

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

6 DECEMBER 2011

Present: Councillor K McLeod (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, A Khan, A Lovejoy and M Meerabux

Also present: Inspector Deidre Dent (Hertfordshire Police)

Officers: Community Safety Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Lynch.

Absent without apologies: Councillor Martins.

6 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2011 were submitted and signed.

7 CRIME STATISTICS - DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING

Inspector Dent introduced the presentation which included crime statistics and covered the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Crime statistics were available online at www.police.uk. The document was used at the Joint Action Group and contained raw data that should not be used elsewhere.

She explained that Watford was compared with other similar areas, these were all outside Hertfordshire as Watford did not compare with any other Hertfordshire district. This was known as the 'iQuanta' group. Other areas within Watford's group included Poole, Trafford, Kingston upon Thames, Slough and Reading. This was based on size, crime levels and demographic information. Watford had done well in the last 6 months but crime levels in other areas had had an effect on Watford's position.

Inspector Dent informed the Task Group that the peak time for burglaries was between 3pm and 6pm and residents were being encouraged to use timer switches when they were out.

She explained all the different offences that were classified as 'violent crime'. Sexual offences were included and these often related to historic abuse cases. The biggest crime problem in Watford was Actual Bodily Harm.

Councillor Meerabux asked if a change in the housing mix in an area had an effect on the levels and types of crime that took place. Inspector Dent confirmed that this was the case but in general this was not a problem in Watford.

There had been an increase in violent crime and during August's riots; 13 people were arrested for criminal damage. Inspector Dent reported that, despite the spike, Watford had remained in the middle of the iQuanta group.

Councillor Khan asked about how the data on antisocial behaviour was presented. The Community Safety Manager responded that the same data was collected but the classifications had changed. Antisocial behaviour offences were now assigned to one of three categories.

Inspector Dent reported that the CSP did not deal with domestic violence very much; it was monitored by the Watford Responsible Authorities Group (WRAG).

Included in the figures for domestic violence were arguments between partners that took place in public and this was not uncommon in the town centre.

Councillor Khan asked about how so-called honour killings were dealt with; Inspector Dent replied that these were monitored by the Hate Crime Unit.

In response to a question from Councillor McLeod about how the crime statistics were scrutinised, Inspector Dent explained that the Police held daily meetings and reviewed all the crimes that had taken place and monitored any spikes. Every two weeks there was a meeting at county where each CSP reported what had happened in their area. Police analysts highlighted emerging issues in the county.

Councillor Khan expressed concern about the theft of gold jewellery from Asian households where gold has a particular sentimental value.

Councillor McLeod asked whether statistics relating to drug offences in Central Ward could be broken down further. Many people were in the town centre for the night time economy and it would be useful to know whether the offenders were from Central ward, other wards or outside the borough.

Inspector Dent agreed to look into whether this could be made available for drug and other offences.

The Community Safety Manager reported that the CSP were operating very proactively in particular in relation to drugs and domestic violence.

Councillor Collett congratulated the Police for their work during the summer's riots; it was thanks to the Police's actions that Watford had not seen more trouble.

The Community Safety Manager explained that the CSP worked hard to communicate with residents. For example, using About Watford to give advice about security at home.

Councillor McLeod noted that it was important for members of the Task Group to let their fellow councillors know about the statistics available on www.police.uk.

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WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor McLeod began by listing some of the topics considered by the Community Safety Task Group in the previous year.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer noted that a suggestion had been made by Councillor McLeod about inviting the Probation Service. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had had a suggestion about drug and alcohol treatment which had been forwarded to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

The Community Safety Manager reminded Members that at the previous meeting they had had a presentation about the work of the CSP. The four priorities for the CSP this year were:

1. Reduction of crime in priority areas
2. Reduction of alcohol-related crime
3. Reduction of re-offending, including drugs
4. Maintaining standards in tackling antisocial behaviour

A review had recently been carried out to ensure that they were the right priorities. The Partnership's action plan was going to be updated after April 2012. After this, she could bring a report to the Task Group considering what had been achieved.

The Community Safety Manager reported that the Probation Service were keen to come to speak to the Task Group about their work. The Court Service were also always looking to build greater understanding of what they do.

She also informed the Task Group that Turning Point had come to speak to the Task Group last year and from April 2012 Hertfordshire County Council would have a new agency for drug treatment in Watford.

Councillor Meerabux asked whether the Task Group could contact tenants' and residents' associations to find out their views on community safety. He added that other organisations like Street Angels could also input.

Councillor McLeod agreed that it could be useful to hear about their relationships with the agencies involved in Community Safety.

Councillor Collett felt that many residents did not know what avenues to take when dealing with crime and antisocial behaviour.

The Community Safety Manager noted that Members were referring to problems of antisocial behaviour and suggested that the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator could come and give a strategic overview of what was happening. He could discuss how data was collated and explain the joined-up approach.

Councillor Khan suggested that a topic could be to look at the impact of crime on hard to reach groups and communities. He asked what could be done, for example with gold theft from the Asian communities as his local PC had not been able to help.

Councillor Khan added that there was a lot of focus on crime in the High Street and his residents were experiencing problems with antisocial behaviour on St Albans Road. He also noted the link between homelessness and antisocial behaviour. These were areas that could be raised with the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator.

Councillor Lovejoy agreed and referred to problems with a homeless man on St Albans Road.

Councillor Meerabux said that he wanted more engagement with young people on community safety issues. He was also concerned about security on buses.

The Community Safety Manager said that she was not aware of the specific problems the Member was referring to.

ACTION- The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to distribute a report on the work done on youth services last year.

ACTION- The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to send Task Group Members the scrutiny topic request form to help them develop their suggestions

It was agreed that the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator would be invited to the meeting in January to discuss antisocial behaviour issues.

With regard to alcohol-related problems, Inspector Dent informed the Committee that data-sharing with Watford General Hospital was not yet possible. It had been agreed in principle but there were operational issues. She added that the Night Time Economy Tour for Councillors would be visiting A&E.

It was agreed that Brian Gale would be invited to the meeting in March to talk about the drug and alcohol treatment agencies and the new proposals.

Inspector Dent added that it would be useful for the Task Group to feed into the process of Neighbourhood Priority Setting in March.

It was agreed that this would be a second item for the meeting in March.

ACTION- The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to produce a draft work programme based on the discussions.

RESOLVED-

that the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator be invited to the next meeting.

that Brian Gale be invited to discuss drug and alcohol treatment to the meeting in March.

that Neighbourhood Priority Setting be added to the agenda for the meeting in March.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the next meetings would take place on:

- Monday 30 January 2012 at **7 p.m.**
- Tuesday 6 March 2012 at **6.30 p.m.**

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 8.25 pm