

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

**1st Floor Conference Room, Cecil Ward Building
Thursday, 5th June, 2014**

Political Members

Councillor Tim Attwood
Councillor Matt Garrett
Councillor Marie Hendron
Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Independent Members

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

PSNI Representatives

Chief Inspector Anthony McNally, PSNI
Sergeant Christopher Robinson, PSNI
Inspector Alan Swann, PSNI

Staff Present

Alison Allen, Safer City Manager
Alan Wardle, Safer City Coordinator
Katharine McCrum, Partnership Support
Officer

Apologies

Alderman Frank McCoubrey (Chair)

1. Welcome and Routine Matters

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

2. Declarations of Interest

- i. The Vice-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. No declarations of interest were declared.

3. Minutes

- i. The minutes of 26th March, copies of which had previously been circulated, were taken as read and agreed as correct.

4. Policing Committee Grants Process

- i. The Safer City Coordinator advised Members that a new process for the delivery of Policing Committee Grants would bring the funding into line with other funding streams in terms of procurement, governance and audit procedures.
- ii. Members were further advised that although the process was stringent, funding could be turned around quickly and approved via email if necessary.
- iii. The Area Commander asked for the process map to be sent through to him to allow it to be distributed to the Neighbourhood Police Team whose Sergeants would be required to sign each application.

- iv. Following Members' approval of the process, the Safer City Coordinator advised that the application would go live on the Belfast City Council website once each DPCSP had approved it towards the end of June.

5. Area Commanders Update on Policing

- i. The Area Commander for West Belfast, Chief Inspector McNally, provided Members with a 12 month performance report against the Local Policing Plan for the period of April 2013 to March 2014, as well as figures for April-May 2014. He advised that overall crime statistics were steady with a few exceptions.
- ii. Chief Inspector McNally advised Members that he would be focusing on making officers within West Belfast contactable, reactive and on ensuring appropriate investigative standards.
- iii. Members were advised that burglaries had reduced by 12.2% when compared to the previous year however 35-40% were still carried out through open doors and windows. Chief Inspector McNally advised that he would be working with Crime Prevention Officers to move towards a proactive rather than reactive approach to reducing burglaries.
- iv. With regards to reducing drug supply and use, Members were advised that over £200,000 worth of drugs had been seized within West Belfast and further assets had been seized through the Proceeds of Crime Act. Chief Inspector McNally added that Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) would be used where possible when searches were taking place.
- v. Chief Inspector McNally advised that Neighbourhood Officers had been recorded as spending 94% of time on patrol, the majority of which was in their own areas. He added that NPTs were now linking with victims following calls rather than Response Officers. Members were also advised that a mobile police station had been used in the Suffolk area and that this would be rotated to other areas twice per month, based on availability.
- vi. With regards to the current year, Members were advised that violent crime against the person were up by over 10% when compared in April-May of last year which was significant and would need to be tackled.
- vii. Looking at outcome rates, Chief Inspector McNally advised that domestic violence crime outcomes were up by 7% while drugs related clearance rates were slow (down by 56%) as it took some time for drug testing to be completed.

Members Questions

- viii. A Member echoed their concern regarding this rise in violent crime and asked in what ways the DPCSP could support the work of the police in this area. It was noted that the Council were reviewing the Get Home Safe initiative and the extension of safe zones into West Belfast would be welcomed.
- ix. Members voiced their support for the mobile police stations but added that it was important that the community received feedback when incidents were reported.

- x. The Area Commander agreed, stating that he was keen for follow up calls to be made as soon as possible following the initial report. He asked Members to advise him of incidents where calls were not being returned.
- xi. In response to a query regarding Council's on-street drinking signage, Inspector Swann advised that prosecutions were made by the Council as the issue was a Council by-law. Members agreed that it would be useful to be briefed on this issue at a future meeting.

Confidence in Policing

- xii. A Member welcomed the Area Commanders vision for building confidence within the community but noted that legal issues between the PSNI and Police Ombudsman's Office undermined this confidence.
- xiii. The Area Commander agreed to feed this comment back to the District Commander adding that the Chief Constable had agreed that concerns around the issue were unhelpful regardless of right or wrong.

Bonfires

- xiv. A Member commented upon the ongoing bonfire meetings that were taking place as well as incidents of duty Inspectors having little knowledge of the protocol for the collection of bonfire material.
- xv. Chief Inspector McNally agreed that improved communication was needed on this issue and advised that he would be addressing this. Inspector Swann advised that Neighbourhood Policing Teams were working with businesses to secure bonfire materials and that the protocol would soon be finalised before being shared internally.