

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 6 DECEMBER 2004 AT 7.30PM  
IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,  
50 BALLYRONAN ROAD, MAGHERAFELT**

**PRESENT** Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson  
Cllr P McLean, Vice-Chairman  
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  
Mr David Wilson, Director of Planning, NIPB  
Ms P Shaw, Secretary

**1 Apologies**

Mrs M McCormack.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

No member had any interest to declare.

**3 Confirmation of Minutes**

The Chairperson, Cllr Lagan explained that she had not attended the previous meeting but she questioned the correction to a minute of the August meeting saying that she believed that no police cars had arrived at “the cruise” in Maghera prior to the Technical Support Teams. Inspector Harry Johnston stated that two cars had gone to the scene in order to assess the situation but withdrew without taking any action, due to the size of the crowd. Cllr Lagan accepted the explanation.

Cllr McBride stated that he did not second the minutes as he had joined the meeting late.

PROPOSED by Ms F Symington,  
Seconded by Cllr Montgomery, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4 Matters Arising**

Ms F Symington enquired again if the Commander had prepared a report as to how many jobs which had previously been performed by police officers were now being performed by civilian staff.

Superintendent Lindsay stated that nine jobs were now being performed by civilian staff and that the Magherafelt DCU presently had ten officers on probation (new recruits).

Mr J Campbell apologised for not being able to attend the Planning Workshop for the Local Policing Plan.

#### **5 NISRA Presentation**

Mr David Wilson, Director of Planning NIPB gave a presentation of the results of the recent Public Consultation Surveys for the Magherafelt DPP for 2004, copy attached.

Mr J Conlon stated that the presentation had been given for the entire survey population and asked if the results had been broken down by age, sex, religion, etc. In reply Mr Wilson stated that this detail was available in the detailed survey reports but he had decided not to present the results in such detail tonight.

Cllr Rev McCrea asked for clarification as to how domestic burglary could be the areas single biggest concern, but yet speeding was the top of the list of the population's top five concerns. Mr Wilson explained that domestic burglary was the areas top concern but when the individuals surveyed were asked to list their top five concerns, speeding was the crime that appeared most often.

Mrs M Donnelly drew attention to the statistic that 22% of the people in Magherafelt thought the DPP was doing a good job. This compared favourably to the NI average of 17%. She asked however did this mean that 78% thought that the DPP was not doing a good job. In reply Mr Wilson stated the 78% represented people who either did not answer, or did not know or were not happy. When it came to random sampling it was normal to find that two thirds of people would sit on the fence.

Cllr McLean queried how representative the sample was. He stated that if 1429 were sent out to various households this constituted only 1 in every 10 households in the district. If in turn only 353 households replied this represented only 1 in every 40 households. If one person answered in every household this in turn meant that the survey was capturing the views of less than 1% of the population. In reply Mr Wilson stated that one had to remember that a large portion of the population was under 18 years of age and so they should not be considered as part of the potential survey population. In addition he considered that a response rate of 25% from the total number of questionnaires sent out was sufficient to be representative of the public's view. He added that one had to bear in mind the costs and in order to achieve a much larger sample would involve spending approximately £2 million.

Cllr Rev McCrea stated that he felt that the methodology was wrong in that he suggested that the only way to be sure if people's views had changed from one year to the next was to survey the same individuals in two succeeding years. In reply Mr Wilson stated he felt that the sample was representative and that the results did build in a tolerance level.

## **6 Youth Project**

The DPP Manager, Mr Michael McCrory gave a report on the recent Youth Drama Project carried out amongst year 8 pupils at the post primary schools in the district, funded by PSNI and the Community Safety Partnership, which concentrated on criminal damaged. After some debate it was agreed that the DPP would provide £2,500 to fund a follow up, the PSNI agreed to provide £1,000.

PROPOSED by Cllr Montgomery,  
Seconded by Miss A Scott, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the DPP would provide £2,500.

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

The District Commander Superintendent John Lindsay introduced to the meeting, Chief Inspector Tom Wiggins, Inspector S Martin and Inspector H Johnston.

The District Commander presented his report (Appendix I) for the months of September - October 2004. He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic burglary - 7 incidents compared to 9 during same period the previous year
- (b) Vehicle crime - 6 compared to 12 during the same period the previous year.
- (c) Drug seizures - 4 compared to 8 during the same period the previous year.
- (d) Violent Crime - the detection rate for the period was 57%.
- (e) Criminal damage - 87 incidents compared to 83 during the same period the previous year.

### Members Questions

(a) Cllr Rev McCrea enquired if there had been any success in solving the recent violent burglary and theft in Castledawson and if the police believed the perpetrators had come from outside the district.

In reply Superintendent Lindsay stated that the police were still investigating this matter. He believed that the perpetrators had probably originated from outside the district. He further stated that the level of commercial burglaries had reduced and that significant arrests had been made for vehicle crime. In addition the police had recovered 46kilos of cannabis and that individuals had been arrested for this crime.

(b) Ms F Symington enquired if the drug seizure had been a result of local intelligence or the work of the drug squad.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that it was work done by drug squad and that the results of this operation represented a major success.

(c) Cllr Rev McCrea enquired about the number of road traffic accidents and asked if they were the result of speed or alcohol.

In reply Superintendent Lindsay stated that during this period there was no particular pattern to the cause of these accidents. However he highlighted the fact that there had been a particular drive to ensure that people had been wearing their seatbelts. He further

stated that there was very clear evidence that the occupants of a vehicle would not be as badly injured if they wore their seatbelts.

(d) Cllr Rev McCrea then drew the meetings attention to the blind spot over the brow of the hill on the Castledawson Road, just before the roundabout and stated that he has received representations regarding the dangers of traffic queuing back from the roundabout and the oncoming traffic not being aware of this until they were over the brow of the hill.

Chief Inspector Wiggins suggested that the group should contact the DRD to have a sign erected warning oncoming traffic of the queues.

(e) Mr J Campbell also highlighted the problem of traffic coming from Magherafelt and queuing to turn right into the GAA pitch opposite St John's Church.

In reply Superintendent Lindsay suggested that the group write to the DRD requesting that the speed restriction be extended.

(f) The Chairperson, Cllr Lagan highlighted the problems of the Craigadick Road and asked if the partnership was writing to the DRD that a request for lighting to be provided on the Craigadick Road also be included.

PROPOSED by Mr J Campbell,  
Seconded by Ms F Symington, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the partnership write to the DRD regarding the issues raised about the crest of the hill before the roundabout on the Castledawson Road, the queuing to turn right into the GAA pitch on the Castledawson Road and the issue of lighting on the Craigadick Road.

(g) Mr J Campbell raised the matter of speeding in the Parkmore area late at night and of how young drivers seemed to have established a virtual rallying circuit in that area.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he would encourage the local residents to contact the PSNI when this occurred and he would have his officers investigate this matter.

(h) Cllr Rev McCrea stated the he was concerned that the police were setting up speed detection operations in area where there were no accidents. In addition, in Castledawson gangs of young people were tormenting residents especially in Moyola Avenue.

(i) Cllr Montgomery added that in many cases the traffic police were hiding like young school boys in order not to be seen during speed control operations.

In reply Sup Lindsay stated that if hiding in this manner helped to save lives then he would encourage his officer to carry on like this.

(j) Cllr McLean then raised the matter of the promise made by Superintendent Shevlin of promising to establish a "Police House" in Castledawson.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he had been endeavouring for the last 3-4 weeks to obtain a suitable site to locate a mobile police office, but as of yet he had met with no success.

In reply Cllr Rev McCrea stated that Superintendent Shevlin had not promised a mobile unit and that it was not acceptable to establish something less than what had been promised.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he was still looking for such a location but that there were Health and Safety issues for his officers, as well as other concerns to be borne in mind before locating a suitable site.

(k) Cllr Shiels raised the matter of the anti social behaviour during the switching on of the Christmas lights in Magherafelt. In particular he raised the matter of youths with aerosol cans spraying peoples clothing and of also spraying sectarian graffiti on property.

He also raised the matter of the major football match at the Gaelic pitch in Maghera on 7 November 2004. He stated that cars had been parked on both sides of the Glenshane Road for a distance of approximately 2 miles, sometimes two abreast. This he said, posed an obvious danger to traffic. He stated that he was surprised that there were no police officers to be seen and that members of the GAA club alone were acting as stewards. He added that he viewed this as discrimination against the protestant community, as, if there had been a band parade which would have attracted a much smaller crowd, then it would have been marshalled by members of the PSNI.

Inspector S Martin, replying to the incidents on the night of the switching on of the Christmas lights stated that some young people had obtained aerosol sprays and had been abusive in their use of them. However twenty four spray cans had been taken from these young people and the shop which was selling them was asked to stop doing so for the evening.

Inspector H Johnston replying to Cllr Shiels' concern about the parking at the GAA match, stated that agreement had been obtained to park down one side of the Glenshane Road. However the numbers had been far larger than expected and consequently carparking had occurred on both sides of the road. He stated that the whole incident had been a learning experience. He added that it was not correct to draw a comparison between a band parade and a football match and stated that if Tobermore United Football Club were holding a match which had expected such a large crowd then the police would have acted in exactly the same manner.

(l) Cllr Rev McCrea stated that the perception amongst some of the public was that different events were being treated differently.

(m) Miss A Scott enquired if there was any follow-up to the letter from a member of the public which had been raised at the last meeting. She stated that it seemed to her that Cllr Shiels had been asking some of the same questions and wondered if the matter had been treated any differently because it had been brought up by a Councillor.

(n) The Chairperson, Cllr Lagan stated that Superintendent Lindsay had answered the question at the last meeting but invited him to address the issue one more time.

In reply Superintendent Lindsay stated that the purpose of the DPP was not to address policy issues such as the 50/50 recruitment or what organisations PSNI members had to declare their membership of. Instead the function of the DPP was to deal with local policing issues and to hold the Local Police Commander to account.

## **8 Questions from the Public**

Cllr Montgomery read the following question which he recently received from a member of the public.

*“ I would like to know why Magherafelt Area Partnership DPP do not take questions from the general public at each DPP meeting.*

*Further more is it the decision of the DDP membership or PSNI not to take questions from the general public at each meeting.*

*If it is the membership decision, can a vote be taken in order that the public may see who supports an open and public meeting and who does not want to have question ask on the night of each meeting.”*

Mr John McLaughlin read the following extract from the first meeting of the DPP which was amending Model Standing Order 16.

- (a) all questions from the public should be in writing
- (b) only written questions received ten days before the meeting will receive a reply at the meeting
- (c) written questions received after the ten day cut off period are unlikely to receive a reply at the meeting, but this does not preclude the District Commander exercising his discretion to reply to the question at the meeting if he so wishes.

After some debate the members accepted that Standing Order 16 answered all of the questions raised by Cllr Montgomery.

PROPOSED by Miss A Scott,  
Seconded by Cllr Montgomery, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that members discuss how to encourage better public attendance at the meetings as well as how to encourage more questions from the public and how they should be dealt with at the meetings.

## **9 Local Policing Plan - Planning Workshop for DPPs/DCUs**

Mr Michael McCrory, DPP Manager advised the meeting that a date was to be arranged for January and in addition that a facilitator also had to be arranged.

## **10 Any Other Business**

- (a) Miss A Scott enquired if the youth group would attend the next meeting. Mr M McCrory, DPP Manger stated that they would.
- (b) The Chairperson, Cllr Lagan informed the meeting that this was Superintendent Lindsay’s last meeting of the DPP and that he was in fact retiring after this meeting. Cllr Lagan along with other members spoke of the many positive attributes and

qualities which Superintendent Lindsay possessed and of how he had been very forthright and honest in answering questions at the meetings.

Replying Superintendent Lindsay stated that he had found Magherafelt town and the Magherafelt district a wonderful place in which to live. He believed that his time here had been very rewarding and that he had found working along with the DPP quite a challenging experience. However his time here had left here with many fond memories which he could reflect on throughout his retirement. The Chairperson then presented Superintendent Lindsay with a memento from the DPP as a reminder of the time in his career which he spent in Magherafelt.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next public meeting would be held in Maghera Leisure Centre, Coleraine Road, Maghera on Monday 7 February 2005 at 7.30pm. A Private meeting will be held beforehand at 6.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.50pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

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

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