

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

31 JANUARY 2013

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

Also present: Chief Inspector Nick Caveney (Hertfordshire Constabulary)
Kate Moore, Hertfordshire County Council, Community
Safety Unit

Officers: Executive Director Services
Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head
Community Safety Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

14 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2012 were submitted and signed.

16 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The Task Group received the Strategic Assessment for Development Plans 2013/14.

The Chair explained that the document would help the Task Group to understand the strategic direction of the partnership. The Task Group needed to ensure it was happy with the strategic plan and offer any guidance it felt relevant.

The Executive Director advised that she was also the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership. She explained that the annual assessment was carried out by the County Council. The assessment was then forwarded to the partnership to review. The assessment helped in the development of the priorities and action plan. There were no major changes proposed as a result of the

assessment. Each priority had a strategic and operational lead. The action plan would be agreed at the partnerships meeting in March. She advised that Chief Inspector Caveney would be able to provide the most up to date statistics. It was important to note that the figures in the strategic review went from mid year to mid year. The partnership had seen an improvement in all areas. Crime continued to fall. There was good partnership working.

Chief Inspector Caveney informed the Task Group that all priorities under 'Reduce crime in priority areas' had seen a reduction in crime. Year on year, vehicle crime had seen a reduction just under 35%. Theft from person, this did not include any violence against the person, was a challenging area but had a reduction just under 6%. Scan-net had been introduced in the Town Centre for use by the pubs and clubs. It was partly funded by the partnership. Since its introduction in December it had already had a positive effect. It was a visible device and acted as a deterrent. He explained how the system worked. It was able to scan 1500 different types of identification and check against set parameters for forgeries.

Chief Inspector Caveney confirmed that all the Town Centre premises had access to the system and that it was able to identify people banned in other venues. It was linked locally and nationally. It was intended that the Police would also obtain a machine. It would assist with the prevention of violent crime. The licence holders held the licences for the machines. Data Protection was covered within the licence from the company. It was part of the conditions of entry to venues.

Chief Inspector Caveney advised that the reduction of violent crime was also challenging. The performance of this priority fluctuated. Currently the trend towards March was positive. The improvement was due to policing in the town and other initiatives, including the scanner. He informed the Task Group that there had been just under 35% reduction in domestic burglaries.

Kate Moore, from the County Community Safety Unit, stated that a lot of positive work on alcohol had been carried out.

The Community Safety Manager informed Members that incidents of anti-social behaviour were down by 32% compared to the previous year. Chief Inspector Caveney added that this was the second highest reduction in the county.

The Chair commented that generally in Watford crime was falling. He noted, however, that when compared to the rest of the county it did not look very good.

Chief Inspector Caveney said that it was important to realise that this was a snapshot of data. When making comparisons it was important to remember that the nighttime economy was different to anywhere else in the county.

The Executive Director added that when compared with similar police authorities to Watford, known as the iQuanta group, the statistics more accurately portrayed Watford's performance as it was comparing like for like. For example, in relation to burglaries Watford was ninth out of 15 compared to the most similar

community safety partnerships. It was not a good comparison to compare across the county. It was important to remember that Watford was a regional centre for shopping and sport. The nighttime economy had its own challenges. Crime was concentrated more in the Town Centre, not only from the nighttime economy.

Kate Moore commented that the number of visitors to Watford could be as high as 500,000 per week at certain times of the year.

The Executive Director commented that in a previous review of incidents, the majority of people did not come from Watford. In addition the data was worked out per head of population. This could have the effect of skewing data, as happened with Albert Road South each year. There were very few residential properties in the road which was used to compare with the number of recorded crimes, which were mainly related to incidents in the Town Centre. She said that it was deeply frustrating how this was calculated.

The Chair said that following the explanation given it was important to compare with similar authorities rather than others within the county.

Councillor McLeod said that the information in the assessment did not show a breakdown by age or where people came from. She added that she was surprised the number of domestic burglaries had reduced. Residents within her ward relayed stories to her where they had chased burglars away. They had not told the Police. She asked whether attempted burglaries were included in the statistics.

Chief Inspector Caveney confirmed that unsuccessful burglaries which were reported to the Police were included.

Councillor Meerabux commented that Watford had a transitory population. He was concerned about Police resources particularly in light of the proposed cuts. He did not want officers to be put in danger.

Chief Inspector Caveney informed the Task Group that the needs of the town were continually assessed. He ensured resources were tailored to different problems. For example, in the past a set number of officers were deployed in the Town Centre for the nighttime economy. The new method involved assessing each night individually and set in a matrix. This helped to identify the staffing profile for that night. It was important to ensure that officers were not placed in vulnerable situations.

Councillor McLeod referred to the information about domestic violence and hate crimes. She noted that the ethnicity was changing with the Borough and questioned if this had had an impact.

The Executive Director advised that cases were down by 10% over the whole year. One issue to consider was the level of reporting. If the number of cases were increasing it was necessary to consider whether it might be due to more people being prepared to come forward. She added that many of the domestic

violence cases were related to alcohol. Incidents could vary from a verbal altercation to the extreme case of domestic homicide.

Following a question about staff awareness, Chief Inspector Caveney explained that the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process was followed and each relevant agency was involved.

Councillor Joynes reported that she had attended the Domestic Violence Forum prior to Christmas. She had understood that it could also be related to the economy. She envisaged it would get worse with the forthcoming benefit changes.

The Chair referred to the Key Achievements section. They all seemed to relate to detection rather than prevention. He asked whether this was an area that needed more work.

The Executive Director said that the document possibly did over focus on that area. She assured Members that the Community Safety Partnership did discuss particular operational targets and specific groups.

Chief Inspector Caveney added that Scan-net was part of crime prevention. In West Watford £3,000 was being invested in gating schemes for residential alleyways. The Police held roadshows, for example in ASDA.

The Chair said that he was aware it happened but it might be useful to reflect this area of work in future reports.

Councillor Khan noted that in many of the key areas alcohol played a part. He asked what action the partnership was taking, for example education.

Kate Moore advised that she was the lead for alcohol strategy within the county. Preventative work included education. The strategy also covered treatment and enforcement. All different partnerships developed the blueprint for Hertfordshire and then each community safety partnership selected those areas relevant to them. This was an area that was moving up the agenda, but was often looked at after drugs. The statistics for the whole of Hertfordshire showed a reduction. There were fewer young people drinking alcohol but those who did appeared to be drinking more.

Members referred to ways of informing people, including messaging, OWLS and social media.

Chief Inspector Caveney advised that the Constabulary was investing in more Twitter accounts, which were due to be in place in February. These would cover different parts of the area.

Councillor Meerabux said that there was no reference to stop and search data in the assessment. He felt this information would be useful to the Police.

Chief Inspector Caveney advised that this was part of the crime prevention plan. Hot spots were identified and the demographics. Watford had an influx of visitors from other areas including Luton and North Watford. The demographics for these areas were different from Watford and therefore the demographic of the data was different from that of Watford. He confirmed that the stop and search data was recorded as the location the person was stopped and not the person's home address.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Caveney and his team as he felt the residents of Watford were well looked after. He also thanked the other officers for attending and answering the Task Group's questions.

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IMPLICATIONS OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR WATFORD

The Task Group received a copy of a presentation given by the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Police and Crime Panel.

The Chair considered that it was too early to see if the Police and Crime Commissioner had had any impact on Community Safety.

Chief Inspector Caveney advised that there was a clear distinction between the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police service.

The Executive Director advised that a representative from the Commissioner's office attended the Community Safety Partnership. The Mayor was a member of the Police and Crime Panel which scrutinised the work of the Commissioner. The Community Safety Partnership had put together information for the Commissioner highlighting areas of concern and where money was needed. A dialogue had started and she hoped that it would continue. Following a question from Councillor McLeod, the Executive Director advised that they were waiting for a date to meet with the Commissioner.

Following a question from Councillor Aron about the back up of officers following the redeployment of others, Chief Inspector Caveney explained that his role was to ensure that resources were deployed appropriately. There were times when officers were drawn from one area to cover another. If a gap were left then appropriate cover would need to be put in place.

Councillor Khan noted that the last Panel was held in Borehamwood and the next would be held in Three Rivers. He asked when it was due to visit Watford.

The Executive Director stated that she would find out for Members.

The Chair suggested that when it did come to Watford Councillors should attend.

RESOLVED –

that the presentation be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Task Group received the latest work programme and two scrutiny proposals from councillors.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that the work programme set out the work carried out during the year and the plans for 2013/14.

The Chair commented that the task Group had focused on one major topic this year and felt that the Task Group should do the same for the following year.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the two scrutiny suggestions which had been outstanding for some time. She asked the Task Group to review each one and consider whether it should be taken forward.

Involvement of residents and tenants' association to identify community safety issues

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer briefly outlined the scrutiny proposal. She said that she had some concerns how it might be carried out. She advised that Councillor Meerabux, who had proposed the suggestion, would be able to explain the reasons for his proposal.

Councillor Meerabux advised that having spoken to different groups across the town, it was felt there was a lack of connectivity. Community cohesiveness was important. Neighbourhood Forums were poorly attended. He felt that his suggestion would show that groups' views were taken seriously.

Councillor Aron said that having looked at the suggestion, this already happened within her ward. They held Neighbourhood Forums, they circulated newsletters and residents knew how to contact their local councillors. She also regularly met with the local residents' associations. She would not want the Task Group to hinder the work carried out by the councillors in their wards; it could damage relationships.

Councillor Khan suggested that an outcome might be to identify how the hard to reach communities were involved. It might be possible to ask the Chairs of groups to attend the Task Group and give evidence.

Councillor McLeod said that the residents' association within her ward no longer existed. She envisaged that it might be difficult for the PCSOs to reach residents. One question would be whether the Police felt they had sufficient contacts within the wards.

The Executive Director suggested that the proposal was about engagement with different parts of the community and how it might be improved.

It was suggested that a questionnaire could be drawn up and circulated. Councillor McLeod recommended that there should be three slightly different formats, one for PCSOs and the Police, one for Councillors and a third one for residents and tenants' associations.

It was agreed that this should be started immediately and the results would be presented to the first meeting in the new Municipal Year and a decision made on how to proceed.

The Probation Service and the support of ex-offenders

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer introduced the second scrutiny suggestion which had been proposed by Councillor McLeod.

Councillor McLeod explained that she had attended a course about ex-offenders. It had come to her attention that Watford Borough Council did not have any policies about ex-offenders.

The Executive Director advised that she was on the strategic board that worked on strategies for ex-offenders. The Probation Service worked with prolific offenders over a period of time. Having looked at the scrutiny proposal, she suggested that it appeared to be a fact-finding exercise. She suggested that responses could be obtained for the questions within the proposal. The answers could then be reviewed at the Task Group's next meeting and a decision made whether to progress the subject further.

Following a further comment from Councillor McLeod, the Executive Director advised that housing was a constant concern. There was increasing difficulty in the current housing market. The Council had signed up to the Hertfordshire wide protocol regarding housing.

It was agreed that the questions would be forwarded to the appropriate organisations and the responses would be reviewed at the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

1. that the work programme be noted.
2. that the Task Group produces a list of questions to be circulated to the Police and PCSOs, all Councillors and Residents' and Tenants' Associations and that the responses be reviewed at the first meeting in the new Municipal Year.
3. that the questions raised with the scrutiny suggestion about support for ex-offenders be circulated to the appropriate organisations and considered at the Task Group's first meeting in the new Municipal Year.

CONTRIBUTION TO SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Task Group that the Scrutiny Annual Report would include a section about the Community Safety Partnership Task Group. The Chair would be asked to provide a comment. She asked Members to consider whether there were any specific matters they wanted to include. The draft content would be circulated to the Task Group prior to its inclusion in the final document.

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.55 pm

Chair
Community Safety
Partnership Task Group