

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

Notes of the **POLICE AUTHORITY LIAISON MEETING – CARRICK** held at Falmouth School, Trescobeas Road, Falmouth on Tuesday 29 September 2009 at 19.30hrs.

PRESENT

Authority

Mr M Hicks Chairman
Mrs C Horton (Administrator)

Constabulary

Superintendent J Whitmarsh (Local Policing Area Commander - Mid-Cornwall), Temporary Inspector M Cooper (Falmouth)

16 people attended the meeting as recorded in the attendance register

1. Welcome & Housekeeping

The Chairman welcomed everyone and introduced himself as the Police Authority Member representing the Isles of Scilly. He then introduced Superintendent Julie Whitmarsh and Temporary Inspector Mark Cooper who was covering for Inspector John Trott following his recent road traffic accident.

2. Matters of Interest from the Police Authority

The Chairman drew attention to the information contained within the Police Authority Newsletter and explained that one of the primary functions of the Devon & Cornwall Police Authority (DCPA) is consultation with the public. He therefore requested that all those in attendance complete a 'consultation daisy' and give their response to the statement "I am confident that the police in my area deal with anti social behaviour and crime".

The Chairman explained that the DCPA is made up of 10 elected members and 9 independent members and that there had been a number of recent changes to the membership following the local authority elections in May. Independent member, Mr Mike Bull, had been appointed as Chairman along with County Councillor Mr Bryan Preston as Vice Chairman, and there were 4 new independent members.

The Chairman also highlighted the Chief Constable's aim for the force to become one of the top 10 performing forces in the country and explained that 200 officers had been brought to frontline duties in pursuance of this. The force is now aiming to improve communication with the public, in particular by providing better feedback following contact with the police.

Finally the Chairman explained that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) will be carrying out its first inspection of the DCPA later this year to check and challenge the way the authority operates.

3. Police Report

Inspector Cooper introduced himself as an operational police officer from the Falmouth area who is temporarily covering for Inspector Trott. He reported that the past 6 months have shown a marked improvement in police performance in the area:

- Violent Crime – the detection rate for this is 63.2% which is the best in Cornwall.

- Vehicle Crime – incidents have reduced to 2 per week which meets the crime reduction targets, but unfortunately the detection rate is only 5.2% which reflects the difficulty of identifying an offender for what is often a random and indiscriminate offence.
- Domestic Burglaries – the detection rate for this is 23.3% which is a significant improvement against a target of 20%.
- Crime Reduction – Falmouth has achieved the greatest reduction in total crime in comparison with the rest of the county and the detection rate is currently 35%
- Domestic Abuse – the detection rate for this is currently 62.5% which is an impressive achievement for the specialist Domestic Violence team and the initial responding officers, particularly as the offences commonly occur in private with only a single witness.
- Town Centre Disorder – a high visibility presence is being maintained in the town centre and a close working relationship with the licensees and the licensing department is helping to drive down alcohol fuelled crime to an even lower level.

The Partners and Communities Together (PACT) process has identified the following priorities in the area which are being tackled by the Neighbourhood Teams and Police Community Support Officers:

- Vehicle anti-social behaviour, noisy exhausts & speeding in Castle Drive area – work is on-going to tackle this issue.
- Vehicle traffic flow problems in Grenville Road, Bassett Street & Penwerris Lane – working with the Highways Department to try and resolve issues in the long term.
- Heightened Community Tension in the Old Hill area – this is a Sector priority and has been addressed by increasing patrols and taking positive action whenever appropriate.
- Speeding – handheld speed detection devices have been used throughout the area – in particular on Treliever Road, Dracaena Avenue, Kernick Road, Church Hill and behind Swanpool.
- Off-road motorcycles in the Wheal Maid area – regular patrols are undertaken by car, pushbike and on foot to identify and prosecute those involved.

Insp Cooper finished by reporting that some border changes will come into effect on 1st October and Budock, Stithians, Constantine, Mabe, Mawnan Smith, Gwennap, Perranarworthal and Mylor, which have historically been part of the Helston area, will become part of the Falmouth catchment area. The existing Neighbourhood Team responsible for these areas will be transferred to Falmouth Police Station. This border change will facilitate the most effective use of resources and improve customer satisfaction.

Superintendent Whitmarsh introduced herself and explained that she had been in post for 16 months and is responsible for the Mid-Cornwall area which covers St Austell, Newquay, Truro, and Falmouth. She explained that Falmouth was the most challenging sector within her area when she first started in post, but there have been 301 fewer crimes in the first 24 weeks of this year compared to last year and an 11% increase in the detection rate which is significantly better than in other areas. This is largely due to the high visibility policing in the town and the 5 new patrol officers who have been introduced - one for each section. There is also a Neighbourhood Beat Manager focussing on the University at Tremough and changes have been made within CID following the retirement of the previous Detective Sergeant.

Mid Cornwall also now has a Neighbourhood Safety Team comprising a Sergeant, 4 PCs and 8 Specials. The aim of this team is to provide additional resources to support the Neighbourhood Beat Teams throughout the area and run special operations to deal specifically with the PACT priorities. The team can be called on as required and have provided excellent support to date. Supt Whitmarsh ended by explaining the importance of providing a good quality service and in mid-Cornwall last month 95% of the victims of crime were satisfied with the service that they received.

4. Open Session – General Questions on Policing Issues

The Police Officers and Members of the Authority responded to the following questions from the public:

- Call handing at the call centre – it is recognised that delays can be frustrating but work is on-going at a Force-level to improve the service and ensure that issues are dealt with by the first point of contact. Additional staff have been employed and extra training is being given to try and ensure that call handlers are aware of the local PACT priorities.
- Problem detecting speeding vehicles in Castle Drive at night – whilst there may sometimes be problems with visibility and safety at night, it is possible to carry out speed checks at night. The traffic calming in Spernen Wynn Road has helped the problem, but there are now some problems to the rear of Swanpool which are being focussed on. Community Speedwatch has also been introduced, where members of the public are trained to use the speed guns and report the information to the police who then send out a warning letter to the driver.
- Neighbourhood Watch – there is a seminar for groups in mid-Cornwall in October and it is hoped to encourage the groups to be more pro-active.
- Street Pastors – this is a scheme which has had a great impact in Torbay and Newquay. The pastors provide support to the wider policing team and can help to diffuse situations.
- Speeding in Venton Road – Insp Cooper agreed to ask the Neighbourhood Team to investigate this matter.
- Speed bumps – a request was made that these should not cover the full width of the road as they can cause problems for ambulances transporting injured individuals. Insp Cooper agreed to raise this matter with the Highways Department.
- Alleged drug dealing at 2 addresses in Porthtowan – Supt Whitmarsh will ensure that Sector Inspector Mark Richards follows this up.
- Compressed air 'shotguns' in Porthtowan car park – Supt Whitmarsh will raise this issue with the Neighbourhood Beat Manager.
- Anti-social behaviour officers at Cornwall Council – there are 6 caseworkers across Cornwall who take the lead in processing Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). The police deal with the issues as they arise, but the Council Officers help to gather evidence, sometimes by using headcams, and work with individuals and families to develop Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.
- Police visits to schools – this is an important part of the local officers' role. There are also 2 Youth Intervention Officers who work with young people on the verge of offending and sometimes use 'Restorative Justice' to demonstrate to them the impact of their actions. 75% of people who go through this process don't go on to re-offend.
- Beggars in the town centre – rough sleepers and street drinkers are being targeted by the Neighbourhood Safety Team who can serve notice to move on to a suitable hostel. If they don't take up the hostel space and continue to sleep rough they can then be arrested under the Vagrancy Act.
- Late licensing – the police have an input into licensing hearings and will make a strong business case relating to the impact on police resources when requests are made for late licenses.
- Skateboarding on public highways – this is an offence and people have been arrested in the past. Whilst there is often a problem with detection, if skaters are caught in the act they are dealt with.
- Fear of walking through Falmouth town centre at night – violent crime is considerably lower in Falmouth than in other areas and very often the fear of crime is much worse than the reality. It is recognised that the noise levels and the volume of people can be intimidating, but the town centre is covered by CCTV 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a high visibility approach to dealing with people who are drunk and disorderly or behaving anti-socially and the police are focussing on dealing with people early in the evening in order to avoid the problem escalating later in the evening.
- Spate of crimes in Longfield around midnight – it is important that all crimes are reported so that hotspots can be identified and policed accordingly. People can call anonymously or request that the police don't attend their address if they are concerned about the possible repercussions.

- Lack of publicity for Police Authority Liaison Meetings – all but one person present at the meeting had received a direct invitation. Cath Horton agreed to ensure that the press are invited to future meetings and that the information be put on the neighbourhood section of the Force website.
- PCSO Amanda Shaw was publicly thanked for her high profile work as part of the Neighbourhood Team as wished well for her future as a regular police officer.

The Chairman thanked the audience for their participation and positive feedback and also thanked Inspector Cooper and Superintendent Whitmarsh for their input.

5. Independent Custody Visiting Report

There was no Independent Custody Visitor present.

6. Date and Venues of Future Meetings

The dates and venues of the next meeting are to be advised.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 21.00hrs.