

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

MINUTES

A meeting of the **Planning and Consultation Committee** was held on 15 March 2005 in the Conference Room, Endeavour House, Woodwater Park, Exeter, starting at 10.30am

Present:

Chairman.....Mr D Money
Mr M Hicks, Mrs J Owen and Mr C L Wallin.

Officers in Attendance: -

Police Force Deputy Chief Constable N Arnold, L Fellows (Corporate Planning Officer), P Hutton (Director of Corporate Communications) [items 1 to 6 only], E Lewis (Police Authority Liaison Officer), Dr T Lowndes (Force Consultation Officer), Chief Superintendent L McGrath (Commander, Strategic Development Department) and A Oaker (Force Diversity Officer) [items 1 to 6 only].

Police Authority G Davey (Chief Executive) [items 1 to 4 only], T Kelland (Consultation Officer) and R Martin (Policy Officer)

PC/135 Chairman's Statement

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming those present, especially Chief Superintendent McGrath attending his first Planning and Consultation Committee as Commander of Strategic Development Department.

The Chairman also extended his thanks to Superintendent Marsden and David Walker for their commitment and contribution to this Committee in the past.

PC/136 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M I R Bull, Mr C Bulley, Ms O P Dendy and Mr W D Thomas.

PC/137 Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interest were made in respect of any item on the agenda.

PC/138 Minutes

(a) **RESOLVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2004 were confirmed as a correct record subject to the amendments indicated below.

(b) Matters arising from the minutes

The following issues were raised:

- PC/122 The Chairman reported that no legal action came about as part of the FM contract negotiations.
- PC/134 Under the last bullet point, *Plymouth College* should be amended to read *Plymouth College of Further Education*. Also, the minutes should reflect that the Police Authority instigated this consultation.

PC/139 Police Authority Local Policing Summary

The Chief Executive provided an update on the status of the Serious Organised Crime and Policing Bill which proposes that police authorities are given the duty to provide a 'local policing summary' to all taxpayers. The Government is prioritising the Serious Organised Crime Agency section of the Bill and may drop the policing summary element if there is a lack of parliamentary time.

The Police Authority Policy Officer reminded Members that there had been indications from this Committee in the past for a wish to deliver a summary of the policing plan to all households. The Committee was advised they may wish to pre-empt any legal duty by issuing a summary for 2005-2006.

The Director of Corporate Communications advised the Committee that several options were available but production and circulation costs could not be determined until content was agreed.

Circulation options were given as:

- A zero-cost option would be for a 'hot button' link via the Authority and/or Constabulary websites.
- Regional distribution through an insert in local newspapers
- Contracted door-to-door drop
- Pages in a publication such as 'Devon Talk' (no equivalent publications available in Plymouth, Torbay, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly) or a 'mix and match' with other publications.
- Flyers in public places (council offices, libraries, police stations) to augment one of the above options.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The existing Council Tax leaflet is too long and does not include the information or issues the public care about
- Neighbourhood Beat Managers and/ or Neighbourhood Watch representatives could be utilised to distribute policing summaries. This would assist in raising the profile of Beat Managers. One view expressed was that this would be an inappropriate use of Neighbourhood Beat Managers' time. Neighbourhood Beat Managers were already very busy and there was a danger of creating a public expectation that it may not be able to sustain.
- The 'Coppers' Contract' (or Quality of Service Commitments as proposed in the 'Building Communities, Beating Crime' White Paper) could be a basis for the information circulated to the public. Central government guidance on this is awaited.
- There is a network of local community safety organisations (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Neighbourhood Watch) that could be better used to communicate messages to the public.
- Previous Force policing summaries, such as 'Your Police', received mixed feedback from the public. It is also unclear how the Force or Authority benefited from this publication.
- A balance is needed between incurring additional spends for new initiatives and the need to make substantial efficiency gains.
- The Authority and Constabulary websites could be used more effectively to provide local policing information.

After lengthy debate, the Chairman assessed there was little enthusiasm from this Committee to proceed with a summary of the policing plan to be circulated to all tax-payers in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It was proposed the issue be deferred until after the summer by which time the legal position should be clearer.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the decision on producing a summary of the policing plan be deferred until later in the year when the legal status of producing such a summary is clear.
- (b) The Police Authority Policy Officer to liaise with the Assistant Chief Executive to discuss providing more information on the Authority's website as an interim measure.

(c) The Police Authority Policy Officer to liaise with the Director of Corporate Communications to discuss website 'hit' information that would be useful to the Police Authority.

PC/140 Evaluation of Community Engagement with Minority Communities

The Force Diversity Officer presented a paper on the proposal to commission an independent consultant to evaluate the Force's current community engagement activity with minority communities.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- Community Engagement is poorly understood across the Force. This review should position the Force well in understanding the future consultation needs for minority communities.
- A minority community is defined as one that has traditionally not been included in communication with this organisation.
- The evaluation will examine what community engagement activity means for those communities and this organisation. The review will challenge assumptions that this organisation knows what minority communities require from engagement activity. It will help inform future policy making decisions.
- There was concern from some Members that this review could duplicate other pieces of work as it did not appear to be part of a wider approach to community consultation. For example, it was questioned how this review related with the Devon Racial Harassment And Violence Action Network (RHAVAN) project being led by the multi-agency Monitoring Group Rural Racism Project and other such initiatives.
It was stated that the review would link-in with the RHAVAN work.
- With regard to consultation, asylum seekers, refugees and gypsy travellers are the most excluded members of society. The consultant's review should provide a pointer to where consultation methods should be best directed to include these hard-to-reach groups.

Mr Wallin reported that he had attended, upon invitation, meetings of the Disability Independent Advisory Group on 9 March 2005 and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Independent Advisory Group on 12 March 2005. Both advisory groups welcomed Member attendance and Police Authority engagement.

The Force Diversity Officer stated that whilst Independent Advisory Groups were a valuable part of community engagement they remain just one aspect of it. The review will determine how these groups can best be facilitated in the future.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) That this committee be provided with an update on the results of the review in due course.

PC/141 Progress of Race Equality Scheme Consultation

The Police Authority Consultation Officer presented a report on the progress of Race Equality Scheme consultation.

Advice has been sought from Devon and Plymouth Race Equality Councils on the best methods of consulting with ethnic communities. They recommend that consultation is channelled through existing community group networks via link workers and group leaders. This would overcome issues of mistrust of authority figures.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- Devon and Cornwall Constabulary was one of 3 forces assessed as non-compliant following a review of its Race Equality Scheme by the Commission for Racial Equality in 2004. The Constabulary is now compliant but there is a need for the Race Equality Scheme to be rewritten by May 2005.
- The Police Authority will be compliant once the feedback has been received from the Race Equality Councils.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) That this committee is updated on the Race Equality Scheme in due course

PC/142 Consultation Update

The Force Consultation Officer introduced a report informing the Committee on current consultation activity.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The Force Staff Domestic Violence Survey scheduled for April 2005 will be based on a survey model used by Devon County Council. This produced some surprising outcomes. Results will help inform policy development and raise awareness of the real issue of staff who are victims of domestic violence.
Before this survey can be released, the Force will ensure mechanisms are in place to offer support to victims where necessary.
A voluntary scheme in North Devon for perpetrators of domestic violence has been very successful. This offers a telephone helpline, the first in the country, and has recently secured Home Office funding.
- Consultation with students at the Plymouth College of Further Education continues. Initiatives are also underway which involve school exclusion units in the city.
- A summary of other Police Authority community engagement activity is being prepared for circulation to Members at the Police Authority Seminar on 21 March 2005.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

PC/143 Quality of Service Surveys

The Force Consultation Officer introduced a report informing the Committee on the findings from customer satisfaction surveys circulated to victims of burglary, violence, vehicle crime, racist incidents and road traffic collisions.

A large amount of feedback is received from the public. The Consultation Unit determines the best use that can be made of this information. Both positive and negative feedback is channelled back to Basic Command Units. Positive feedback can then be communicated to individual officers and staff through the Personal Development and Review process.

Members questioned whether the Consultation Unit received responses from Basic Command Units as to the action taken to deal with negative comments. The Force Consultation Officer reported that due to capacity issues there was no procedure in place to pick this up. It was confirmed letters of praise from the public were replied to.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

PC/144 Preliminary Results from the November 2004 Public Survey

The Police Authority Consultation Officer presented a report on the findings from the public survey conducted in November 2004.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The survey attracted a response rate of 31%. This is considered good for a random survey of this type.
- Those surveyed who knew their Neighbourhood Beat Manager indicated that they would be happier to pay more in council tax and had higher confidence levels in the police.

Members questioned what the Force was doing to raise satisfaction levels with the police, in particular with regards to officer visibility.

The Deputy Chief Constable reported that several targets had been agreed by the Police Authority in relation to frontline policing. Public expectation had been raised with the roll-out of neighbourhood policing. For visible policing activity, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary compares favourably with other forces

The Deputy Chief Constable stated that neighbourhood officers must take responsibility for issues on their Beats and Sectors. This will lead to greater levels of visibility and public reassurance.

The Commander Strategic Development Department stated there is a split between rural and urban areas with regards to satisfaction levels. The distances individual officers need to cover in rural areas means they are less likely to come into contact with the public as frequently as officers working urban beats.

An issue regarding the calculation time for Neighbourhood Beat Managers to spend at least 6 hours on neighbourhood beat related activity per shift was raised. Presently, South and West Devon Basic Command Unit is disadvantaged as it operates different shift lengths to the three other Basic Command Units.

Members questioned the number of young people engaged in this survey activity.

The Force Consultation Officer reported that the surveys were addressed to the head of the household and invariably the opinions of younger people were not taken into consideration.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

PC/145 Chairman's statement

The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked Members, officers and staff for attending.

The meeting closed at 1215 hours.

Signed:

Chairman of the Planning and Consultation Committee

Dated: 20 September 2005