

# Minutes of the East Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

## Policing Committee Meeting

Skainos Building, Newtownards Road  
Wednesday, 28th August, 2013

<b>Political Members</b>	<b>Independent Members</b>
Alderman Gavin Robinson (Acting Chair)	Mrs Lynda Gibson
Councillor Claire Hanna	Mr Gareth Beacom
Councillor Mervyn Jones	Mrs Olwen Lyner
<b>PSNI Representatives</b>	
Chief Inspector Mark McEwan	
Sergeant Declan White	
<b>Staff Present</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
Alison Allen, Safer City Manager	Councillor Adam Newton (Chair)
Phyllis Anderson, Safer City Coordinator	Mr Mark Houston (Vice-Chair)
Heather Horner, ASB Officer, East Belfast	Councillor Niall O Donnghaile
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support Officer	

### 1. Welcome and Routine Matters

- i. The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted the apologies provided. In the absence of the Chair, Members agreed that Alderman Robinson would take on this role.
- ii. Alison Allen, the new Safer City Manager was welcomed to the meeting.

### 2. Declaration of Interests

- i. No declarations of interest were recorded.

### 3. Minutes

- i. The minutes of the East Belfast DPCSP Private Meeting held on 23rd May, copies of which had previously been circulated via email, were taken as read and agreed as correct.

### 4. Update on Policing in East Belfast

#### Policing Statistics

- i. Chief Inspector McEwan advised Members that overall crime had increased by 21.4% when compared with last year's figures to date with particular increases in burglary however arrests in this area and increased.
- ii. He stated that the figures were not positive however changes were beginning to be seen in figures within recent weeks. He added that normal policing had been effected due to the reallocation of neighbourhood and response officers to flag protests and interface disturbances due to the heightened tensions.

- iii. A Member sought clarification on the use of 'speedy justice' or discretionary disposals following reports of high level use in 'B' District and that sexual and violent offences were being treated in this way. She added that clarification would be useful as such media portrayals represented a public confidence issue.
- iv. The Area Commander agreed to obtain these figures and added that it was possible that indecent behaviour could have been dealt with using discretionary disposal and that large amounts were attributable to the City Centre, motoring offences and young people.

#### Drug Seizures

- v. In response to a Member's question, Chief Inspector McEwan advised that most drug seizures were made following community intelligence. He added that the information would be verified before any arrests or searches would be made and that these did continue throughout the parading season and flag related disturbances. Members were also advised that the police provided funding to FASA to supply harm reduction services.
- vi. Members discussed the decline in public confidence when high profile offenders are released on bail and agreed to invite the PPS to a future meeting on the East Belfast DPCSP to discuss these issues.

#### Parades

- vii. The Area Commander advised Members that there had been deployment issues in the Short Strand during July and tensions had risen in the area. He added that the size of policing operations would now be considered based on the size of parades and that talks were ongoing with community representatives in the area.
- viii. A Member stated that consideration should be given to the safety of spectators alongside the policing of the parade itself.

#### Resourcing

- ix. A Member questioned why resourcing issues had not been raised with the DPCSP in June as normal policing had not been in place since the flag protests began in December, 2012, and the impact was now being seen in the crime figures across East Belfast.
- x. The Area Commander advised Members that all Districts had experienced difficulties with regards to resourcing since December 2012 and that discussions regarding this were ongoing however normality was now returning.
- xi. In response to a Members query regarding how the East Belfast DPCSP could assist in raising the issue, the Area Commander stated that it was reasonable for resourcing to be raised at the next PCSP Meeting.
- xii. Members agreed that the Chair should bring the issue of resources within East Belfast to the next PCSP meeting.

### Burglary

- xiii. Members discussed the almost 30% rise in burglary figures and the impact that additional resources could have had on these figures if the issue had been looked at early in the year.
- xiv. Chief Inspector McEwan stated that the extraction of officers to other duties had had an impact on figures however more would be known by the next meeting in September.

### Drugs

- xv. Members discussed the use of legal highs and the recent death in East Belfast as a result of drug misuse.
- xvi. A Member stated that he had experienced difficulty in contacting the police and that the information supplied by the District Commander had differed from that of the Area Commander.
- xvii. The Area Commander stated that the information regarding the drug deaths in May/June was unclear at the time of the DPCSP Public meeting as autopsy results had not been released. He suggested that queries could be passed to the Safer City Coordinator and then onto the PSNI Performance Unit and agreed that they should look at better forms of communication.
- xviii. Members agreed that information should be received by the full DPCSP in order to maintain the credibility of its Members.