

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

Notes of the **POLICE AUTHORITY LIAISON MEETING – KERRIER** held in the Wesley Hall, Helston Methodist Church, Helston on Tuesday 25 September 2007 at 19.30hrs.

PRESENT

Authority

Mr G Hicks Chairman
Mrs C Horton (Administrator)

Constabulary

Chief Superintendent R Cooper (BCU Commander – Cornwall & isles of Scilly), Inspector M Eccles (Sector Inspector – Helston & South Kerrier)

22 people attended the meeting as recorded in the attendance register

1. Welcome & Housekeeping

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He introduced himself, then introduced Inspector Mark Eccles, who has been the Sector Inspector for Helston and South Kerrier for the past 8 months. He also introduced Chief Superintendent Rob Cooper, BCU Commander for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

2. Police Report

Inspector Eccles provided a report on the crime statistics for the Helston area for the period April to August 2007. The area covers 167 square miles and stretches from Ponsonooth to the Lizard.

- Violent Crime was up by 7% to 139, however, the Pub Watch & Shop Watch schemes are proving invaluable in helping to identify potential offenders and prevent the escalation, and therefore reduce the seriousness, of incidents especially at pub closing time.
- Domestic Burglary was down by 39% to 28
- Other Burglary was down by 23% to 69
- Vehicle Crime was up by 13% to 97
- Criminal damage was up by 3% to 178
- Other Crimes were down by 9.5% to 246
- Total Crime was down by 3.3% to 757 which is one of the lowest crime statistics in the county, and possibly the country. 25.9% of all crime is detected, against a target for detection of 30%.

Inspector Eccles explained that there had been a big change in the team at Helston, in particular through the introduction of 6 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who have had a very positive impact in the local community and are now well recognised as a first point of contact. A number of issues had been identified by local people through the Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and the top priority across the Sector is speeding. This issue is being addressed through the use of speed guns in various areas and by prosecuting offenders. Speeding is also covered in the Life Skills programme that is run in local schools, along with issues such as road safety, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. Improving access to services is also a priority and therefore funding is being sought to extend the area covered by the Youth Outreach Worker based at Mullion Youth Centre.

Chief Superintendent Cooper reported on crime from a countywide perspective and explained that total crime had fallen by 10% against the same period last year, and Cornwall had the lowest Violent Crime rate of all the 14 rural Basic Command Areas (BCUs) in the country. There are less than 3 domestic burglaries per day out of 157,000 households in Cornwall and there have been none in Helston for the past 7 weeks.

Chief Superintendent Cooper also reported on call handling and emphasised that the Force handles over 1 million calls per year which is approximately one every second. 280,000 emergency 999 calls are received every year and on average they are answered within 4 seconds with 90% being answered within 10 seconds. 90% of non-emergency calls are answered within 30 seconds although the average answering time is 8 seconds. However, there is often a long delay after the call has been answered and changes have been made to the staffing systems to address this. This has shown a week on week improvement in call handling and waiting times over the past nine weeks.

3. Open Session – General Questions on Policing Issues

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

- Anti-social behaviour of young people in Helston & Porthleven – the police are working closely with the Anti-social Behaviour Unit, the Youth Service and Kerrier District Council to address the problems caused by young people, in particular in the areas around the boating lake, the sunken garden and Coinagehall Street. It is planned to improve the lighting in these areas and restrict access in the evenings to the boating lake car park. These measures need to be put into place before a Dispersal Order can be sought.
- Drug related crime – there are limited problems in this area, in particular regarding the possession of drugs. The issue is being dealt with positively through operations which are planned with the school and on the school busses.
- CCTV funding – Kerrier District Council currently funds the CCTV costs through a levy on the residents of Helston, Camborne and Redruth, but it is proposed that this cost will be spread across all residents in 2008/09 which could also raise additional revenue to extend the system. The police would welcome any opportunity to extend the CCTV system as it helps to alleviate violent crime and would be useful in high risk areas.
- Domestic Burglary statistics may be skewed due to unreported crimes – The police have been very proactive in dealing with burglary offences resulting in two prolific offenders being convicted which has subsequently led to a reduction in burglaries. Neighbourhood Beat Officers are encouraging local people to report all crimes so that officers can be accurately deployed to relevant areas.
- Impact of extended licensing hours on anti-social behaviour and drink related crimes – this has had a limited impact in Helston as most premises only open for one hour longer and the introduction of Pub Watch and the use of CCTV had helped to minimise any problems.
- Recent allegations that police officers only spend 20% of their time on the beat – In Cornwall 65% of officers' time is spent on operational activities, compared to 52% nationally, based on a 'time and motion' style study that is carried out twice a year. Further measures to increase in productivity are planned, for example through the better use of IT and the sharing of information with partner agencies, such as the Probation Service and the Crown Prosecution Service.
- Lack of response to reported incidents – when an incident is reported and dealt with at night, the original caller may not receive any feedback and this needs to be improved, either by the officer in attendance or by the station officer contacting the caller the following day and informing them what action was taken.
- Overtime budget could be better used to fund additional officers – The budget in Cornwall includes £500,000 for overtime which enables staff to operate in a flexible way, e.g. complete their dealings with an incident at the end of a shift or provide cover when a major incident occurs. Spending this budget on additional officers would not provide this same degree of flexibility that is required due to the nature of the work.
- Introduction of a single Unitary Authority for Cornwall – The bid is currently in development and the final plans for the proposed Community Network Areas have yet to be agreed. Chief Superintendent Cooper is working with the Chief Executives of the County and District Councils to ensure that the requirements of all parties are met.

- It was felt that the disproportionate increase in Police element of Council Tax over the past 10 years is not matched by improvements in service delivery.
- Contact phone number for local police station – The single call centre is the most effective way of handling calls and keeping officers out on the beat rather than them having to cover the station 24 hours a day. It was suggested that a presentation on Call Handling should be an agenda item at the next meeting
- Lack of confidence in policing in Ponsonooth – The level of calls from Ponsonooth is extremely low and therefore the level of policing is limited as the deployment of staff is demand led. The police are looking to set up bases in rural areas for Police Community Support Officers and therefore the offer of office space in Ponsonooth could be valuable and it may be necessary to set up a PACT meeting in the village to establish why there is such a lack of confidence. Inspector Eccles agreed to attend a Parish Council meeting to follow this up.
- PACT meeting in Carleen – This was attended by the Police, the local MP, members of the public, etc and was a very useful and positive experience for all involved.
- Opening times of Helston Police Station – 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Phone 08452 777444.

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

4. Matters of Interest from the Police Authority

The Chairman explained that the Local Policing Summary 2007-08 had recently been published and would soon be delivered to all homes in the area. The leaflet includes information and contact details for the local area.

He also highlighted the fact that there would be a live web-cast of the next three Police Authority meetings in order to try and make them more accessible to all members of the community. The first of these meetings will be held on Friday 5th October.

5. Independent Custody Visiting Report

No report available.

6. Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

John Ellis provided a report on behalf of Gill Gillvray who was unavailable. There are currently 351 Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the district covering 12,932 households, including several new schemes within the Helston and Camborne/Redruth areas. The Neighbourhood Watch team had been present at a number of local fun days and events, including Air Day and Stithians Show and a summer newsletter had been produced and circulated. Car Crime Awareness leaflets had also been distributed during the summer in a number of holiday and National Trust car parks and these had been well received.

7. Date and Venues of Future Meetings

The next Police Authority Liaison Meeting to be held in Kerrier will take place in March/April 2008 at a date and venue to be advised.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 21.05hrs.

