

# SAFER SELECT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2010

**Councillors:** Quentin Webb (*Chairman*) (P), Jeff Beck (P), George Chandler (A), Adrian Edwards (A), Roger Hunneman (*Vice-Chairman*) (P), Keith Woodhams (P)

**Substitutes:** Lee Dillon, Geoff Findlay, Tony Linden, Terry Port

**Also present:** Andy Day (Head of Policy and Communication), Jessica Broom (Principal Policy Officer, Research and Consultation), Chief Inspector Judith Johnson (Thames Valley Police), Alex O'Connor (Assistant Community Safety Officer), Rachel Craggs (Community Safety Manager), Jo McIntyre (Domestic Violence Reduction Coordinator), Elaine Vincent (Principal Policy Officer, Equality and Diversity)

### PART I

#### 9. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Superintendent Robin Rickard and Helen Clark (Waste Improvement and Enforcement Manager).

#### 10. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- **Agenda Item 4**, should refer to page 8 not page 9.
- The Committee requested that an update sheet be circulated with responses to all matters arising.
- **Minute 5, final sentence:** It was noted that Neighbourhood Action Groups were now required to engage more with the public. The introduction of monthly 'Have Your Say' meetings by Thames Valley Police were intended to provide greater accessibility for the public to the police and were expected to address the issue of greater involvement and improved communication. The arrangement and running of these meetings would be considered in conjunction with other agencies to ensure an integrated approach to public involvement.

#### 11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### 12. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman requested that an item be added to future agendas entitled 'Chairman's Remarks' to allow information to be shared with the group that might not have arisen elsewhere on the agenda.

The Committee were advised that this could not be used to introduce new business to a meeting.

The Committee agreed to the addition and accepted the condition.

**RESOLVED** that future agendas to include 'Chairman's Remarks'

#### 13. IMPROVING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

##### 13 i. RESIDENTS' VIEWS

Jessica Broom presented a report to inform the Committee of the results of four residents' focus groups which were held in October 2009 and looked at residents'

perceptions of the Council, and why residents felt that the police and the Council were not dealing with anti social behaviour.

In addition, results from the annual resident's survey were also available and presented to the Committee. These results highlighted that National Indicator 21 (residents' satisfaction levels with whether the police and other local services were successfully dealing with concerns about anti social behaviour and crime) had increased by five percentage points from 23% to 28%. The results also indicated that residents were two percentage points more satisfied with how their views were sought with regard to anti social behaviour and crime.

Residents considered that the following had the greatest impact on how well they thought the police and local public services were dealing with crime:

- Visibility of police, neighbourhood wardens and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs);
- Actual levels of crime and anti social behaviour;
- Word of mouth;
- Media stories.

The key areas raised at the focus groups were:

- Anti social behaviour was considered the main issue but it was also recognised that this often appeared to be due to a lack of respect for people which the Council and police would not necessarily be able to address;
- Smaller issues should be addressed by the Council or police, for example graffiti, speeding or broken or damaged signposts;
- Residents would also like to see longer term solutions put in place such as activities for teenagers;
- There was a lack of awareness of what the Council or police were doing to address issues. Residents would like to be better informed and encouraged more creativity around how communications were delivered, for example using email alerts, producing fridge magnets and using parish publications to better effect;
- Residents also requested feedback from issues they reported.

The Committee discussed the creation of an integrated model for two way communication that worked across agencies, and allowed feedback to be provided to residents once issues had been raised. It was recognised that the new 'Have Your Say' meetings being run by Thames Valley Police could address this.

The Committee questioned whether the improvement in satisfaction reflected the effect of Neighbourhood Wardens. It was felt that the improvement was most likely the result of targeted communications in the Thatcham area put in place to address low satisfaction levels.

It was also noted that the 2008 Place Survey, which reported that the drop in satisfaction amongst residents, was conducted at a time when residents were raising a number of issues about the new waste contract.

It was noted that a report was prepared annually to communicate the results of the residents survey, and that all respondents would receive feedback.

**RESOLVED** that 'Have Your Say' meetings would be developed to integrate what was required by residents, the police, the Council and other interested agencies.

### **13 ii. COMMUNICATION SURVEY**

Andy Day presented information to the Committee regarding a survey that was carried out in 2009 to compare West Berkshire Council's communication activity with that of other councils.

The results indicated that West Berkshire Council was providing a communications service that was comparable to other authorities. The Council could improve its communications activity by aligning the communications activity across the Council and by investing further in 'A Great Place to Live' as the only publications regularly distributed to residents.

Alex O'Connor reported to the Committee on communications activity undertaken by the Community Safety Team as a result of the drop in satisfaction levels from the 2008 Place Survey.

- Weekly meetings were held with Thames Valley Police and West Berkshire Council press officers to review media articles and considered how to address negative stories or correct inaccurate reports.
- Monthly meetings were held with the media around specific themes to report positive news stories. Recent and planned themes included domestic abuse, arson and anti social behaviour. The press had given positive feedback on this approach.
- Monthly meetings to discuss issues relevant to National Indicator 21 were being held.
- The Community Safety Team was involved in the targeted publication in Thatcham. A second newsletter was planned for Thatcham in recognition that a single publication would not be effective on its own. Positive stories were being gathered.
- Adverts were placed in the December issue of Prevue, available from the cinema. These addressed domestic and alcohol abuse and were targeted at a younger audience.
- A Christmas crime prevention 'menu' was published in December and distributed through local papers, the internet and Neighbourhood Wardens.
- The team always ensured editorial was included in 'A Great Place to Live'.
- The Safer Partnership were developing a Communications Strategy, from which the Community Safety Team would develop a local strategy.
- The team would plan to publish minimum standards for addressing anti social behaviour.
- The team ensured that the Council website was updated properly and in a timely manner.

Suggestions were offered to place information in local Post Offices to assist with distribution, especially in rural areas, and officer were asked to ensure that all publications were written in plain English.

**RESOLVED that** the second Thatcham newsletter would include the improvement in results from the residents survey as a positive story.

### **13 iii. CONCLUSIONS**

The Committee considered the residents' suggestion of email alerts and recognised that this would require working with IT to understand how this could be coordinated across the Council and remain relevant for residents.

It was noted that targeted newsletters, whilst they were effective, could not be offered as a regular occurrence due to the level of resource required. Anecdotal feedback from the newsletters had been positive and results were awaited from a recent survey to confirm this view.

**RESOLVED that**

- Results from the survey to understand the effectiveness of the targeted Thatcham newsletter be distributed to the Committee when available.
- A final report be prepared drawing together the results of this review for agreement by the Committee.

**14. SELLING OF KNIVES AND ASSOCIATED KNIFE CRIME**

The Chairman clarified that the remaining issue from this review was to understand safe methods for the disposal of any sharp blade from any source.

The West Berkshire Council Waste Team provided information that the only current provision was for cutlery knives to be recycled with other metals. Other knives could not be disposed of through the waste service.

It was noted that the police had previously held knife amnesties and disposed of knives collected in this manner. Reassurance was given that any person arrested in possession of a knife would have the knife confiscated and the knife would be disposed of.

The Committee agreed that no further action was necessary for this review. The police were able to collect and dispose of knives.

**RESOLVED that** this review would be closed.

**15. DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Rachel Craggs and Jo McIntyre presented information to the Committee regarding the action plan developed as a result of the Pemberton report of 2008. Six of the thirteen recommendations related to training and awareness raising for staff in all agencies, victims and their families and the wider community. This included awareness raising to assist people in identifying themselves as victims as this was not always recognised.

Training has been held for some Child Safeguarding employees and GPs amongst others. In West Berkshire there was a small volunteer pool of trainers from different statutory and voluntary agencies to train everyone necessary. However the reducing number of volunteers made it difficult to undertake only 6 sessions a year despite the fact that 418 members of staff still needed training. Consideration was being given to employing a dedicated trainer within the Community Safety Team, or to buy in the services from a consultant. It was important to ensure that any training given was adequate due to the high risk in providing sub standard training.

It was questioned whether the Safer Communities Partnership could be approached to fund a dedicated training post.

It was noted that the police delivered their own training and that it could be useful to understand how resources could be shared in this area.

It was further noted that a dedicated trainer was considered to be the more effective way of delivering and managing this training programme however ongoing professional development would be required to maintain skill levels.

Following questioning, Jo McIntyre confirmed that schools had received recommendations as part of the report and these were being addressed. A schools coordinator would be best placed to assist schools in understanding the issues and with training, however this role no longer exists. It was suggested that the schools forum would be best placed to assist.

In response to other recommendations, the Community Safety Team confirmed that they:

- were developing a website to provide information to agencies and users;
- had set up a third party reporting centre in Lambourn;
- had provided a number of leaflets, some in a range of languages;
- had made available two policies for employees either experiencing domestic violence, or in contact with someone experiencing domestic violence;
- had contributed to a multi agency strategy which was currently out to consultation.

A request was made for Member guidance to clarify the process to be followed should a Member become aware of a domestic violence situation. This was agreed and consideration would be given to utilising the Member Bulletin and Yearbook for useful information or telephone numbers.

**RESOLVED that:**

- Jo McIntyre provide guidance to Members.
- Andy Day and Rachel Craggs discuss how to work with schools in the absence of a dedicated point of contact.
- The Committee agreed to endorse the action plan and invite the Community Safety Team to approach the Committee for assistance if required.

**16. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman introduced an item agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be taken forward by this Committee. The item was to consider a policy for the installation of fire sprinklers in new and renovated council buildings. It was agreed that this would be the next item for review.

The Committee additionally agreed to review the progress of the road safety work programme at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED that:**

- A scoping paper for a fire sprinkler policy be developed and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
- Andrew Garratt (Principal Engineer, Traffic Management and Road Safety) be requested to provide an update on the road safety work programme.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.15pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature:** .....