

Minutes of East Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Meeting In Public

Wandsworth Community Centre, Belfast
Thursday, 26 September, 2013

Political Members

Councillor Adam Newton (Chair)
Councillor Claire Hanna
Councillor Mervyn Jones

Independent Members

Mrs Lynda Gibson
Mrs Olwen Lyner

Designated Organisations

Gary Ballantyne, NIHE
Yvonne Cowan, H&SCT

Jane Lappin, PBNi
Dermot Magorrian, YJA

Pauline Smart, BELB
Chief Inspector Mark McEwan,
PSNI
Inspector Angus Mairs, PSNI

Staff Present

Phyllis Anderson, Safer City Coordinator
Saranne Gallagher, Partnership Support Officer
Bernie Quinn, Project Officer

Apologies

Alderman Gavin Robinson
Cllr Niall Ó Donnghaile
Mr Gareth Beacom
Mr Andy Moorhead
Yvonne Adair, YJA
Alice Mills, NIHE

1. Welcome and Routine Matters

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

2. Presentation on Home and Garden Safety

- i. The Crime Prevention Officer for the area gave a presentation detailing how members of the public could keep their homes safe and what precautions they could take in order to prevent crime.

3. Presentation on Fire Safety in the Home

- i. The NI Fire and Rescue Service representative provided information on how to keep homes safe from fire hazards.
- ii. He highlighted the main causes of fire, how each cause could be prevented and the importance of having an escape plan.

4. Presentation on Fire Safety in the Home

- i. The Neighbourhood Watch Development Officer gave a presentation detailing information regarding the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

- ii. Within the presentation, benefits of the scheme were highlighted and information provided on how local residents could implement the neighbourhood scheme within their local areas.
- iii. A member of the public asked a question in relation to the timeframe required to become a neighbourhood watch area. The Neighbourhood Watch Development Officer commented that it normally took between 2/3 months and buy in would be required from all the community.

5. Presentation on the RECALL Project

- i. A representative from the RECALL project provided information about this free community-based good neighbour support service which supports older and vulnerable people and those with life affecting ill-health in South & East Belfast & Castlereagh.
- ii. She also provided an overview of the services that were available through the project that the general public could avail off.

6. Written questions received from members of the public

Questions 1 - 6 submitted by John Collins

1. *With the ongoing protest in North Belfast, what impact is that having on Neighbourhood policing teams in East Belfast - i.e. how many officers are being taken away from East Belfast on a daily/weekly basis?*

Response:

B District has provided resources to A District during September on 9 occasions.

2 neighbourhood officers were abstracted from their normal duties on one occasion and 1 officer carried out duty in A District on overtime on 2 further occasions.

2. *12th July East Belfast return parade - can the Commander give me a breakdown on the number of injured police officers in the short strand and those on the lower Newtownards road and the nature of those injuries?*

Response:

12 officers were injured. 1 lower leg injury, 2 facial injuries, 1 broken leg, 6 neck injuries and 2 jaw injuries.

3. *Can the Commander give me a breakdown on the numbers of officers taken from different departments to shore up frontline policing (i.e. protests/parades etc) - also which departments those officers have come from?*

Response:

The number of officers from other departments has varied dependant on the operational requirement of each protest/parade.

Officers from other units within the District such as Reducing Offending, Tactical Crime and Public Protection have been used as well as TSGs and officers from other Districts. During G8 and the 12th period mutual aid officers were also used.

4. *Does the commander have enough resources to deal with day to day policing within East Belfast?*

Response:

I am satisfied that I have access to sufficient resources to provide a day to day policing service in East Belfast.

The past 9 months have presented many challenges for policing in Belfast as a whole. Throughout that period we have maintained 24/7 policing, responding to calls for service from all communities. When public order issues have been at their worst support has been provided from elsewhere in PSNI, and indeed UK policing via mutual aid.

Clearly we have had to prioritise our resources against the greatest risk, meaning that at times we have been diverted from some of our proactive operations that would focus upon burglary and drugs.

As a result there was an increase in crime which is currently being addressed and is reducing.

5. *Since the start of the year can the Commander give the total number of drug offences / sexual offences / burglaries / violence against the person and any percentage change compared to the same timeframe last year?*

Response:

These figures are available on the PSNI website at the following link:-

http://www.psni.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics/update_crime_statistics.htm

6. *With operations Titan and Dulcet - what manpower are both taking from East Belfast? Full breakdown please.*

Response:

In relation to Operations Titan and Dulcet a large number of investigations related to incidences in East Belfast. There are currently 5 officers on secondment to Op Titan, two from CID and 3 from response. Ongoing enquiries from Op Dulcet have been incorporated into Op Titan additional support has been provided from other areas of the PSNI to further these investigations.

Question 7-9 submitted by Rachael Davison, Secretary Victoria PACT

7. *When can we expect regular Neighbourhood policing in Victoria Ward?*

Response:

Neighbourhood policing within Victoria has started to return to normal and dependant on other policing contingencies this should continue in the future.

8. *Have we got a full team of Neighbourhood Officers in Victoria Ward?*

Response:

We are currently carrying 3 vacancies in Victoria NPT.

9. *Has there been an increase in crime in Victoria Ward?*

Response:

Crime within Victoria NPT has increased by 11.5% which is an additional 88 offences.

Question 10 submitted on behalf of Strandtown Traders' Association

10. *"The businesses on the Belmont Road serve the local community, provide employment, and pay rates and taxes. Strandtown Traders' Association has put a lot of effort in over the years to make the area more attractive to shoppers and residents alike. In recent months we have been plagued by increasing crime and anti-social behaviour, and the on-going contentious issue of flags has affected our viability. The G8 summit, the Police & Fire Games, and the marching season are all over - when can our community expect Neighbourhood Policing to be restored to an acceptable level?"*

Response:

Neighbourhood policing within Victoria has started to return to normal and dependant on other policing contingencies this should continue in the future.

7. Questions from the Public

- i. The Chair opened the floor to any additional questions.
- ii. A member of the public asked in addition to the responses provided by the PSNI to written questions, for further clarification specifically regarding what the impact of the protests were having on neighbourhood policing.
- iii. The Area Commander commented that there had been an increase in the number of PSNI officers policing protests. This was in an attempt to prevent public disorder occurring.
- iv. The Area Commander further commented that this had a huge impact on PSNI's ability to deal with other criminal activity such as burglary, but did comment that there had been an overall reduction in burglary.
- v. The Area Commander explained that additional units had been brought in from other rural areas to assist with managing the current protests, but stressed the importance of a need to find a resolution to the situation.
- vi. A member of the public asked if the PSNI could request additional resources. The Area Commander responded that additional resources are deployed in East Belfast on a nightly basis. In addition due to recent events, neighbourhood officers have been abstracted to police Inner East protests.
- vii. A member of the public commented that at a recent Victoria PACT meeting, it was noted that there was a lack of neighbourhood police presence in the area. The Area Commander commented that it is a case of perception versus fact. The Area Commander commented that the current situation had affected neighbourhood officers being redeployed and that through this the PSNI are facing additional pressures, particularly staffing issues.
- viii. A member of the public raised concern regarding funding they had been awarded to work in partnership with the Neighbourhood Police. The member of the public

commented that if Neighbourhood Police were not available to facilitate and participate in programme delivery, funding may not be fully utilised.

- ix. A member of the public asked with the up and coming anniversary of the flag protests, could this impact on additional public disorder occurring. The Area Commander said it possibly could, and I would appeal for people to be restrained, while recognising that everyone has the right to lawful protest.

8 Close

- i. Chair thanked all the presenters for their well informed presentations. The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all for attending.