

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

Notes of the **POLICE AUTHORITY LIAISON MEETING** for the Restormel District Council Area held at the Village Hall, Fraddon on Tuesday 18 September 2007 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Police Authority

Mr C Wallin (Chairman)

Ms J Norton (PA Member), Mrs K Olver (Administrator) and Ms E Tanner (Administrator).

Constabulary

Inspector J Pearce (Sector Inspector for Newquay), and Sergeant G Symes (Community Sergeant).

29 people attended the meeting as recorded on the Attendance Sheet.

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Officers present; apologies were given on behalf of Mr Bryan Preston who had been due to Chair the meeting. Ms Norton, a new Member of the Police Authority was introduced and the Chairman informed those present that vacancies on the Police Authority were advertised in the local press.

2. Matters of Interest from the Police Authority

The Chairman encouraged attendees to read the leaflet which had been distributed to all present and contained information relating to counter-terrorism. The role of the Police Authority was outlined and in particular setting the annual budget, plans and performance monitoring of the Police activities on behalf of the general public were highlighted. The following questions were raised:-

- **Budget.**
It was noted that the Authority determined the budget in conjunction with the Police Force. The current budget was approximately £250 million pounds per year, of which a percentage was received directly from central Government with the remainder coming from the Council Tax. The Police Authority puts forward a very strong case to central Government but unfortunately does not receive as much as it would wish each year from this source. It was noted that the budget was not allocated per head of population, but that each area received a budget based upon a weighting which took into account the crime rate in the area and included a measure in response to the increased numbers of persons resident in the area during the summer period.
- **The role of Police Officers**
It was noted that the Police Authority sets the strategy for the Police Force, but the manner in which this is performed on a day to day basis is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and his officers.
- **Guidelines**
Guidelines for the Police Authority come from central Government in the form of mandatory targets, however, central Government does not directly control the Police Force. Police Officers are responsible to the Chief Constable, who is in turn responsible to the Police Authority. The Police Authority appoints the Chief Constable and his senior officers and have the power to dismiss them should the need arise.
- **Legislation regarding Police Officer duties and paperwork**
Concern was raised that legislation appeared to increase the paperwork required for completion by Police Officers. The Police Authority make representations and comments to central Government in regard to legislation regarding the duties of Police Officers and is aware that the need for actions to be evidenced had increased the paperwork burden for Officers. However, the Police Authority is striving

to maintain the number of Police Officers in the Devon and Cornwall Force and recognises that back-office paperwork is required. The possibility of using one form for each crime report which could subsequently be photocopied for use in other departments as required rather than duplication of information on a number of different forms was suggested as a way of reducing paperwork.

- Closed police stations and night cover for St Austell area
Members of the community were concerned that a number of Police Stations appeared to be closed. It was considered that the nature of Policing had changed in response to changes in types of crime and communities, and that the public would prefer to see officers out on the streets rather than in the Police stations. The Devon and Cornwall Force now employed more officers than ever before, 3500 as at April 2007. Some of these officers were involved in different specialisms such as child protection and domestic violence. Where police stations were not open to the public, there were generally emergency telephone lines available outside the stations and the 999 telephone service was available 24 hours every day. It was noted that Police Officers were no longer housed in tied accommodation and free to live wherever they chose.
- Use of technology within the Police Force
Computers and technology were assisting the Police but were also proving to be a double-edged sword. Often incidents were reported by a number of persons using mobile phones, leading to duplication of logs and increased paperwork. However, technology was assisting with crime detection, particularly in forensic work.
- Police employment numbers
It was noted that the number of 3,500 Police Officers as at April 2007 did not include the Police Community Support Officers of which there were a further 357. There is also approximately 2,500 civilian staff, making a total number of staff in the order of 6,000.

3. Police Report

The Police Report was given by Inspector Pearce and related to the sheet of statistics circulated to those present. He reported that:-

- There had been two murders during the previous year, however, persons had been arrested and had been before the Courts in relation to these offences.
- There had been a significant fire in a local hotel.
- The reduction in crime during the summer months may have been in part related to the poor weather during the summer.
- The 'Run to the Sun' event had run smoothly with minimal arrests.
- Considerable success had been experienced in Newquay town centre in relation to pedlars and beggars and also with parking issues.
- Unfortunately there had been some problems with burglaries at the start of the year and it was noted that reports of violent crime had increased in the current year.
- There had been no change in the reporting mechanism over the previous four years and it was felt that the year-on-year improvements were commendable.
- The changes in the licensing regulations had seen an increase in crime during the early hours of the morning, whereas previously this had been most significant at 2.00 am.
- Police Community Support Officers spent a considerable amount of time working in the community rather than dealing with paperwork.
- It was felt that anti-social behaviour had reduced significantly since the introduction of Police Community Support Officers.
- A Neighbourhood Beat Manager had been appointed for every area and, over the past six months, problem-solving groups had been set up involving members of the community and other partners.

4. General Questions

- Drugs

Although it was noted that drugs were at the bottom of local residents' lists of concerns, it was thought that these may be the root cause of the other issues raised by residents. Officers considered that local knowledge and intelligence was of great value when dealing with drug associated issues.

- Residents Priority Concerns
It was noted that the list of residents concerns relating to Newquay showed criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and parking issues as the main sources of concern. Each area had a specific resident's list which was very focused on local priorities.
- Reductions in reported crimes and increased detection levels
The increased detection levels were a matter for congratulation to everyone concerned and reductions in crime levels were pleasing. It was felt that technology was assisting with the detection level improvements and that further improvements were anticipated with the imminent introduction of new technology into the forensic department.
- It was noted that there were some financial rewards in terms of increases in funding for the crime and disorder partnership for reaching target levels.
- Lunchtime closures at Newquay Police Station
Concern was raised that the Newquay Police Station had to close over the lunchtime period due to shortage of staff cover and it was felt that this was a worry to local residents. It was noted that staffing decisions in regard to resources were made by senior officers and this concern would be reported to them.
- 08452 telephone number
Comment was made that the 08452 telephone number can take a considerable time to be answered on occasion and that calls are expensive to this number. It was further felt that it would be helpful to have call handling staff who were familiar with the local environment. A change in the management of the department had recently taken place and it was hoped that the problems encountered would be resolved in the near future. The number of calls received each year was in the region of one million with the number of calls increasing annually. It was helpful if the postcode could be provided when making calls as this did speed up the response time. It was noted that there were less calls during the evening and that the response time was quicker during the evenings. Some persons present felt that calls would be received more quickly if put through to local Police Stations rather than to a call centre, however, Officers felt that they would be unable to carry out their duties to the same level if they were required to staff telephones during the day and evening.
- 101 non-emergency calls
There had been a Government initiative to provide a non-emergency call number - 101 - and the current situation in regard to this initiative was requested. Unfortunately no information was available regarding this initiative.
- Fire at Penhallow Hotel
Members of the Police and other emergency services were commended for their actions during the recent fire. The Chairman reported that he attended the attestation events for new Officers and that he was very proud of the Police personnel appointed and felt that they were of an extremely high calibre. It was noted that some of the plaudits received by the Police were presented at the Chief Constable's meetings.
- Anti-social behaviour
It was noted that Treverbyn Parish Council were experiencing anti-social behaviour in respect of the recently improved sports field. This matter would be raised with Inspector Gibbons who would be asked to contact the Parish Council directly in this respect.

5. Independent Custody Visiting Report

Independent Custody Visitor Kay Scarle reported on the role of Independent Custody Visitors. She outlined the visits made to Police Stations with custody facilities on behalf of the Police Authority. Officers visited detainees if they wished a visit, to ensure that they were receiving the assistance they needed and that the facilities were up to the required standard. She had visited over a period of 20 years and felt that the role had developed considerably over that time. A check sheet ensured that all matters were addressed on each visit

and provided a safeguard for the Police force as well as the detainees. All visits were welcomed by the Police Officers in the custody suites and she found the role to be both rewarding and valuable.

6. Neighbourhood Watch

The Chairman of the local Neighbourhood Watch Committee gave his report. He had spent a considerable amount of time over the past year communicating with other groups and expanding the Neighbourhood Watch schemes in Newquay and St Austell. Concern had been raised that the scheme seemed to be dying out in the local community with few meetings being held, however, this appeared to be mainly a communication problem in that there were schemes in existence of which the Chairman was unaware. It was felt that it would be helpful for the Chairman to attend the next meeting of the Fraddon Parish Council in order to raise awareness in the local area.

7. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

The date and venue of the next meeting would be advised. A request was made for representation from the St Austell Police at the next meeting.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 21:05 hours.