



Notes of evidence

Name of meeting	POLICY COMMISSION FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES
Date and time	THURSDAY, 8 JANUARY 2009, COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM ONE, FLOOR 4, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Commission	Cllrs David Williams (Chair), Henry Adams, Mike Cunningham, Heather Humby, Susan Scoccia, Jilly Wood
Officers Present	Stuart Love, Zoryna O'Donnell, April Ross, Simon Wiggins
Stakeholders	David Ouston and John Swindell, Street Pastor Coordinators, Alan Marriott, Editor, Isle of Wight County Press,
Also Present	Cllrs Jonathan Fitzgerald-Bond, Ian Stevens
Apologies	Cllr Diana Tuson

1. **Notes of Evidence**

- 1.1 Minute 2.2 should read Cllr Mike Cunningham declared a personal interest in Item 4 as he was a member on the Licensing Committee.
- 1.2 Following the above amendment the Notes of evidence arising at the meeting held on 27 November 2008 were agreed ([Paper A](#)).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 No declarations were received at this time.

3. **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions received

4. **Crime and Disorder and Fear of Crime Enquiry**

Evidence was received about the Street Pastor Scheme from David Ouston and John Swindell.

- 4.1 The Street Pastor scheme was an inter-denominational Church response to urban

problems allowing the Church to work with the Police, Local Authorities and statutory organisations in engaging with people on the streets.

- 4.2 It was noted the scheme had been pioneered in 2003 in London and each project was set up by the Ascension Trust, being run by a local coordinator with involvement from local churches and community groups. Funding was provided in the main from the Police, Church Grants and the Safer Communities Partnership.
- 4.3 The Commission were told that the projects involved mixed sex teams of 3 or 4 patrolling designated areas at weekends between 10pm and 3.30am offering a Good Samaritan approach and assistance to those that were vulnerable. Examples of this were calling a taxi, handing out foil blankets and diffusing situations. It was noted that it was not the purpose of the Street Pastors to preach but to engage in dialogue and support members of the public.
- 4.4 Ryde and Sandown had been identified as Island towns that would benefit from a Street Pastor project and following the launch of the project on 3 February 2009 which was open to church members and Christians over 18 years of age, the teams would be on the street by June 2009, one night a week initially. These teams would work in conjunction with the Environment and Neighbourhood Officers and Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) schemes that were currently in place.
- 4.5 Training would be given to all team members around subjects including Substance Abuse and Safety Awareness. Island teams would patrol in a minimum team of 4 but these could work in pairs provided they maintained close proximity with other team members. It was noted there was no maximum age limit for team members and that teenagers tended to be more respectful of older team members
- 4.6 Portsmouth had 85 Street Pastors with the project having been in place for 3 years and had been operating in the Guildhall Square area of the city where it was noted that there had been a 30% reduction in crime including a 61% drop in violence against people within the first 12 months. The project also allowed the team to have an influence on the perpetrators of crime through having the time to talk and listen to them diffusing the situation, time neither the Police nor door staff possessed.
- 4.7 It was noted the project had not moved the issue to another location and through feedback over 70% of the public felt it was a safer place to go since the project was introduced.
- 4.8 The Commission noted that the Street Pastors Project targeted teenagers and members of the public that were out late evening into the early hours. The Coordinators stated that in areas that were already running an evening scheme a further project had been introduced. This was School Pastors which operated between 3pm and 7pm. However, this would involve setting up a separate group and was a possibility in the future.
- 4.9 Members of the Commission were told that dealing with the homeless was not the role of the Street Pastors and whilst they would get engaged, precaution would be taken not to over engage as the homeless were a vulnerable group. Over action could attract people into the area, the Street Pastors would however help with referrals.

Evidence was received from Alan Marriott from the Isle of Wight County Press

- 4.10 The Commission noted the importance of the role of the press in regard to reporting of crime and the manner in which Island crime was reported, which would ultimately have an impact on the public's perception of crime.
- 4.11 Whilst the numbers of crimes committed on the Island meant it was not nationally recognised as a high crime area, it was noted that crime was one of the top five subjects Islanders had stated that they wished to be reported within their local media.
- 4.12 It was noted that the Police did not always release information in relation to Island crime immediately to the media and this was due to various reasons including whilst they carried out investigations or contacted witnesses.
- 4.13 The Commission were told that the media had used the Freedom of Information Act to make requests for the release of information in regard to local crimes from the Police, although this was a lengthy process and an open relationship was the preferred method of communication. Information was supplied from the Media and Corporate Communications Manager who was based at Newport Police Station with whom the local media had a good relationship.
- 4.14 The Commission were told that whilst the local media had a duty to report crime it did not have a desire to increase the public's fear of crime. This was achieved through balanced responsible reporting without sensationalising the subject. The Commission noted that the County Press covered items appearing at court. However, this was reported throughout the publication to avoid the items being regarded as a "badge of honour".
- 4.15 It was noted that the media supported a number of schemes including the annual Making a Difference Community Action Partners (MADCAP) event which had been designed for young people to take part in an exercise and allowed opportunities for partner organisations to disseminate their messages. In addition the County Press regularly advertised the Crimestoppers initiative and published working interest articles that included identification of local area Police Community Support Officer. The Editor informed the Commission that a similar working interest article could be published to support the street pastor scheme.
- 4.16 The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods told the Commission that a number of crimes were not reported to the Police and that this was owing to the public perception that no action would be taken. He reemphasized the importance that all crime be reported to the authorities in order that appropriate investigations could take place and the reports of crime were used as the basis of statistics on Island crime levels.

Evidence was received from the Head of the Community Safety Services

- 4.17 The Commission were told that following a number of amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) had agreed a range of Strategic Priorities for 2009/2011. These priorities had been fully endorsed at the meeting of the Full Council on the 21 May 2008. These priorities included:
- The Reduction of Crime – Focusing on Burglary, Criminal Damage and Violent Crime.

- Reducing Substance Misuse (Illegal Drugs and Alcohol).
- A reduction in Anti-social Behaviour and Disorder.
- Increasing public confidence and reducing the fear of crime.
- Enhance local areas – Focusing on public realm improvements.

4.18 It was noted that the Island was one of the safest locations in the country, however it had a disproportionately high level of fear of crime which affected people's quality of life. The fear of crime impacted more on certain groups including the elderly, which it was noted could result in extra hidden costs including health, medical care and general well being.

4.19 The Head of the Community Safety Service informed the Commission that the Home Office had issued a fear of crime matrix and the Island fitted within the low crime – high fear of crime sector of the matrix. This area traditionally contained rural communities that tended to be bordered by high areas of crime. The Island was considered a mainly rural location and although isolated by the Solent, it was in close proximity of two cities with perceived high levels of crime.

4.20 Research had shown that in addition to personal experience of crime, the manner in which it was reported had been one of the major factors on the impact of the fear of crime levels. It was noted that in April 2008 a strategy had been approved that was designed to address the fear of crime on the Island through the implementation of a coherent crime/communications strategy. The objectives of the strategy included:

- Reducing the fear of crime and changing attitudes to crime
- Communicating crime reduction messages – 60% of thefts were opportunist and the overall level of burglary was not high.
- Raising the profile of the partnership – communicate with other agencies and publish key messages on the aims of partnership.
- Engaging the community in the partnerships' work and assisting the partnership to meet its community involvement goals.

4.21 The Commission were told that the main components of the strategy included:

Internal communications

Embedding two way communications between partners to increase information sharing and to enable knowledge based decisions.

External communications

Open communication with the media, key audiences, stakeholders issuing press releases to the media on project successes and to raise awareness of the different campaigns that were underway including the Know Your Limits campaign and Smart Water. Using when possible methods that were free of charge and making use of Home Office supplied leaflets.

Training

Organisation of joint training programmes on community safety and related

issues for key staff members of the partner agencies to ensure they were trained to understand the best method to communicate and work effectively.

- 4.22 The strategy also contained a Community Safety Communication and Training Plan which was regularly monitored and incorporated any lessons that were learnt. The plan followed a Multi-agency Media Protocol, which ensured the messages remained consistent, reflective of the partnerships work and press releases were of a high quality.
- 4.23 The Commission were told that the CDRP Communication Group worked within the terms of reference that had been set up as part of the structure and were an important group in the partnership containing designated officers from different agencies with communication skills, who met once a month. They were responsible for all partnership communications, consultation and training and community engagement activities.
- 4.24 Examples of the work that had been carried out included the Partnership Tasking and Coordinating Group workshop on 17 October 2008, which had been organised by the communications group. A Member information seminar on community safety, which had provided information on the work of the Community Safety Services and publication of the Isle of Wight Community Safety Handbook, was an example of partnership working and was available online and in large print.
- 4.25 A review of the Strategic Assessment took place in October 2008 which had offered Island residents a range of opportunities to communicate their views on crime and disorder issues including Island wide, parish and local consultations. It was noted that the perception of crime and disorder issues had improved in the last 12 months and the main issues raised at the consultations had been low level issues compared to gun crime or serious crime. It was recognised that the majority of residents did feel safe, however there were still more challenges and ways people could work better to reduce fear of crime.
- 4.26 The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods told the Commission that Members had a role to play in the communication and engagement of Islanders about fear of crime themes, although it was noted that the provision of crime figures on an area basis would be labour intensive and a range of legislation covered the types of information that could be released.

5. **Members Question Time**

Cllr Ian Stephens asked a number of oral questions in relation to crime and the fear of crime in his ward. The Head of Safety Services and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods responded.

CHAIRMAN