

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 5 DECEMBER 2005 AT 7.30PM  
IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, 50 BALLYRONAN ROAD,  
MAGHERAFELT**

**PRESENT** Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson  
Ms F Symington, Vice-Chairperson  
Cllr P McLean  
Mr J Conlon  
Mrs M Donnelly  
Cllr T J Catherwood  
Mrs B Foster  
Mrs S Chada  
Cllr G Shiels  
Dr Shortall  
Mrs M McCormack  
Mr J O'Doherty  
Cllr J Crawford  
Cllr Mrs E A Forde

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 and Mr J Campbell

**2 Declarations of Interest**

No member had any interest to declare.

**3 Welcome**

The Chairperson, Cllr K Lagan, welcomed the new independent members to the partnership and stated that she looked forward to working with them throughout the incoming four years.

Cllr Lagan thanked the members for the flowers which she had received during her recent illness.

**4 Confirmation of Minutes**

PROPOSED by Ms F Symington, Vice-Chairperson,  
Seconded by Cllr T J Catherwood, and

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

## **5 Matters Arising**

Cllr McLean raised the issue of the number of independent members being equal to that of the number of Council members. He stated that it was his firm understanding that the number of the Council members should exceed the number of independent members by one and that the total membership of the partnership could only be 15, 17 or 19. He further stated that although he realised that there were now only 8 Councillors wishing to join the partnership, the Policing Board had been informed of this and consequently only 7 independent members (instead of 8) should have been appointed. He emphasised that this was not a reflection on any or all of the independent members who had been appointed.

PROPOSED by Mr J Conlon,  
Seconded by Cllr P McLean, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the partnership should write to the Policing Board requesting that this situation be addressed.

## **6 Appointment of Vice-Chairperson**

The Chairperson informed the meeting that there had been a tie between Ms F Symington and Mr J Conlon when the Independent Members had voted prior to the meeting to appoint a Vice-Chairperson. As a result it was agreed the Ms F Symington would serve as Vice-Chairperson for the first 6 months of the current year and that Mr J Conlon would then serve the second 6 months.

## **7 Report by the District Commander**

Chief Inspector Wiggins presented the District Policing Partnership Report for the period April - September 2005. (Appendix 1)

This report indicated that the local DCU had failed to meet most of its targets for this 6 month period. The most noteworthy of these results were

- (a) Criminal Damage - April - Sept 2005 - 323 - an increase of 40.4%
- (b) Vehicle Crime - April - Sept 2005 - 29 - an increase of 81.25%
- (c) Domestic Burglary - April - Sept 2005 - 22 - an increase of 15.8%
- (d) Number of Crimes - April - Sept 2005 - 891 - an increase of 26.2%
- (e) Racist and Homophobic Crimes - April - Sept 2005 - 9 - an increase of 80%
- (f) Clearance rate for all Crimes - April - Sept 2005 - 33.9% - a decrease of 10.9%
- (g) Incidents of Drug Seizures - April - Sept 2005 - 17 - a decrease of 34.61%

On a positive side the report indicated that the local DCU had met and exceeded its targets in relation to detection of driving whilst impaired through drink, the non-wearing of seatbelts and careless and dangerous offences. The local Command Unit had also reduced the average days sick from 14.31 to 7.73 for police officers and from 5.71 to 4.42 for civilians. In addition 100% of all custody cases were now being processed within 90 days as were all bail cases within 110 days.

The Chief Inspector emphasised to the members that whilst the results appeared to be disappointing within themselves, one had to remember that the comparative figures for the same period in 2004 were so low that it would have been very difficult to improve upon them. He further emphasised that the Magherafelt District still had the lowest crime rate in the whole of Northern Ireland.

(a) Members sought the Chief Inspectors opinion on the level of domestic burglary over the Christmas period.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the district had been subjected to a spate of domestic burglary and car thefts over the recent period. It would seem that the perpetrators were career criminals, probably from Belfast who had targeted this area and would now in all likelihood move onto a different area.

The Members suggested that possibly the local DCU should advertise how individuals could best avoid being subjected to such attacks e.g. not to leave valuables exposed in cars, always to lock your car, front door, etc.

(b) Chief Inspector Wiggins also informed the meeting that there had been an increase in criminal damage, in particular mindless random damage such as pulling a wing mirror or wiper of a car. Two separate arrests had been made following two separate incidents of criminal damage to the Christmas lights in Maghera. As with many random attacks both of this incidents seem to be alcohol related and are carried out mostly by people in the 18-30 year old age group.

(c) Mr J Conlon asked if the introduction of CCTV had been effective in decreasing the incidents of criminal damage.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the introduction of CCTV had been an outstanding success in Magherafelt but particularly in Maghera. It had allowed the PSNI to carry out proactive operations and the level of offences had definitely declined.

(d) Mr J O'Doherty asked for figures to include days and times for driving offences.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he did not have these to hand, but that Sunday was undoubtedly the most dangerous day for driving. The trend in serious accidents was very much up on last year with 11 fatalities having been recorded during the current year. A disproportionate number of these fatalities had been recorded on the Tobermore Road, Magherafelt.

(e) Cllr McLean sought information on the level of drink driving over the Christmas period.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins reported that he was presently in the process of preparing a Press Release which would indicate that 14 people were being prosecuted for drink driving offences over Christmas. He emphasised that his officers had been instructed to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards such offences.

(f) In reply to a question from Dr Shortall, Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the evening time was the period when most drink driving offences occurred.

(g) Mr J O'Doherty suggested that the local police and the DPP should join with the local taxi firms in order to advertise the dangers of drink driving and to promote taxis as a sensible alternative.

The meeting unanimously adopted this suggestion.

(h) The Vice-Chairperson, Ms F Symington enquired if the levels of long term sickness were improving.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that there was mention of this in the 6 monthly report which he had just presented. However, he would write to Ms Symington with fuller details but he could report that the level of long term sickness was improving.

## **8 Local Policing Plan**

Members agreed that the best way to progress this issue was to hold a half day meeting to finalise the policing plan. This was arranged for Wednesday 14 December 2005 at 6.00pm.

## **9 Questions from the Public**

Mr J O'Doherty asked the District Commander about the unsolved murder cases in the district, and what progress was being made in solving these crimes.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that this matter was totally outwith his control. All that he could inform the meeting was that the Historical Enquiry Team was looking through old cases and that the public would have to be patient because of the volume of work involved

Both Cllr G Shiels and Cllr P McLean stated that the public had been patient for years and felt that nothing worthwhile was being done in an effort to solve these crimes. However, both of them asked that the families of the victims should be informed before any investigation commenced, rather than hear such information via the media.

## **10 Any Other Business**

Cllr McLean asked for the website to be continually updated. The DPP Manager, Michael McCrory gave an undertaking to the meeting that this would be done.

### Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DPP should be held in Maghera Leisure Centre, Coleraine Road, Maghera on Monday 6 February 2006 at 7.30pm.

Following a request from the Vice-Chairperson, it was also agreed that a private meeting would be held at 7.00pm on Monday 6 February 2006.

The meeting concluded at 9.25pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

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

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