

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 2 JUNE 2003 AT 8.00PM  
IN THE BRIDEWELL, CHURCH STREET, MAGHERAFELT**

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

Also present Mr J A McLaughlin, Chief Executive, MDC  
Ms P Shaw, Secretary

**1 Apologies**

Mrs M McCormack and Mr J Conlon.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman explained that this item would be on the agenda for every meeting as a matter of course and explained its relevance.

No member had any interest to declare.

**3 Confirmation of Minutes**

PROPOSED by Cllr Montgomery,  
Seconded by Cllr Lagan, and

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

**Matters Arising**

Cllr Montgomery asked what progress had been made with regard to meeting members of the Community Police Liaison Committee (CPLC)? He felt there was a case for retaining them. The Chairman stated that he had been in contact with both the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the CPLC and said that he would meet them before the next meeting of the DPP and would report back with a firm recommendation.

#### **4 Report by the District Commander**

The District Commander, Superintendent Terry Shevlin introduced his management team, Inspector Richard Maynes, Inspector Harry Johnston, Inspector Frankie Taylor, Inspector Steven Martin and Chief Inspector John Lyndsay. He also introduced Patricia Roulston, the Crime Analyst for Magherafelt.

Superintendent Shevlin commenced his presentation by saying that the Magherafelt District had the third or fourth lowest crime rate of any area in Northern Ireland. He then presented the report which covered the period January - March 2003.

#### **Members Questions**

(a) Mrs M Donnelly enquired how many drugs prosecutions there had been for the period?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin explained that there had been charges in relation to all seven seizures during the period.

(b) Ms F Symington enquired to what degree there was drugs being sold in the clubs and pubs in the district?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that it was the police's experience that all licencees were acting responsibly and did not want a bad reputation. He further stated that the police would like the assistance of the young in attempting to arrest and charge drug dealers.

(c) Cllr Rev McCrea stated he felt that the police were only scraping the surface in relation to drugs and were trying to paint a better picture than what really existed. He stated that drugs were easily available on estates, parents were concerned and children could easily obtain drugs. He was of the view that the police were not on top of the drug situation and that there wasn't enough conviction of drug peddlers, as evidenced by the fact that there was only a small number of them arrested and charged.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that the evidence did not agree with Cllr McCrea's assertion. If there had been an increase in drugs in the area, then there would have been a corresponding increase in crime. However burglary and robbery had dropped by 10% in the period and thus in his opinion there was nothing to substantiate that there was a growing drugs culture.

(d) Mr J Campbell enquired if the police had officers trained to speak to children in the schools in relation to alcohol misuse? He added that this could be extended to youth clubs.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that alcohol education in schools was not the remit of the police. Instead teachers would have to take the lead and parents should also take responsibility.

(e) Cllr T Catherwood stated that he was of the opinion that the sentences being handed out to convicted drug dealers by the courts are far too lenient. He also recalled the recent case in the local newspapers where a well known drug dealer in Coleraine had walked free from court.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that the police could only endeavour to obtain the evidence to obtain a conviction. The severity of the sentence was a matter for the judge.

(f) Cllr P McErlean asked for a definition of “violent crime”?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that violent crime was a crime against the person. Burglary was a crime but robbery was a violent crime, as it contained an offence against the person. Sexual offences were also an obvious example of violent crime.

(g) Dr Shortall enquired how many of the total number of burglaries and car thefts were committed by criminals from outside the district?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that most of the burglaries were committed by people from outside the district, mostly from Belfast. Organised car theft was being committed on a “steal to order basis”, with high performance cars being their main target. The recovery rate for this type of theft was very low, as within an hour of the incident occurring, most of these cars were in another jurisdiction.

(h) Ms F Symington enquired as to the level of drinking and driving and also speeding?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin said the police service had recently mounted a very high profile campaign province wide against drink driving and speeding. This had proven very successful. They were also targeting those who failed to wear their seatbelts

(i) Cllr McBride spoke of the type of “offence against the person” where people were feeling intimidated and fearful in their own homes and when walking down the street, but without actually being attacked. Cllr McCrea added to the debate by stating that this type of worry and fear was very prevalent. Many elderly people were in fact prisoners in their own homes because they were too frightened to venture outside because of the type of violence which they perceive they might encounter. He also spoke of the amount of damage to property which went unreported every month. He gave the example of the vandalism to Council property, on which, the Council members received a report every month.

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that attacks against the elderly were deplorable. However in this district, the level of such attacks has in fact decreased from the previous year. He did however add that even one attack, was one attack too many. The Magherafelt DCU planned to work in partnership, with for instance the Community Safety Partnership in an attempt to tackle this type of crime.

(j) Cllr Montgomery enquired as to why the police had not reacted quicker, and in fact why they could not have predicted the violence in Maghera which included an attack on property following the result of a recent football match, (Glasgow Rangers winning the Scottish League). He stated that the criminal damage to the property included broken windows and the premises being attacked with paint bombs.

In reply Inspector Johnston stated that the police always done their best to anticipate this type of reaction to high profile football matches. However there was a chance of this similar type of reaction in other towns to this same football match. Consequently although they might submit a request for additional resources from outside the Magherafelt DCU there were also other DCU’s competing for these additional resources. He added however that the police would always try to continue to predict these types of

events but he felt the imminent installation of CCTV would help the police to manage this type of situation.

(k) Cllr Montgomery then enquired about the level of underage drinking and asked what could be done to tackle the problem?

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that although there was a problem, one had to accept in fairness to the licencees, that many children under 18 years of age, did in fact look much older, and short of having an ID system it was very difficult for the publicans to manage this situation. He added however parents also had to play their part and that many of these parents “dropped off” their children outside a licensed premises or nightclub in the expectation that they would be admitted.

## **5 Question from the Public**

Mr J McLaughlin then explained that before the meeting Mr J Campbell had submitted five written questions from the public. He (Mr J McLaughlin) pointed out that as in accordance with the standing orders, since they had not been received ten days prior to the meeting the District Commander was not obliged to answer them tonight, but he could exercise his discretion to do so if he wished.

Superintendent Shevlin stated that he was happy to answer the questions, which were as follows:

***1 What plans, if any, does the Commander have to prosecute publicans who contravene current legislation by serving alcohol to already intoxicated persons?***

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that this was an offence which was still in the Statute Book. He stated that it was difficult to prove at what point a person actually got drunk. There was however a big role for the licencee to play. They should act responsibly and call for the police to remove anyone who would not leave the premises when asked to do so, when they became drunk.

***2 What plans if any does the local Commander have to prosecute publicans who contravene licensing laws by selling alcohol to the underaged?***

In reply Superintendent Shevlin gave an assurance that if publicans were detected committing this crime then they would be prosecuted.

***3 Will the Commander recommend to the Courts that the licences of such publicans be suspended and/or refused when they next come up for renewal?***

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that his officers critically reviewed all such applications and would not hesitate to recommend refusal where they had sufficient justification to do so.

***4 What plans does the Commander have to deal with late night/early morning street disorder and anti-social behaviour resulting from excessive consumption of alcohol?***

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated that he felt that the installation of CCTV cameras in Magherafelt had dramatically improved the situation within it. He also felt that the

pending installation of CCTV cameras in Maghera would also dramatically improve the situation in that town. He also stated that increased monitoring of the CCTV's would help and if necessary he would increase the number of patrols.

**5** *Does the Commander have any plans to increase or re-allocate his resources, especially in relation to street patrolling, to take account of the fact that most street disturbance and crime takes place between the hours of 11.30pm and 3.00am and does he realise that it is during these hours that people in the district feel most vulnerable and in the greatest need for protection for themselves and their property?*

In reply Superintendent Shevlin stated yes, they were evaluating the merits of a varying shift system, together with extra cover at the weekends.

**6** **To consider the results of The Community Attitudes Survey as published by the Northern Ireland Policing Board**

Mr McLaughlin introduced the Community Attitudes Survey (CAS) 2002, carried out by the Northern Ireland Policing Board. He stated that this was purely for the interest of members, but he would attempt to answer any questions which the members might have.

Mrs M Donnelly wished to know if the results of the survey were Northern Ireland wide, or if they related purely to the local district. She pointed particularly to questions 5 and 6, on pages 5 and 6 respectively, which were asking the same questions, but were giving two different answers. She stated that this seem to point to question 5 having been asked on a local basis, whereas question 6 seemed to have been asked on a Northern Ireland basis.

In reply Mr McLaughlin stated that he tended to agree with Mrs Donnelly's view but that he would attempt to obtain confirmation for the next meeting.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Mr McLaughlin raised a question of the location of the next meeting. He suggested that it should be held in the conference room in Maghera Leisure Centre.

PROPOSED by Ms Symington,  
Seconded by Cllr Lagan, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the next public meeting of the District Policing Partnership scheduled for 4 August 2003 should be held in the conference room in Maghera Leisure Centre.

Mr McLaughlin further recommended that due to the size of the room the number of public members should be limited to six for this venue.

PROPOSED by Cllr Rev McCrea,  
Seconded by Cllr Catherwood, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the number of public members should be limited to six for a DPP meeting at this venue.

The meeting concluded at 9.25pm.

Mr J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

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

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