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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

IMPROVING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE TASK GROUP of the SAFER SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28TH JULY 2009

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

Substitutes: Lee Dillon, Geoff Findlay (P), Tony Linden (P), Terry Port

Also present: Andy Day (Head of Policy and Communication), Superintendent Robin Rickard (Thames Valley Police), Rachel Craggs (Community Safety Manager), Aidan Stephenson (Safer Communities Partnership Analyst), Jessica Broom (Principal Policy Officer), Elaine Vincent (Principal Policy Officer)

PART I

1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Jeff Beck and George Chandler. Councillors Tony Linden and Geoff Findlay substituted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. PERCEPTION INFORMATION.

Jessica Broom presented a paper to the Group on perceptions of anti social behaviour relating to the Police and West Berkshire Council. The information presented was sourced from:

- the Place Survey locally and compared to national and South East averages;
- the Community Safety Survey
- National research from MORI

A key finding was that NI21 (people's perceptions about whether crime was being dealt with) was influenced more by the perception of engagement than the perception of local crime figures.

Local areas demonstrating the lowest scores relating to NI21 were in Thatcham and the rural west.

It was recommended that consideration be given to further investigation through focus groups to understand more about why residents did not feel that the Council and Police dealt with anti social behaviour or sought local views.

It was noted that a study by the Office for Criminal Justice found that receiving information booklets significantly increased positive attitudes.

Clarification was provided to the Group that the current surveys were the Place Survey (relating to the area generally), and the Annual Satisfaction Survey (relating to the

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Council only). The Community Safety Survey would no longer be run as it was proposed that the questions would be incorporated into the Annual Satisfaction Survey.

Jessica Broom clarified the following points raised by the Group:

- The Place Survey was a random sample of 3500 addresses and due to the method of selection it was unlikely that the same people would be surveyed again in future years.
- There was approximately a 50% response rate, and the results presented were statistically significant.
- It could be deduced that the results for Newbury were not skewed by the wards ranked as deprived, therefore this was likely to be true for Thatcham. However this could be investigated further if necessary.

The following question was raised by the Group:

- How were Basingstoke and Deane able to achieve a score for NI21 that was 8% higher than West Berkshire?

Robin Rickard confirmed that the Police Neighbourhood Survey also showed Thatcham as an area of lower confidence. It was noted that respondents to this survey could not be followed up as the responses received were anonymous.

It was further noted that a number of other factors might impact on resident's perceptions in relation to this matter. For example, the location and availability of police stations, the success of Neighbourhood Action Groups, local media stories, awareness of local incidents that might not be in West Berkshire (for example in Reading), and residents expectations of how the police should deal with a reported incident.

In response it was suggested that Town and Parish Councils could invite police representatives in order to support engagement with the public in the area.

A note of caution was raised to ensure that this review remained focussed on those things that could be influenced with the resources available.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUPS.

Superintendent Robin Rickard gave a verbal presentation to the Group with regard to Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs). There were 18 NAGs in the West Berkshire area which covered the whole of the district. The role of each NAG was to be a multi agency problem solving group, including partners and the community. NAGs were to focus on three priority areas as identified by the local community. Members of NAGs had been trained in problem solving.

It was noted that the more successful NAGs tended to be located in urban areas. A police assessment of the effectiveness of NAGs (based on whether they had met their stated priorities) indicated that of the 18 NAGS:

- 5 were fully effective
- 7 worked well
- 5 were less than effective
- 1 was ineffective

It was further noted that where NAGs had been identified as less than effective or ineffective, this was most likely due to processes or structures (for example rural NAGs were harder to run).

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On request, Supt Rickard agreed to identify the NAGs in each category in due course.

It was noted that NAGs were not given specific responsibility for improving public confidence; however the way in which they operated could make a contribution to this. Consideration was requested to be given to requiring NAGs to feed back to the community on activity that had been taken to address concerns. It was suggested that this could occur at Town or Parish Council meetings which were often attended by the media thereby ensuring positive messages could be placed in the public domain.

It was further noted that there was no clear correlation between areas with a positive perception of the work of the police and Council, and the effectiveness of the NAG in the area.

Supt Rickard explained that a survey had been undertaken in June 2009 to understand the views of those involved in NAGs. Some key findings from the survey were:

- 32% of respondents believed that communication between NAGs and partner organisations was good or excellent;
- 55% of respondents believed that local residents did not know about their NAG;
- 18% strongly agreed that their NAG had had a positive impact in their area

A view was expressed that the West Berkshire area was a relatively safe place to live, it was therefore important for everyone to take care in communicating with the public, and to utilise opportunities to be positive.

Supt Rickard explained that the police produced a monthly update for local people. It was suggested that this could be linked into Parish Council websites.

Further suggestions as to how NAGs could further contribute to improving public confidence were:

- Requiring NAGs to hold public meetings at least once a year;
- Ensuring that Ward Members be invited to each NAG

Supt Rickard explained that the SCP was developing a Communications & Confidence Action Plan with three main headings:

- Neighbourhood focus – Thatcham had been agreed as a focus to understand what did or did not work in relation to improving public confidence as the results of the Place Survey showed confidence to be low in this area.
- Crime and anti social behaviour – recognition that only a minority of people received services from the police and partners in response to problems with crime and anti social behaviour and how their experiences influenced other people's perceptions.
- Communications – eg to provide contact information for Neighbourhood Policing.

Further, policing teams had produced visibility plans to set out how to engage with the public; an events calendar was being developed to identify where the police could engage with communities; and a weekly meeting had been set up between the Council and police to coordinate media stories.

In support of this, the Council would contact all Town and Parish Council clerks to source information for the events calendar.

5. CRIME STATISTICS.

A presentation was received from Rachel Craggs and Aidan Stephenson regarding crime and perception of crime.

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It was noted that residents could be influenced for a long period of time after crime or anti social behaviour had been addressed, with examples of people referring to incidents that happened up to 2 years previously being discussed. This raised a question as to what the Council and the police could do to correct perceptions, with a suggestion that in areas where free papers heavily influenced perceptions they should also be utilised to correct them.

Aidan Stephenson clarified the following points raised by the Group:

- All presented statistics were based on super output areas.
- Open areas were not identified through this analysis as being hot spots for anti social behaviour.

It was noted that consideration should be given to targeting resources to particular areas. However a reminder was provided that this review was to consider improvements to public confidence through partnership working and that the issues should not be considered as belonging to the Council or to the police only.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) Jessica Broom to investigate how Basingstoke and Deane were able to achieve a score for NI21 (Dealing with local concerns about anti social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police) that was 8% higher than West Berkshire.
- (2) Aidan Stephenson to prepare information setting out perception values against actual crime values by area across the district.
- (3) Supt Rickard to provide information to identify which NAGs were considered effective or ineffective.
- (4) West Berkshire Council to contact Town and Parish Council clerks to source event information for Supt Rickard.
- (5) The Place Survey to be utilised to include targeted questions relating to public confidence.

Recommendations for further consideration:

- To consider producing information booklets for residents.
- To consider utilising free newspapers as a communication tool to improve public confidence.
- To consider implementing a requirement for NAGs to formally report to their Town or Parish Council.
- To consider requiring NAGs to hold public meetings at least once a year.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 12.00pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature: