

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 1 AUGUST 2005 AT 7.30PM
IN MAGHERA LEISURE CENTRE, COLERAINE ROAD, MAGHERA**

PRESENT Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson
Cllr P McLean, Vice-Chairman
Mrs M Donnelly
Cllr T J Catherwood
Mr J Campbell
Ms S Ewing
Mrs A Scott-McKinley
Cllr G Shiels
Ms F Symington
Dr Shortall
Mrs M McCormack

Also present Mr J A McLaughlin, Chief Executive, MDC
Mr M McCrory, DPP Manager
Ms P Shaw, Secretary

1 Apologies

Cllr Rev Dr R T Wm McCrea, MLA.

2 Declarations of Interest

No member had any interest to declare.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

PROPOSED by Ms S Ewing,
Seconded by Mrs M McCormack, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising

(a) Mr J Campbell raised the issue of able bodied drivers parking in the disabled bays. He enquired about how many complaints the police had received and how many fixed penalties had been issued. In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he did not have these statistics to hand but that he would report them back to the next meeting.

(b) Cllr McLean raised the issue of the “police house” having still not been established in Castledawson and stated that he felt let down in that the police had not kept their promise to the Partnership.

Cllrs Shiels and Catherwood spoke in support of the remarks made by Cllr McLean.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that two police officers were now “on the beat” in Castledawson. He felt that this was a more effective way to police the town rather than establishing a “police house”. He also felt that it would be very difficult to identify and obtain a suitable premises.

(c) Mrs A Scott-McKinley stated that whilst she was disappointed that the “police house” had not been established, she did agree however that the beat officers had proved very successful and she cited the example of the help which these officers had given to her grandmother.

5 Report by the District Commander

Chief Inspector Tom Wiggins presented the report (Appendix I) for the period 1 October 2004 - 20 March 2005. He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic burglary - 21 incidents compared to 31 during same period the previous year
- (b) Vehicle crime - 17 compared to 33 during the same period the previous year.
- (c) Drug seizures - 12 compared to 19 during the same period the previous year.
- (d) Violent Crime - the detection rate for the period was 69.8%.
- (e) Criminal damage - 197 incidents compared to 223 during the same period the previous year.

Chief Inspector Wiggins stated, that whilst he was very happy to report a reduction in the many crime categories compared to the previous year, he was still concerned about the level of criminal damage. This appeared to happen mostly on weekend nights. He felt, however, the recent introduction of CCTV monitoring for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week would be a very effective way to combat this.

Members Questions

(a) The Chairperson Cllr K Lagan enquired how many convictions had been obtained through CCTV in the Maghera area.

In reply Sergeant D Moffett stated that he thought six convictions had been obtained, although there was still more prosecutions progressing through the court service. He felt that the majority of people committing these crimes were in the 18-25 year old age bracket.

Cllr Lagan enquired if a conviction had been obtained for the damage done to the Christmas tree in Maghera, which had been caught on CCTV.

In reply Sergeant D Moffett stated that one individual had been responsible but that he had not yet been identified from these pictures.

Chief Inspector Wiggins gave an undertaking to Cllr Lagan to write to her with all of the statistics regarding the use of CCTV.

(b) The Chairperson Cllr K Lagan also informed the meeting that she had written to the Police Ombudsman regarding what appeared to be the heavy handedness of the police on

18 March. She advised that the Ombudsman had found no case and on reviewing the footage it did appear that the police had not been as heavy handed as one would have first thought. She stated that this incident proved that CCTV was of a benefit to both parties.

(c) Mr M McCrory advised the meeting that the CCTV Partnership were planning a CCTV awareness week. He further advised that to the best of his knowledge approximately 20 cases were pending through the evidence gathered by CCTV and that another 70 cases were being prepared.

Sergeant Moffett stated he was of the view that CCTV had without a doubt made Maghera town centre much safer.

The Chairperson Cllr Lagan enquired how heavily the police were now policing Maghera town centre on weekend nights.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the police had now a reduced presence and were now focusing their resources in outlying areas.

(d) Ms F Symington asked how a serious accident was defined.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that it depended on the type of injuries.

6 Questions from the Public

Mr J Campbell posed the following question:

A crowd of people erected a variety of flags (Union, Ulster, Scottish) in the King Street area on Monday 11 July at approximately 1.00am. Their manner and behaviour could have given rise to serious problems, though thankfully none occurred.

What action was taken by the PSNI to:

- (a) Prevent the erection of at least some of these flags, particularly immediately in front of the chapel and at other church property? and*
- (b) To have them removed as soon as possible as requested by the local priests?*

What action needs to be put in train now to avoid a similar situation arising in future years?

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that although the whole incident was undesirable, the encouraging aspect of it was that it was people from the same community who had actually put up the flags who had also taken them down. He stated that this was by far the preferred option, since for the police, or anyone else to take them down, would in his opinion, be seen as provocation and would lead inevitably to an increased number of flags being erected.

The meeting discussed the issue of flags, the difficulty of striking a balance between the expression of ones culture and provocation of the other community and how best to have the flags removed. It was agreed that it was best that the flags be removed through negotiation. Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that in his view this policy was working and that certainly no more flags had been erected than had been last year.

(b) The Chairperson Cllr K Lagan raised the issue of the public ignoring “no drinking signs”. In Maghera people were actually sitting under these signs, outside the old recreation centre, drinking. A large number of these individuals were underage.

In reply Sergeant D Moffett agreed that drinking around the old recreation centre had become a problem. However, because the area was quite open, these individuals could see the police coming. This made it easier for them to run away and very difficult for the police to apprehend them.

(c) Ms S Ewing enquired what the police done if they caught an underage person drinking.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the individual would be taken home and their parents would be totally appraised of the situation.

(d) Mrs M Donnelly raised the issue of adults supplying drink to those underage and asked if the supplier was liable for any of the criminal damage caused as a result.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins said that the person supplying was only guilty of the supply of alcohol to underage persons.

(e) Cllr Shiels raised the matter of “pay and display” car parking and the consequences it was having throughout the town, especially in Queens Avenue. He cited numerous examples of entry’s to private houses being blocked, of the PSNI being informed, but of no action being taken. He felt that possibly the best way forward was to have a joint meeting between the PSNI, DRD Road Service (Mr P Doherty) and the Councillors.

Inspector S Martin informed the meeting that Road Policing proposals were in the process of being drawn up.

7 Road Safety

Cllr Lagan and Mr M McCrory are meeting with the PSNI to discuss awareness raising road safety in the district.

8 Annual Report

Members received the annual report. This was approved in principle. However if any members had amendments to make they are to contact M McCrory by Friday 5 August 2005.

9 Public Consultation

It was agreed that the Public Consultation would take the form of a household survey.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DPP should be held in The Rural College, Derrynoid Road, Draperstown on Monday 3 October 2005 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)