

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Thursday 11th September 2008, at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2, Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Vickers (Chairman)
Councillor Cotterill (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Dunn, A. Finch, Ms Foster, P Harley, Nottingham, Ryder
and Taylor.

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Finance (Revenue, Benefits and Management Support) (Lead Officer to the Committee), Chief Executive (for item 6 only), Head of Community Safety, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Development Manager, Performance and Commissioning Manager – Community Safety and Mr P Burford (Community Safety), (All Chief Executive's Directorate), Principal Solicitor and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

13 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Burston , J. Martin and Mrs Martin.

14 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillors Mrs Dunn and Taylor had been appointed as substitute members for Councillors Burston and Mrs Martin respectively for this meeting of the Committee only.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a declaration in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

16 **MINUTES**

During consideration of this matter it was reported that, in accordance with Minute 8 (2) the Lead Officer had contacted Bridlington regarding their measures for tackling anti-social behaviour however, given a lack of sufficient information, it had not been possible to pursue this matter and therefore no further action would be taken.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th June, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

17

PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

18

SAFE AND SOUND, DUDLEY'S COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the current structure of safe and sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership and on the delivery mechanisms that it utilises to achieve its priorities.

The Chief Executive in his introductory comments stated that the Partnership believed that it was possible year on year to improve and that the proof of this was in the figures which showed a very significant reduction in crime levels and hence the number of victims over the last three to four years. This position had also been recognised by the Government Office for the West Midlands and the Home Office who had indicated that Dudley's Partnership was one of the best in the Country.

Although there was the position as reflected in the figures it was still the case that the public perception was that crime was not reducing and that fear of crime was still disproportionate to the amount of actual crime, also there were still hot spots of crime in the borough. So, whilst the level of criminal activity in the borough was reducing for many crimes as compared with previous years the hot spots in the borough were actually accounting for a disproportionate amount of crime despite work done for example to make people safer in their properties by 'hardening' the properties.

Regarding the hot spots and other parts of the borough it was considered that the variations in crime levels between these areas were due to an element of self-help which was more evident in some parts of the borough than others in that people were more proactive and made demands on available resources. In the hot spots this was less likely to be the case and it was considered that there was a greater tolerance of crime and particularly in the hot spot areas a lack of confidence in the police and their ability to deal with crime leading to likely under reporting of crime.

The Partnership therefore needed to challenge these aspects so that everyone in the community could feel safer and to reach those people who would not normally report crime.

On the figures available there had been between the periods 2004/5 to February 07/January 08 a reduction of some 5,000 crimes and therefore victims and given the significant reduction this could not be put down to under reporting.

Given this position criticism of the Partnership as regards performance could not be considered to be justified however as indicated work would concentrate on the issues identified so that the next phase of the Partnership would concentrate on making the public feel safer, the crime hot spots in the borough and on the issues of under reporting and fear of crime.

Arising from the presentation given members asked a number of questions and made comments relating in particular to the fear of crime and the role that neighbourhood policing has had and would have in addressing this and on the content of the recent green paper that the Government had produced, which in some aspects could be considered premature, and the comments made by the Chief Executive and others at the recent Government Cabinet meeting held in Birmingham at which the issue of crime was raised so that hopefully those comments, to which a written response had been promised, would show whether the Government were indeed listening to what people at the local level were saying.

The role of PACT meetings especially with regard to anti-social behaviour was also raised and the view expressed that whilst there were differences in operation between areas Members, if they had not already done so, should express their views on how neighbourhood policing was working to the appropriate persons so that these could be taken on board. On this point Members could speak to their local Operational Command Unit Commander or Council representatives on the Police Authority.

In response to the issue about anti-social behaviour the Chief Executive responded that this aspect was also one that the Partnership recognised that it had to deal with.

The question of punishment was also raised, as was the need for the Council and its Directorates to deal proactively with instances of anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, Appendix 1 to the report and as reported at the meeting, on the current structure of safe and sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership, and on the delivery mechanisms that it utilises to achieve its priorities, be noted.

CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP (CDRP) REFORM

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the CDRP reform programme updated position following the review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988.

In her presentation of the report the Head of Community Safety outlined a number of the proposals contained in the Government green paper entitled 'From the neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together' arising from the Government response to the published Flannigan Report and their response to the report on stronger communities by Louise Casey.

Arising from the presentation given a number of questions and comments were raised relating in particular to

- The Safe and Sound Structure including delivery groups, set out as an Appendix to the previous report, which it was considered was complex and would lead to complex lines of communication. Furthermore if Dudley was one of the best Partnerships the question was raised as to who was considered to be the best and whether any lessons could be learnt from them as to how they structured their business.

In response it was stated that it was difficult to say which was the best Partnership however no doubt the view of the Home Office could be obtained on this. Regarding structures, governance and delivery arrangements each area had been allowed to set up its own mechanisms so that each was free to develop those arrangements most suited to its own particular circumstances.

The present structure as outlined in the Appendix came about from the merger of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team in 2003 and whilst the structure did look complex it did work in practice with the Safe and Sound Strategic Board holding the other bodies to account. As a result of the merger it was also reported that the Partnership was not solely concerned with crime in that it also looked at substance misuse in its widest context including treatment services.

- Arising from a query regarding a previous proposal that the Chairmanship of the Safe and Sound Strategic Board should be rotated a query was raised as to the position on this in the light of the provisions of the Green Paper in particular whether rotation would still occur.

In response the Head of Community Safety indicated that interim arrangements would be the subject of a further paper to the Board and the comments made at this meeting would be taken into account. The view was also expressed that perhaps there was a need to retain the current Chairman (Dudley's Chief Executive) during the forthcoming period of uncertainty.

- Reference was made to the proposals for 'visible justice' which would in future be known as 'Community Payback'. The present arrangements for offenders to carry out works in the community, organised by the Probation Service, were reported on and the fact that they were offenders was known through the wearing of high visibility jackets. A member queried whether offenders always wore such jackets and cited an example in his area.

Another member raised an issue in his locality regarding a gating issue in Saltwells Road and the Head of Community Safety undertook to look into the matter and respond back direct to the Member.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the information contained the report submitted, on the proposals contained in the Government green paper entitled 'From the neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together', be noted and that a further report be submitted to this Committee following the development event detailing safe and sound's position in meeting the requirements of the green paper.
- 2 That the Head of Community Safety be requested to draw up an agreed response on behalf of the Committee to the proposals contained in the Government green paper, to be circulated to and agreed by all members of the Committee, by 7th October, 2008, so that a response might be submitted by no later than Friday, 10 October, 2008.
- 3 That should individual members of the Committee wish to do so individual responses to the green paper should be submitted, either electronically or in writing, to the addresses shown at the end of paragraph 5 of the report submitted by Friday 10th October, 2008.

20

REVIEW OF PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) MEETINGS

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the outcome of the review of PACT meetings carried out on behalf of safe and sound, Dudley's community safety partnership. The report of the review steering group, in its original format, was reproduced as part of the report submitted.

Prior to the consideration of the content of the report a comment was made that the meetings should be known as 'Police and Communities Together' and not 'Partners and Communities Together'. In response it was acknowledged that there was some ambiguity over this matter and the difference in terminology was considered in part to have an historical basis.

As part of the presentation of the report the Head of Community Safety indicated that it had been hoped that Chief Superintendent Monroe, the Chairman of the review steering group, would have been able to be present at this meeting however he already had an engagement on this date. Arrangements were therefore in hand for him to attend the next meeting of this Committee on 6th November, 2008. This report would though serve as useful background information and indicate for example the current position and likely direction of travel.

As indicated in the report of the review steering group there were variations between and within areas in relation to PACT meetings in the borough and the aim was therefore to try and align the various aspects so that a corporate approach was adopted across the borough to the benefit of the communities and areas served.

The Safe and Sound Strategic Board had agreed to the review being undertaken and discussions were ongoing on the findings. It was considered that many areas did need resolution and that decisions needed to be made. Further consideration would be given to some of the matters raised at a meeting scheduled for Monday. It was also reported that as part of the discussion paper there was a suggestion that PACT's could be more closely aligned with the Board.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the outcome of the review of PACT meetings carried out on behalf of safe and sound Dudley's community safety partnership, be noted and that a further report be submitted to this Committee following the considerations and actions decided on at the November meeting of the Safe and Sound Board.

21

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT (ASBU)

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on progress in developing the ASBU over the previous fifteen months including the range of activities currently undertaken and on plans for developing the unit's work further.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Development Manager presented the contents of the report and highlighted particular aspects contained therein.

Arising from the presentation given members commented in particular on the role of the domestic security fitters and the Home Security Initiative. In response to a query regarding the availability of the Home Security Initiative it was reported that it was open to anyone be they a victim of violence, domestic abuse or arising from a referral for works to be carried out regardless of tenure.

RESOLVED

The information contained in the report submitted, on the progress made in developing the Anti Social Behaviour Unit and on plans for developing the unit's work further, be noted.

22

DUDLEY BOROUGH DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY UPDATE

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the current position regarding the Dudley Borough Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Performance and Commissioning Manager, Community Safety, gave a presentation on the content of the report submitted and highlighted various aspects contained therein. In so doing he informed members that the domestic abuse worker working in the Emergency Department at Russells Hall Hospital had commenced in post on Monday of this week and that the sanctuary scheme involving support for victims was now in place and had had their first referral. Of future initiatives reference was made to the Visual Evidence for Victims scheme that had been piloted through Victim Support.

Arising from the presentation given clarification was sought on the following wording referred to in paragraph 4 of the report:-

- 1) maintain reporting levels of domestic violence at 3300 incidents per year.

In response the background to the figure quoted and to the wording of this target were explained and it was also reported that the figure was being exceeded in that the last quarters figure were some 27.9% above target. This figure was therefore deemed to be suitable being based on earlier baseline figures.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the current position regarding the Dudley Borough Domestic Abuse Strategy, be noted.

23

QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the performance of the Council in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee for the fourth quarter of 2007/08, January to March, 2008.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the Council's quarterly performance for the fourth quarter of 2007/08, on the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee, be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.13 pm

CHAIRMAN