

DARLINGTON POLICE COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Notes of Meeting held on 25 March 2009 at
Hurworth Community Centre, Hurworth Place, Darlington

Present:

Councillor B Dixon in the Chair

R Bennett, S J Burningham, A Burton, M Dunstone, M Edwards, B Jefferson, B Jones, G Mitchell, K Pattison and B Stenson.

Police Authority

Mr P Thompson, Mrs L A Davies, Mrs E Wallace and Mr I Croft

Durham Constabulary

ACC M Banks and Supt G Hall

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs P Burton, Mrs S Boggett, Mr P Hoehne, Mrs E Richards, Mr D Thomas, Mrs Margaret Thomas, Mrs Marion Thomas, Mr N Welch, Mr John Whitby and Councillor V Whitby.

Item No.	Description/Discussion Points	Action
1.	Welcome The Chairman welcomed those present and thanked them for their attendance, and the officers present introduced themselves.	
2.	Notes The notes of the meeting held on 25 March 2009 (for copy see file of Minutes) were considered and approved by the Group, subject to Mr M Dunstone's attendance being recorded. Mr Dunstone referred to the second bullet point of Item No 3 and asked whether any progress had been made on arrangements for visits to the custody facilities at Darlington and the communications centre at Bishop Auckland. Elaine Wallace replied that the visits would be arranged, adding that two separate visits would be needed and these would be between PCCG meetings.	Approved Visits to arrange and PCCG Members to be informed of details
3.	PCCG Review The Chairman referred to Item No 7 and commented that the format of the paperwork provided for the meeting was a great improvement on previous paperwork.	

Elaine Wallace referred to the previous PCCG meeting and to the review of PCCG meetings which had been undertaken. The findings of the review had shown that PCCG's were a forum which were valued by attendees and should be maintained, however some slight changes to their format were needed, and these were as follows:

- Closer links to PACT meetings to create an area PACT/PCCG bringing together all groups within an area, and to bring issues raised at PACT meetings to PCCG's , with a view to inviting other organisations where appropriate
- Standardisation of reports brought to PCCG's
- Ensure that more Police Authority business is on PCCG agendas
- Identify existing groups to link in with and to promote meetings more widely – particularly targeting BME and youth groups, and the help and input from PCCG Members and attendees was sought in identifying these groups.
- The option of receiving papers by either email or post was to be introduced.

The Group provided the following feedback:

- Ms Burningham would email details of the Darlington Community Forum to Elaine Wallace as part of identifying existing groups, and reported that the Evolution website had recently been updated and was a good source of information.
- Ms Burningham referred to the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Forum in Darlington, which was a group who experienced difficulties in communicating with the emergency services
- There was confusion around what the difference was between PACT meetings and PCCG meetings. Elaine Wallace informed the Group that PACT meetings considered issues on a local basis, covered a smaller geographical area and were held on a monthly basis. PCCG's covered a larger area, gave an overview of an area and were attended by more senior police officers as well as the police authority.
- PCCG meetings were not widely advertised. Elaine Wallace replied that posters advertising PCCG meetings were sent to all libraries, post offices and Parish Councils. Local newspapers were also made aware of the PCCG meetings.
- The timings and topics for PCCG's should be relevant. It was a coincidence that this meeting was taking place only one week after a PACT meeting had been held in Hurworth. The next PCCG meeting would be held in six months time and the meetings moved location around the Darlington area.

4. Report of Police

Supt Hall submitted apologies from Ch Insp Paul Unsworth who was unable to attend the meeting due to an operational deployment. Supt Hall then presented to the Group the report of the police (for copy see file of Minutes)

Supt Hall informed the Group that the report contained details of Neighbourhood Officers and Teams, adding that the majority of people now knew who their neighbourhood officers were. The police took notice of what communities were saying, and as a result, 2 PCSO's and 2 Beat Officers were dedicated to the rural areas around Darlington. In reply to a question from the Group regarding the provision of a car to allow PCSO's to commute between communities, Supt Hall informed the Group that there was support from the Executive for this, although the police like any other public body operated in a very tight financial framework.

Supt Hall informed the Group that the Policing Priorities for 2009-10 for the South Area were as listed in the report. However, as well as these priorities, the police focussed on other areas, including:

- serious and organised crime – the force was determined to tackle serious and organised crime, which was a resource-intensive function. However, some good results in this area had been achieved.
- road casualty reduction – there had been no fatalities in the area, and no under-16 serious injuries recorded this year. Durham was on track to meet the Government's 2009/10 targets for accident reduction.

Supt Hall referred to an initiative called Community Speedwatch, whereby community volunteers assisted the police to carry out speed checks with guidance and support from the police. He added that such a scheme would be brought to the Hurworth area should volunteers be forthcoming. In response to concerns from the Group regarding health and safety implications for the volunteers, Supt Hall agreed that although there were always potential risks, steps were taken to minimise these. He referred to a similar scheme which was currently operating successfully in Keighly.

The Group reported that Councillor Lyonette who was the Darlington Borough Councillor Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Transport was to attend the next meeting of the Hurworth Parish Council to discuss parking and speeding problems in the village. Supt Hall undertook to arrange for an officer from the Road Policing Unit to attend the meeting. The Group raised the question of the provision of a fixed speed camera in the village to address the issue of speeding. Supt Hall replied that the issue of speeding could be addressed using a range of options, from education and awareness to the use of fixed cameras. Mr

Thompson, Chair of Durham Police Authority, undertook for the notes of the PCCG meeting to be sent to the Clerk of the Parish Council prior to their next meeting which was to be held on 13 October, and also undertook to attend the Parish Council meeting on 10 November 2009. The Chairman expressed his doubts regarding the effectiveness of fixed speed cameras, adding that in many cases the problem of speeding could be addressed through using engineering solutions.

Supt Hall then highlighted the following items to the Group:

- problems regarding the theft of metal had significantly reduced following targeting of the problem by the police
- a problem with shoplifting had been addressed through Operation Saxon
- there were concerns around the level of theft from vehicles, and preventative work was ongoing to inform the public not to leave items on view
- there had been a small increase in burglary other over the summer months, this mainly being thefts from sheds and outbuildings
- Prolific and Priority Offenders – an Offender Management Unit, which was multi-agency approach, had achieved considerable success and was seen as an example of good practice
- Operation Nimrod – 32 people had been arrested in a series of drugs raids, which had resulted in an impact on the drugs market. Information from the public regarding individuals had assisted in this Operation
- there had been a 3.1% increase in assault, and Supt Hall informed the Group that he was not happy with the detection rate, which he would like to see around the region of 80%. There was an increase around domestic abuse as victims were more willing to report this – the increase in assaults was not due to the night time economy
- an increase in reports of anti-social behaviour could be attributed to communities having more confidence in the police dealing with such matters
- other initiatives and details of forthcoming PACT meetings were as outlined in the police report

Supt Hall then referred to the Policing Pledge, details of which were contained in the police report. For immediate response calls, there was a minimum target of responding to 90% of calls within 15 minutes, and Durham Force currently exceeded this target. Last Saturday, communications received 131 immediate response calls in a four-hour period, and over 90% of these were responded to within the 15 minute target.

ACC Banks then referred the Group to the Confidence Targets and informed the Group that Durham had the 3rd highest level of confidence in the 43 forces in England and Wales. It was of key

importance that the public had confidence in the police service, and there was a 10-point plan in place to improve this confidence level. Supt Hall informed the Group that PACT meetings would be operating in all Wards within 3-6 months.

In response to a question from the Group about the strength of the force, ACC Banks informed the Group that when considering this, it was important to look at policing in wider terms, for example, in 2001 there were no PCSO's. There had been an increase in the police staff base, which undertook work for which police powers were not needed, and all posts were examined to consider whether they were needed and to ensure resources were in the right place. There was a need to ensure that the resource which was at the force did have was focussed on the areas of need.

A member of the Group questioned whether it would be feasible for a community to provide funding for a police officer in their area. ACC Banks replied that this was feasible and had been done before, but added that the Chief Constable would always retain the right of operational control of the officer. When asked about whether costs of this could be identified, Mr Thompson replied that the responsibility for raising funds rested with the Police Authority. The number of officers employed had increased over the last 5 years due to the civilianisation of posts, and he gave an assurance that there would be no reduction in the number of frontline officers.

A Member of the Group referred to operation Saxon and raised some problems being experienced. Supt Hall undertook to discuss these outside of the meeting. He added that funding was available to retailers for crime prevention measures, but the closing date for applications was 30 September. He suggested contacting Insp Andrea Clayton who was the link to the funding available, and also to contact Insp Steve Steen regarding the re-launch of shopwatch.

5. Community Initiative Support Scheme

The Group noted a report of the Police Authority which gave details of the Community Initiative Support Scheme and how to make applications to the Scheme (for copy see file of Minutes)

6. Police Authority Events Calendar

The Group noted a report of the Police Authority which provided details of forthcoming Police Authority events (for copy see file of Minutes)

Elaine Wallace informed the Group that a date for the Annual PCCG meeting had now been agreed, and this was 7 December 2009, commencing 6 p.m. at County Hall, Durham. She added that it was intended to hold a three week 'roadshow' during the

last week in November and first two weeks in December to gather views on policing priorities for the coming year, and details of any meetings which the roadshow could visit were invited.

Elaine Wallace also sought volunteers to take part in an inter-generational event which was taking place in Darlington on 30 October.

Mr Thompson informed the Group that the Police Authority was to launch its Christmas Card Competition between 11 and 13 September 2009.

7. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Scheme

The Group noted a report of the Police Authority which provided details of the intention of the Authority to produce a combined Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Scheme (for copy see file of Minutes)

Elaine Wallace informed the Group that participation in consultation on the Scheme was sought from Group Members