations.
- ii. The Vice-Chair therefore advised that the matter would be passed back to the North Belfast DPCSP for their thoughts, and invited the Chair of the Partnership to update the PCSP Members.
- iii. The North Belfast DPCSP Chair advised Members that North Belfast DPCSP had considered the recommendation but were still decided that a public meeting was most appropriate. They would prefer the meeting to be organised by the PCSP as it was a wider issue for the City but that if not they had decided at their last meeting to run a North Belfast only meeting on the issue.. He added that he was mindful of security concerns and the issue of finding a suitable location. In closing he suggested bringing together a Working Group made up of 2 representatives from each of the DPCSPs and the PCSP in order to have input from all areas.
- iv. Chief Superintendent Clarke cautioned against holding discussions in just one area of the City and suggested a thematic approach whereby all voices and perspectives could be heard and a report produced at the end of the discussions.
- v. Members discussed the pros and cons of holding large public meetings verses smaller private meetings but agreed that it was important for the public to feel that their views and concerns were being listened to.
- vi. Several Members felt that tensions would be heightened by holding such an event and that frustration with the police could also be increased.
- vii. Members resolved to convene a Working Group made up of at least two Members from each DPCSP and the PCSP in order to discuss the request that a public meeting is held on the theme of parades, protests and public order. The group's purpose would not be to organise an event or series of events but to discuss the wider issues raised and present possible options to a future meeting of the Partnership.

8. PSNI Resourcing Challenges

- i. Chief Superintendent Clarke advised Members that given financial and resourcing pressures, the number of police officers in Belfast would drop by approximately 60 over a 3 year period. He advised that transformational programme of work had been developed by senior PSNI officers and external consultants and asked that the Members set aside some time at the next meeting of the Policing Committee in order to brief Members on the changes.
- ii. Chief Superintendent McCrum added that the programme of change would redesign how Belfast was policed with less Officers and a smaller budget. He also reassured Members that the number of Neighbourhood Officers would remain intact.
- iii. While Members felt that there may be merit in all Members receiving the briefing at once, Chief Superintendent Clarke advised that the PCSP briefing would be at a strategic level while each of the DPCSPs would receive specific detail on how the changes would affect the District.
- iv. Members subsequently agreed to hear the briefing prior to the Private Meeting of the PCSP on Monday, 9th December.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- i. The Safer City Assistant Manager advised Members that the next meeting of the Policing Committee would be held on Monday, 9th December 2013.