

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

11 JULY 2012

Present: Councillor R Martins (Chair)
Councillors J Aron, A Khan, A Lovejoy, K McLeod and
M Meerabux

Also present: Chief Inspector Caveney, Hertfordshire Constabulary (for
minute numbers 1 to 5)
Jon Smith, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (for minute
numbers 1 to 5)
Dawn Morrish, Hertfordshire NHS (for minute numbers 1 to 5)
John Hughes, Hertfordshire Probation (for minute numbers 1
to 5)
Mignon Holmes, Hertfordshire Probation (for minute numbers
1 to 5)
Derek Scudder, Hertfordshire Police Authority (for minute
numbers 1 to 5)
Mike Wright, Watford Observer (for minute numbers 1 to 5)

Officers: Executive Director Services (for minute numbers 1 to 5)
Community Safety Manager (for minute numbers 1 to 5)
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

1 ELECTION OF A CHAIR

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Rabi Martins be elected Chair for the remainder of the 2012/13
municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joynes.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 6 March 2012 were submitted and signed.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Chair reminded the members that the task group's role was to review the effectiveness of the partners' strategies and initiatives in tackling community safety issues and added that it was not appropriate to raise individual operational cases.

The Chair invited everyone to introduce themselves.

The Executive Director explained that as Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) she would provide an introduction to the partnership and then each strategic lead would discuss their priority.

She explained that it was a legal requirement to have a CSP and it had proved to be very beneficial in Watford. She outlined the role of the CSP and explained that the partnership met quarterly to review the performance and priorities. The Joint Action Group (JAG) had operational oversight of the work and the Antisocial Behaviour Action Group (ASBAG), which considered how to address antisocial behaviour issues, was particularly successful.

The Executive Director reported that the CSP had had a lot of success in 2011/12. Watford had had the highest detection rates in the county and crime was down 25 percent on the back of three years' continuous improvement. The only statistic which was increasing was violent crime which had increased by eight percent. For the first three months of this year, however, there had been a reduction of eight percent.

Chief Inspector Caveney reported that the Police in Watford had set targets to reduce burglary and vehicle crime by 20 percent. These were significant but realistic targets. The Police were focusing on identifying people who caused disproportionate problems and were using warrants and searches in known hot spots. The second priority for the Police was reducing the volume of theft from person and violent crime, a significant proportion of which took place in the town centre. They were also working with the Council to look at the culture of the town centre and how it could move forward.

The Executive Director gave apologies for Brian Gale from Hertfordshire County Council, who was the strategic lead on drugs and alcohol. She advised that there was a strong link between alcohol and violent crime and domestic violence. The CSP was working with the pubs and clubs through Pub Watch to address the problem. The Licensing Committee and the Police were also working well together. There was a new alcohol strategy for the County and arrest referrals were now being used.

The Executive Director suggested an item for the Task Group's work programme. The CSP felt it would be useful to have some work done around domestic violence and the relationship with alcohol abuse. A piece of work had been carried out two to three years ago which contained some recommendations.

Councillor Aron asked why the levels of domestic violence might have increased. Chief Inspector Caveney responded that it may be a positive indication that reporting levels had increased as victims were more confident. The root cause of the increase could not be pin-pointed. He hoped that the Police's more victim-focused approach was encouraging more reporting. Watford's levels of domestic violence were not exceptional in Hertfordshire.

Jon Smith, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, advised that the work on ASB in Watford was very proactive and achieved its targets. He paid tribute to the work of the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator who had made the ASBAG so successful. Progress this year was good so far and targets were being reached. The advantages of the partnership approach to ASB prevention were evidenced by the low activity levels during the Queen's Jubilee and the European Championships. The recent bad weather conditions have also affected the levels of anti-social behaviour. He cited a particular project where off-licences which sold to street drinkers were being identified. There had also been a clampdown on illegal encampments which led to antisocial behaviour.

Councillor McLeod advised that she had been promoting the Police non-emergency number (101) to residents and asked about progress. The Community Safety Manager responded that it was crucial; the reporting logs were reviewed daily and highlighting this reporting line to residents was crucial. She noted that a new project called Safetynet was in development; this was a project management tool for the agencies involved in antisocial behaviour.

In response to a question from Councillor Khan, Jon Smith responded that the target of a six percent reduction in antisocial behaviour was based on previous targets and performance. He noted that the level of antisocial behaviour had been dropping but eventually it would plateau.

Following a question from Councillor Meerabux about the Online Watch Link (OWL) system, Chief Inspector Caveney responded that it allowed volume and location of crimes to be identified to show hotspots and the Safetynet programme also gave a risk grading. He said he could supply information about whether the use of OWL was growing.

The Chair asked about the profile of those responsible for antisocial behaviour. Jon Smith responded that lifestyle, rather than age, was the biggest factor in antisocial behaviour. The question of profile was a topic the ASBAG could look at.

Chief Inspector Caveney added that approximately half of crime took place in the town centre. Shop theft took place predominantly during the day and low-level violence tended to take place at night.

Mignon Holmes, Hertfordshire Probation Service, advised that they used the Integrated Offender Management programme to work with persistent offenders. Under the arrangement reoffenders were given a more severe sentence. The programme was successful at reducing the rates and amount of reoffending.

John Hughes, Hertfordshire Probation, added that the benefit to the public was that if they did reoffend they were out of circulation for longer.

Councillor McLeod highlighted her concern over the closure of the Stonham hostel. She asked about the handover period once ex-offenders had completed their probation period. John Hughes replied that housing was a serious problem nationally particularly with single homelessness and affordability. He explained that a supervisory order could be for up to three years and a lot of work was undertaken in the first year. He noted that many service users had chaotic lives and a staged reintegration into the community, whilst desirable, was not straightforward.

Councillor Meerabux noted that role models were important for vulnerable people. John Hughes replied that the probation service made use of mentors from SOVA and efforts were made to match mentors and service users. He added that positive outcomes in education and employment gave people more self-confidence. The Probation Service was looking for people from different communities and with entrepreneurial skills to impart aspiration to the service users. Mignon Holmes noted that some ex-offenders had undertaken a very successful placement with Watford Football Club. She asked Members to contact her with any ideas of people who would be inspiring for offenders. John Hughes said that Councillors could also come and give awards to offenders for their achievements and hear their stories.

ACTION- Probation Service to provide contact details for Members

Councillor Khan asked about levels of reoffending in Watford. John Hughes responded that it varied significantly between crimes. The lowest reoffending rate was for drink driving. The biggest challenge was with individuals who had personality disorders, were unable to keep a job and were emotionally volatile. This was only a small number of people and the Probation Service would continue to work with them. The best way of reducing reoffending was through employment and stable relationships.

The Chair asked about how successful the preventative work was. The Executive Director responded that regular reports were received about the 20 most prolific offenders in Watford. More information was available if required.

Derek Scudder, Hertfordshire Police Authority, advised the Task Group that there would be changes in the governance of the Police Force. The Police and Crime Commissioner, who would replace the Police Authority, would be elected in November. The Police and Crime Commissioner would set the strategic direction of the force with the Chief Constable and be overseen by a Police and Crime Panel, a light-touch scrutiny panel with representatives from all districts and boroughs. Mayor Thornhill would be Watford's representative and Derek Scudder would be her substitute.

Following a question from Councillor Khan, Derek Scudder said that, in his opinion, as Hertfordshire Constabulary was one of the best in the country, it would be wise to change very little. He added that the relationship between the

Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel would develop over time.

Councillor Khan suggested that the new Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to a meeting of the Task Group in the future. He asked about the government's 'problem families' initiative.

The Executive Director replied that the person leading on this project had presented to the most recent meeting of the Watford Responsible Authorities Group. The families were referred to as 'thriving families' in Hertfordshire. She added that ASBAG looked at family situations of cases. Dawn Morrish, Hertfordshire NHS, added that these families were one of the strategic priorities for the NHS. She advised that Members could respond to the consultation on the priorities by visiting the HCC website.

The Executive Director highlighted that Watford had been awarded the Purple Flag award for excellence in management of the Night Time Economy. An action plan had been produced and the scheme would be launched during Purple Flag week in September. This was good news for the town.

The Chair recorded the Task Group's vote of thanks to all officers involved in the Purple Flag project. Councillor Aron noted how impressed she had been with the PCSO who had dealt with incidents of antisocial behaviour in Nascot.

Councillor Khan asked if the report could be circulated to the Task Group

ACTION- Community Safety Manager

In response to a question from the Chair about cuts to the Police, Chief Inspector Caveney responded that they were prioritising front-line services and savings were being made in the back office functions. There was a possibility of outsourcing some of these functions. The force was in a strong position and was leading performance in the county. Derek Scudder added that there had also been collaboration with the forces in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire which provided economies of scale.

Councillor McLeod highlighted an issue of cuts to the Ambulance service. Dawn Morrish said she had no information about this. Councillor Aron offered to pass on a contact at the East of England Ambulance Service.

Councillor Khan asked what effect the NHS commissioning bodies would have on the joint working. Dawn Morrish responded that there were two clinical commissioning groups in Hertfordshire and the Herts Valleys group covered Watford. She worked in public health and this function would go to Hertfordshire County Council.

The Chair thanked the members of the CSP for their time.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Task Group received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer including proposals from councillors.

The Chair noted that work on the thriving families would dovetail well with the proposed topic on drug and alcohol treatment. This could be a topic for February 2013 as this was a new initiative.

Councillor Khan suggested that drug and alcohol treatment was a topic that touched on a lot of areas.

It was agreed that at the next meeting the CSP's suggested topic of domestic violence be considered as well as inviting Brian Gale to talk about drug and alcohol treatment.

Councillor McLeod suggested that this should include support for families. She said the task group needed to question if the need for drug and alcohol treatment in Watford was being fully met. She added that it would be helpful to hear from ex-service users.

Councillor Khan suggested that organisations such as the women's centre be invited to give evidence on the domestic violence topic

The Chair urged the Task Group members to highlight any issues they came across during the year to him and the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer on an ongoing basis

It was agreed to raise the question of housing issues with Brian Gale at Hertfordshire County Council.

ACTION- Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to circulate information about SOVA and the Anne Frank project.

DATES OF NEXT THREE MEETINGS

Tuesday 2 October 6.30pm
 Tuesday 11 December 6.30pm
 A third date to be agreed

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
 and finished at 8.10 pm