

JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OF THE BASSETLAW, NEWARK & SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

THURSDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER 2011
RETFORD TOWN HALL

ATTENDANCE:

Bassetlaw District Council:

Councillor G J Wynne (Chair)

Councillors J W Anderton, K Bullivant, J W Ogle, T Rafferty, J B Rickells, J Scott, J C Shephard and C Wanless.

Newark & Sherwood District Council:

Councillors Mrs B Brooks, Mrs R Crowe, P Handley, J Hamilton, K Rontree, M Shaw, Mrs L Shilling, D Staples and B Wells.

Community Safety Partnership and Partner Agencies:

E Brockel (BNSCSP), B Coleman (Notts Fire & Rescue), G Connor (BDC), C George (Bassetlaw PCT), K Girling (NCC), J Hamilton (BDC), N Hill (Notts Probation), D Hunter (Vice-Chair BNSCSP-JSG), A Khan (Notts Police), L Lancaster (NSDC) A Muter (Chair BNSCSP-JSG), Cllr G A N Oxby (BDC), Cllr M W Quigley (Notts Police Authority), R Theakstone (BDC), C Walker (NCC), Cllr I Walker (NCC) and S West (BNSCSP).

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Wynne, Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, welcomed Members from Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood District Councils and Partner Agencies to the meeting. He went on to explain that every local authority is required to have a crime and disorder committee to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership, its partners and their activities. The meeting is held once a year, this being the third meeting of the Joint Committee. Presentations on activities will be given and Members will then be given the opportunity to ask questions of the panel of Partner Agencies.

2. APOLOGIES

Dr K Allen (Notts PCT), Cllr N Allsopp (NSDC), Cllr B A Bowles (BDC), Mrs R Burton (A1 Housing), S Feast (N&S Homes), (Cllr G Gilfoyle (NCC), C Handley (Notts Police), Cllr G Merry (NSDC), Mrs C Saxton (NSDC), Cllr Mrs A Simpson (BDC), and Cllr D Thompson (NSDC).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2010

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2010 be accepted as a true record.

5. SCRUTINY OF THE BASSETLAW, NEWARK AND SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

(a) Setting the Scene – Andrew Muter, Chair of the Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood Community Safety Partnership

A Muter gave a presentation on the Community Safety Partnership which has as its priority “making Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood a safer, stronger and welcoming place for all to live, work and visit”.

The presentation outlined: the Partnership and its partners; its vision; the Partnership Plus approach; actions within the four priority areas in Bassetlaw and Newark; current performance for Bassetlaw, Newark & Sherwood and the Partnership Plus; priorities for 2012/13; and challenges over the next 12 months.

(A handout of the slides was tabled at the meeting, together with information on the CSP Plan.)

Cllr J Hamilton (NSDC) commented that it had been suggested recently that only 12 people are responsible for the majority of crime in Newark, and asked what could be done?

A Muter replied that the majority of crime and anti-social behaviour in Newark was down to a core element of street drinkers who have issues such as homelessness, mental health, alcoholism, ex-offenders. A multi-agency approach is needed to change their life cycle habits.

(b) Gerald Connor, Bassetlaw Community Safety Co-ordinator

G Connor gave a presentation on the three Partnership Plus areas in Bassetlaw i.e.: Worksop South East, Harworth and Worksop North West, and outlined the main issues within these areas and actions taken to date to combat them. These include: the 1, 2, 3 Alcohol Project; a bike project in conjunction with Harworth Youth Club; consultation with residents of the Wimpey Estate; increased use of Godfrey’s Pond and an educational project at the Sandhill Centre; promotion of the Britain In Bloom campaign; Crimestoppers initiatives; and funding through the Safer Nottinghamshire Board and from other sources for such activities.

(c) Lisa Lancaster, Newark & Sherwood Safety Business Manager

L Lancaster gave a presentation on the Castle Ward of Newark which is one of the Partnership Plus areas. This area covers the town centre, housing and retail developments, licensed premises and a travellers’ site and suffers from shop theft, violence (domestic and night-time) and anti-social behaviour. There is also car crime and scrap metal theft, and actions taken to date to address all these issues were outlined.

(d) Eleanor Brockel, Partnership Analyst

E Brockel gave a presentation on the Partnership's Performance Report as at October 2011 which outlined: current performance and performance against targets for Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood; comparison against peers (Most Similar Group); and performance of the Partnership Plus Areas. Although the majority of the targets have not been reached, it was explained that the targets adopted were "stretched targets" and were acknowledged as being "beyond challenging". However, most differences were reducing year-on-year and this should be seen as a positive trend.

It was reported that the Draft Strategic Assessment was out for consultation, and this shows that the CSP adopted disaggregated Policy Authority targets in May 2011 which are designed to bring the Nottinghamshire County in line with its Most Similar Group averages. The Partnership is to retain Worksop South East, Castle and Worksop North West as Partnership Plus areas for 2012/13, and Devon Ward (NSDC) may be adopted as the fourth area for 2012/13.

(A handout of the slides was tabled at the meeting, together with a copy of the Draft Strategic Assessment.)

L Lancaster added that other issues are affecting performance i.e.: Government spending cuts and the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in November 2012 as future funding will come through the PCC. New legislation regarding domestic homicide will mean that such crimes have to be reviewed through the CSP but, as yet, there is no funding. There will also be changes to the Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts due to the new Commissioning and Clusters, and changes are expected for the Drug and Alcohol Teams. Reorganisation and restructures within local authorities are also taking place. Reduced funding will impact on intervention/prevention work and its sustainability; however, the CSP has been redesigned and now has less officers and meetings. Changes to Government agendas are also expected, particularly with regard to anti-social behaviour, but the CSP will be prepared.

6. QUESTIONS

Cllr K Rontree (NSDC) asked on behalf of Southwell SNG:

"If the Police were a similar sized company, the management structure would be less hierarchical. The Police appear to have nine layers of authority from Chief Constable to PCSO. Reducing the tiers of management would allow front line expenditure to be safeguarded. What is the Police Authority doing to de-layer?"

Cllr M W Quigley (NCC) replied that the Notts Police Force has the same layers as all other police authorities and that these are governed by Police Regulations and legislation. Action is being taken to protect front line policing and to make efficiencies. Police officers cannot be made redundant but under the recent application of the A19 Regulation the number of officers has reduced by 306. The Notts Police Authority is now in the lower quartile of all police authorities with regard to rank mix and its number of front line officers is greater than the number in management. Efficiencies are being sought but certain jobs can only be carried out by certain ranks.

A Khan (Notts Police) cited examples of such efficiencies, e.g. Divisional Commanders reduced from three to one and Chief Superintendents reduced from eight to four. He also reiterated that he is committed to front line policing.

Cllr K Rontree (NSDC) asked:

“Newark and Sherwood has lost its Enforcement Officer – is this post going to be replaced? A part-time officer is better than none.”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that licensing enforcement has been rearranged and there are now two senior managers and two officers. Beat managers will support the licensing officers.

Cllr G J Wynne (BDC) asked on behalf of the Chair of the Central SNG, Cllr M Dobson:

“What is the Nottinghamshire Police doing to support Safer Neighbourhood Groups and Beat Teams as in the Newark area we seem to be losing resources to other areas?”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that they are committed to neighbourhood policing as it works and is visible. Newark has recently lost resources to the Nottingham areas e.g. Carlton, due to its partnership with the City. Recent restructuring has resulted in Newark reverting back to the BNSCSP area and there are now five Inspectors with operational focus.

A Muter (NSDC) added that the previous arrangement proved difficult but that the new co-terminus arrangements will be much better and will focus on the area.

Cllr J C Shephard (BDC) asked:

“There have been massive funding reductions which will impact on front line policing. Worksop has lost two Beat Managers, will these be replaced? Also, clustering beat areas has resulted in fewer officers.”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that he had given instructions today for a PC on the Response Unit to take up the Beat Manager’s role from 1st December. Another individual is to become a Beat Manager but his current position needs to be back-filled. Neighbourhood policing works so we need to ensure that neighbourhood management is prioritised so that the teams are visible and accessible, and give assurance. We have a challenging budget and must save £40m+ by 2014. This will be done by a reduction in back office staff and a collaboration with other forces for non-local services.

Cllr J W Anderton (BDC) asked:

“In the recently published medium-term plan for the Police Authority, it states that £10.3m cuts are to be made this year and £13m next year?”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that he had been informed today that this year’s target had hopefully been reached by making savings in the back office. For next year’s savings, financial and HR planning is needed to maintain the front line. An honest debate with the public and partners is needed to find out what is needed/wanted before the restructure takes place. Silo cuts will impact on the collective service which is provided.

Cllr J Scott (BDC) asked:

“In the 2010/11 budget there were 2,334 officers but this was reduced in the 2011/12 budget to 2,108, a loss of 226 officers. How many were deployed from the Bassetlaw, Newark & Sherwood area and how many more will we lose next year?”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that the Notts County Division now comprises 870 officers and 240 staff which is bigger than many other authorities in the country e.g.: Cumbria, Warwickshire, Northants. The latest financial directive states that there will be 871 across the County and the A19 Regulation has been imposed to force retirements to balance the numbers; however, these are being replaced by officers from Headquarters. £10m savings need to be found this year and £13m next year, totalling £40m by 2014. This pressure will result in teams being shared but police officers, beat teams and CID will be maintained. Duplicated positions will be cut e.g. the DCI for Public Protection, for which there is currently two for both the County and the City. Other options would be for less management leads, e.g. crime, operations and neighbourhood. The 2012 Olympic Games will also present another challenge as 255 officers will be deployed to London during the Games.

Cllr M W Quigley (NCC) added that 73 had retired as a result of the A19 Regulation. There are five County collaboration projects which will result in savings in the back office and management. Front line policing will be protected.

A Khan (Notts Police) further added that there has been no reduction in officers across the County Division, the number being 870. However, there is a high sickness rate and a number of officers who have been away from the Force for some time. These are not vacancies but people who should be at work.

Cllr D Staples (NSDC) asked:

“With regard to policing on the ground, we used to have two PCSOs in Boughton but their vehicle failed its MOT and so was not available. One PCSO used his own bike to patrol the village until he was banned because he had not taken his cycling proficiency test and there was no money to pay for safety equipment which would have cost £400!”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that this was an example of health and safety issues being used as an excuse and that the CSP has the power to prevent such things happening. He had himself been involved with the fleet project which secured £1m in savings by reducing the fleet by 88 vehicles. We need to be more visible and police officers should be using public transport where feasible e.g. in the City.

Cllr D Staples (NSDC) asked:

“The health statistics for Newark & Sherwood show that the mortality rates for road traffic accidents are double the national average. There could be multiple factors but is this an issue for the people of Newark?”

A Muter (NSDC) replied that the Newark & Sherwood Clinical Commissioning Group is looking at its strategy for the prevention of road traffic accidents. The A1 runs through the Newark & Sherwood

District and therefore impacts on such statistics, and there are other accident blackspots e.g. the A614.

B Coleman (Notts Fire & Rescue) added that the Notts Fire and Rescue Service has a dedicated road safety team and is running such initiatives as the Brake Project aimed at 14/15 year olds and which is having an impact; however, there are limited resources.

C George (NHS Bassetlaw) reported that there are also accidents in the home, mainly elderly residents and inexperienced youngsters. Work has been done to produce a coherent strategy and includes the prevention of falls, adaptations in homes and the children's agenda e.g. car seats and stair gates. There is a higher incidence in areas of deprivation and poverty which shows the need for education.

Cllr K Girling (NCC) added that speed reductions have been imposed on the A60 and A614.

A Khan (Notts Police) reported that overall figures for casualties across the County have reduced but the big issue is the number of fatalities i.e. 34 across the County this year to date, which is already an increase on last year's total of 31. Enforcement activity is being undertaken e.g. speeding, use of mobiles, drink driving, seatbelts, etc.

Cllr D Staples (NSDC) commented that speed restrictions are useless unless they are monitored and enforced e.g. cameras.

Cllr J Hamilton (NSDC) asked:

"The figures only show the number of crimes but are criminals being caught? The number of ASBOs issued this year to date are nowhere near the targets."

L Lancaster (NSDC) replied that the crime statistics show a reduction in crime and an increase in the prevention of crime. Detection of crime is measured by the Police and are shown in its statistics. The CSP can only prevent crime. The anti-social behaviour targets are very stretching and their aim is to get statistics down to the national average. They are still reducing year-on-year and the aim is to reach the targets over the next 2-5 years.

Cllr K Girling (NCC) commented that the CSP can only concentrate on what can be influenced. It is intelligence-led and requires resources and funding. The targets are very stretched but the figures are not disgraceful. The CSP is developing and progressing, and remains ambitious.

C George (NHS Bassetlaw) added that there is nowhere else in the County where agencies are working together as well as here and that the agencies will continue to work together to find a solution.

A Khan (Notts Police) reported that the Police target is to detect 35% of all crime. It is currently 32% across the County and higher in Bassetlaw. The prisons are full, so this must be working, although prison is not the right place for everyone, except those that are a danger to the community. A prevention programme keeps track of offenders when they leave prison and 72% of those on the programme do not re-offend.

(C George left the meeting at this point.)

Cllr J Hamilton (NSDC) commented:

“The targets are impossible, not just challenging. The crime detection rates are good and it is important for people and perpetrators to have confidence in the Police.”

Cllr K Girling (NCC) commented that the figures could be adjusted to show green but we want to be open and transparent. Information regarding detection used to be very poor but the public need to know when the perpetrator(s) have been caught.

A Muter added that the Police are held to account by the Police Authority, as are the Probation Service, Courts and the local Criminal Justice Board to the Home Secretary. He reiterated that the CSP is about prevention and not detection.

Cllr J W Anderton (BDC) asked:

“With the size of the budget cuts over the next few years, is 100% attendance to all calls sustainable?”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that 100% attendance at calls is the target. In the past, calls were only attended if it was deemed worthwhile e.g. only a Crime Reference Number was issued for car crime, but now all incidents are attended, and there are positive and robust reporting mechanisms to prevent fraudsters. Reassurance and satisfaction for the victim are vital, as is local intelligence and rapport building. 100% attendance has been achieved over the last 2-3 months and this will be sustained for as long as possible.

Cllr J C Shephard (BDC) asked:

“NCC gave £45,000 to each Partnership Plus Area this year, what will happen in the future, particularly with regard to the Harworth area?”

Cllr I Walker (NCC) replied that funding from the Home Office is reducing year-on-year but NCC will hopefully be able to contribute again. The funding allocated to Harworth may go to a greater priority area.

Cllr K Girling (NCC) added that this Ward is within the Castle Partnership Plus Area and he has been involved with the action plan. We need to look at how the money is being spent. More long-term funding is needed, not quick fixes. He said that he would push for NCC funding to continue.

G Connor (BCD) reported that Harworth is no longer in the top 15 priority areas which is a positive result. The Partnership Plus is about realigning resources and the delivery of core services. Some work will not be finished by March so will continue into 2012.

Cllr P Handley (NSDC) commented:

“The presence of officers on the ground is reassuring to residents. I am impressed by the presentations tonight and the questions and answers have been very positive. The Police and Fire & Rescue Service are under huge pressure at the moment and undergoing re-organisations whilst still doing their jobs. You mentioned absenteeism earlier, so is staff morale an issue?”

A Khan (Notts Police) replied that the majority of people working for the Police want to do a good job. However, changes to terms and conditions are starting to impact on morale, e.g. cuts to overtime rates and personal allowances. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the right tools to do the job, and we need to get away from this health and safety madness. Morale is still very good because they want to serve the public. Occasionally, some ranks don't help and we need to be open and honest. On a recent visit to Newark I asked who was in charge – the answer I wanted was that the Police are in charge.

(Cllr S A Greaves (BDC) joined the meeting at this point.)

Cllr J Hamilton (NSDC) asked:

“With regard to the Fire and Rescue Service, is the number of hoax calls from priority areas increasing or decreasing?”

B Coleman (Notts & Fire Rescue) replied that hoax calls are decreasing year-on-year because detection is better. For example, mobile phones can be stunned if on contract, and we work with the Police and install cameras if a particular kiosk is used repeatedly. The numbers from the priority areas are in the single figures.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other urgent business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the partner agencies for their work, and closed the meeting.