
SCRUTINY PANEL A
CRIME AND DISORDER

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 September 2010

Present: Councillors Fitzgerald (Chair), Kolker (Vice-Chair), Morrell, Odgers, Turner, Willacy and Thomas

Apologies: Councillor Damani

11. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Damani and the Panel noted that in accordance with the provisions of Procedure Rules 4.3 and 4.4, Councillor Thomas replaced Councillor Damani, for the purposes of this meeting.

12. **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

In accordance with accepted practice a statement was made by the Chair.

13. **PUBLIC REASSURANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Safer Communities Manager, outlining the current approach taken to improve public perception of crime and anti-social behaviour in Southampton, identifying the policy changes that would impact on this area of activity and seeking views on how the Partnership should approach communications and public reassurance in the future. (Copy of report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Panel received a presentation from the Safer Communities Manager outlining what the safe city partners had been doing over the past year to make a positive difference.

The Panel noted that:-

- the core aims of the Safe City Partnership were to reduce all violent crime and criminal damage, reduce the fear of crime and increase public perception of Southampton as a safe city;
- the Place Survey and Single Public Confidence Indicator for the police had been removed which would require the measurement of public reassurance and perceptions to be done locally which made it very difficult to compare with other authorities and areas;
- there was a definite gap between reality and perception of crime and residents' perception of crime related to their local area rather than headlines in the media;
- the most effective method of driving up public confidence was community engagement rather than statistics which were not always accurate;
- challenges to be faced were budget reductions and lack of Home Office funding which would put constraints on services, mobilising residents and Councillors to become more involved and the measurement of success.

- local issues such as dogs being a problem in certain areas were a neighbourhood issue and should be addressed by the relevant agency rather than being a police matter;
- local experience of being in a safe environment and local contact with agency workers/police were factors that created confidence;
- favourable messages in the media, better communication tools and systems were imperative to promote public confidence;
- it was important not to withdraw from core functions due to lack of resources as crime issues would become unsustainable;
- it was felt that licensing laws should be amended and that alcohol should be legislated in a similar manner to smoking;
- the council could support the police by planning in terms of building safety and housing estates, marketing the safety aspects of the city to prevent bad media and involve Councillors in neighbourhood management;
- support for the recruitment of more Special Constables would be invaluable to the police;
- under-age drinking was being reduced and test purchasing was having an impact, however there were problems with adults purchasing alcohol for children and pricing might improve the situation;

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Safe City Partnership should communicate and engage more with Members and Ward Councillors by providing them with copies of all regular neighbourhood public confidence newsletters for example “You said.. We did”, leaflets and bulletins sent to residents;
- (ii) that the Safe City Partnership should ensure that safety initiatives publicised in the city centre should be made available to residents so that they were made aware of what was being done to reduce crime;
- (iii) to note that communication and engagement with the public on the delivery of effective services was essential in building public confidence and community reassurance by working together to improve local areas, reducing the impact of irresponsible drinking and providing positive images/messages about reducing crime by local people taking action; and
- (iv) that the presentation and report of the Safer Communities Manager, the overview and comments received by the Chief Superintendent and the Head of Neighbourhood Services, along with the ideas and suggestions contributed by Members of the Panel on the priorities and approach to partnership delivery of public reassurance in the future be noted.

14. **BRIEFING ON THE POLICING IN THE 21ST CENTURY PAPER**

The Panel received and noted the report of the Safer Communities Manager, providing an overview of the main points of the new Government White Paper “Policing in the 21st Century”. (Copy of report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Panel noted that :

- the paper outlined a radical shift in power and control away from government back to people and communities by increasing democratic accountability, removing bureaucratic accountability, providing a national framework for efficient local policing and tackling crime together, all of which contributed to the implementation of the “Big Society”;
- police and crime panels would be made up of locally elected councillors from constituent wards and independent and lay members;
- the statutory duty of the Council to work with the police and Safe City Partners as well as the scrutiny function had been retained; and
- elections of police and crime commissioners would commence in May 2012.

RESOLVED that Panel Members noted the impact of the proposed changes on the Safe City Partnership.