

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2003 AT 8.15PM  
IN THE BRIDEWELL CENTRE, CHURCH STREET, MAGHERAFELT**

**PRESENT** Cllr P McLean, Chairman  
Cllr Miss K A Lagan, Vice-Chairperson  
Cllr Rev Dr R T Wm McCrea, MLA  
Mr J Conlon  
Cllr R A Montgomery  
Mrs M Donnelly  
Cllr T J Catherwood  
Mr J Campbell  
Ms S Ewing  
Miss A Scott  
Cllr P McErlean  
Cllr G Shiels  
Ms F Symington  
Cllr J A McBride  
Dr D Shortall

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

**1 Apologies**

Mrs M McCormack.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

No member had any interest to declare.

**3 Confirmation of Minutes**

PROPOSED by Cllr R A Montgomery,  
Seconded by Mr J Campbell, and

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

Matters Arising

No matter arising.

**4 Report by the District Commander**

The District Commander Superintendent Terry Shevlin joined the meeting along with Chief Inspector John Lindsay and Patricia Roulston, the Police Analyst.

Superintendent Shevlin presented the report on the activities of the local DCU for the period September-October (Appendix I). This highlighted the following points:

- an increase in criminal damage over the same period last year,
- an increase in offences against the person, and
- a decrease in the amount of theft.

Overall there were 197 crimes of this type in the September-October period this year compared to 194 in the same period last year.

It also highlighted the DCU's performance against policing plan targets, specifically:

- level of domestic burglaries - below target,
- level of vehicle crime - below target,
- level of drug seizures - above target,
- level violent crime detections (%) - above target,
- level of criminal damage - above target

In addition for the three months from September to October inclusive there had been:

- (a) 12 incidents of intimidation reported, with two arrests
- (b) 6 drugs finds, with 7 arrests
- (c) 75 arrests and/or interviews
- (d) 58 PACE searches
- (e) Against organised crime there had been three vehicles, 600ltrs of fuel, 100,000 cigarettes, alcohol, fireworks and £185,000 of counterfeit clothing seized in Castledawson
- (f) 3 arrests for suspected Loyalist paramilitary activity
- (g) A conviction in relation to a fatal crash
- (h) 2 parades

### Members Questions

- (a) The members enquired of Superintendent Shevlin as to what could be done to alleviate the traffic congestion and make the roads safer in the entire district council area.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated he still only had one traffic warden to police the entire council area. He was also in the process of initiating the crack down on drivers and passengers not wearing seatbelts. He added that his officers would attempt to keep the traffic moving as freely as possible in the period leading up to Christmas.

- (b) Dr Shortall spoke of the need for a pedestrian crossing and/or traffic lights immediately outside St Patrick's College, Maghera. He was informed that this was a matter for the DRD Road Service, but that none of this would be installed without a traffic survey first being carried out.

- (c) Ms F Symington asked for more information on the fight against drugs and specifically, in relation to the number of convictions.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that his report indicated that the Magherafelt DCU's level of drug seizures was ahead of its target to date. As much as his officers

could do was to seize the drugs, arrest the individual, and present the evidence in court. If the Magistrates were handing down sentences which the public thought were too lenient, he was powerless to do anything about this. Sentencing is not part of the policing remit. He was however happy to point out that much of their success was against established drug dealers rather than low level dealers.

(d) Cllr G Shiels expressed his concern about the level of unsolved serious crime, particularly terrorist murders. He further enquired if there was a policy not to pursue these crimes with as much effort as they had been pursued with in the past.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin reminded the meeting of the setting up of the Serious Crime Task Force which was being led by an Assistant Chief Constable. This Force would include the PSNI's best detectives, would be team based, and would look at all cases afresh.

(e) Cllr McBride enquired if the intimidation and drug seizures mentioned in the Superintendent's report had any paramilitary connections.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that while the police might suspect paramilitary connections, proving it in court was a totally different matter. In addition the paramilitary gangs had become very expert in laundering the proceeds of their crimes.

(f) Cllr Rev McCrea spoke of the elderly living in fear in their own homes and enquired how the Superintendent intended to try to reassure them. He also mentioned the two recent serious cases of attempted child abduction, particularly the one in Castledawson and asked what could be done to prevent this type of activity.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that in relation to the elderly he felt that the increase of level of beat patrols was proving very effective but asked for the public's cooperation in trying to track down those who were preying on the elderly. In relation to the attempted child abduction, he was not sure if in fact they were actual abduction attempts. The crime analyst had carried out extensive research to see if the pattern of these attempted abductions followed any similar pattern in other districts. He emphasised that when he said that he was not sure that they were abduction attempts, he was in no way trying to minimise what had happened, but instead that he and his officers were treating the matter seriously.

The Chairman, Cllr McLean stated that he agreed with the Superintendent, in that the Beat Officers were in fact reassuring the elderly. The Vice-Chairman, Cllr Lagan stated that this would not help the elderly living in the rural areas.

(g) Cllr Catherwood raised the matter of congestion caused by parking in Maghera, particularly at the weekends, and stated that he felt that nothing was being done to address the issue.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that the traffic warden was being sent to Maghera and that Inspector Johnston was now going to target this problem.

(h) Cllr Rev McCrea raised the matter of the residents of the houses behind Westland Road being tortured by windows being constantly smashed and asked what could be done to alleviate this issue.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that he was also aware of a problem where the pensioners opposite the Greenvale Leisure Centre had their houses pelted with muck and eggs for two weekends in a row. Some of his officers had carried out increased patrols and surveillance, but they were still trying to gather better information on the matter.

Chief Inspector Lindsay stated that they would study the problem at the rear of Westland Road. He felt that possibly the correct answer would be to block off part of the laneway. However there was an issue as to whether or not this pathway constituted a right of way.

**5 Questions from the Public**

There were no questions received from the public before the deadline.

Date of next meeting

Mr McLaughlin suggested that the next meeting be held in Maghera Leisure Centre, Coleraine Road, Maghera on Monday 2 February 2004 at 8.00pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.40pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)