

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2006 AT 7.30PM
IN MAGHERA LEISURE CENTRE, COLERAINE ROAD, MAGHERA**

PRESENT Cllr P Mclean, Chairperson
Ms F Symington, Vice-Chairperson
Cllr Rev R T Wm McCrea, MLA
Cllr K Lagan
Mr J Conlon
Mrs M Donnelly
Cllr T J Catherwood
Cllr J Campbell
Mrs B Foster
Dr Shortall
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 G Shiels, Mrs M McCormack and Mrs S Chada.

2 Declarations of Interest

No member had any interest to declare.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

PROPOSED by Cllr T J Catherwood,
Seconded by Cllr K Lagan, and

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

4 Matters Arising

(a) The Chief Executive informed the members that a reply had been received from the NIPB in relation to the Partnerships query concerning the makeup of the DPP. In essence the NIPB were stating that although MDC had only nominated eight Councillors to the Partnership, the Council still had the Partnership constituted as a seventeen member body. Thus in effect MDC still had the right to nominate nine members although they had only nominated eight. Mr McLaughlin advised the Partnership that he was of the opinion that the NIPB's view was probably correct and as such the Partnership should not pursue the matter any further.

The members accepted the view put forward by Mr McLaughlin.

(b) Mr J O'Doherty enquired what progress had been made in relation to progressing his suggestion at the previous meeting concerning the use of taxis to combat drink driving.

In reply the police stated that lists of the various local taxi firms had been compiled and that these had been circulated amongst the various bars and night clubs in order to encourage the use of taxis by drivers who had become intoxicated

(c) Ms Symington stated that she had received no reply to her question raised at the previous meeting concerning sickness levels, especially long term sickness.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins apologised for this oversight but stated that he now had the information to hand. In relation to long term sickness, he could confirm to the meeting that the situation had improved dramatically and that five officers had now returned to work after long term sickness.

5 Report by the District Commander

Chief Inspector Wiggins presented the District Policing Partnership Report for the period April - December 2005 (Appendix 1). He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic Burglary - 46 incidents compared to 34 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 35.3%
- (b) Criminal Damage - 450 compared to 356 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 26.4%
- (c) Violent Crime - 425 compared to 369 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 15.2%
- (d) Offences against the Person - 391 compared to 343 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 14%
- (e) Total Crime - 1329 compared to 1049 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 26.7%

Chief Inspector Wiggins added that although the main categories of crime showed an increase on the same period last year, one had to remember that the figures for the previous year had been exceptionally low and also, that despite the increases Magherafelt still had the lowest crime rate in Northern Ireland.

(a) Members questioned Chief Inspector Wiggins on the benefit of CCTV and enquired if it should be expanded.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that it was his firm belief that CCTV had been a great benefit to reducing crime in the district and that if possible the area covered by CCTV should be extended.

(b) Cllr Lagan and Mr J O'Doherty both raised the issue of CCTV's monitoring the carparks. They highlighted events in St Lurach's carpark in Maghera and that despite the proximity of a camera, no one had been prosecuted.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the police had always responded promptly to any reports of reckless driving in the carpark but that the culprits had always moved on by the time the police had arrived. He stated that it would be difficult to obtain a successful prosecution until the public were willing to come forward with evidence

The Chief Inspector also informed the members that the fifth Crime Reduction Workshop would be held on 14 February 2006 and invited two members to come along to Maghera police station between 10.30am and 4.30pm.

It was agreed that Ms F Symington, Mrs Betty Foster and Mr J O'Doherty would attend the police station on behalf of the Partnership.

(c) The Chairman, Cllr McLean raised the increases in violent crime, vehicle crime and criminal damage and stated that it was his belief that a larger proportion of this was alcohol related. He asked the police if they thought his perception was correct.

In reply Inspector Johnston stated that he was of the view that the Chairman was probably correct, as most of this type of crime appeared to happen late at night or early in the morning when the public were leaving the pubs and clubs.

Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the problem was compounded by large numbers of people coming into the town in order to go to the pubs and clubs, but they were unable to get taxis quickly when they wished to leave the town. As a result they were forced to wait on taxis often in a drunken state and this often led to criminality.

(d) Mr J O'Doherty stated that he believed that the police had no proactive strategy, except CCTV, in order to combat this activity.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the police had carried out "operation night life" where they were working closely with door staff reminding them of their and licence holders responsibilities. He felt that the publicans were now much more aware of their responsibilities and that the situation was improving.

(e) Mrs M Donnelly asked if much of the crime was organised.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that many of the robberies and burglaries were opportunistic. There had been some evidence in the past that some of the burglaries had been carried out by travelling criminals from outside the district, but he was now confident they had moved on.

(f) The Chairman, Cllr McLean raised a matter concerning a complaint in Glenburn Place. He stated that a noise complaint had been made to the police, but it had been hours before they responded.

Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that in relation to the disturbance itself, the police had resolved the matter in conjunction with the NIHE and the local residents. In relation to the delay, he stated that it was possible that the officers on duty that night had other priorities. They may have, for instance, been dealing with a robbery or an assault. He added that this also raised a matter of he and his staff not getting adequate notice of questions and thus being unable to give a proper response. Thus he felt that from now on, in order to do justice to the questions, it would be necessary to have the questions in advance in writing.

6 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

7 Gaining the Cooperation of the Public Strategy

After some discussion it was agreed that the subgroup meeting would be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15 March 2006 in order to progress this matter.

8 Any Other Business

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 April 2006 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.25pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)