

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 4 APRIL 2005 AT 7.30PM
IN THE RURAL COLLEGE, DERRYNOID ROAD, DRAPERSTOWN**

PRESENT Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson
Cllr P McLean, Vice-Chairman
Mr J Conlon
Cllr R A Montgomery
Mrs M Donnelly
Cllr T J Catherwood
Mr J Campbell
Miss A Scott
Cllr G Shiels
Ms F Symington
Cllr J A McBride
Cllr J Junkin

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, Cllr P McErlean and Mrs M McCormack.

2 Declarations of Interest

No member had any interest to declare.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

(a) Private Meeting

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

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

(b) Public Meeting

PROPOSED by Mr J Campbell,
Seconded by Cllr J A McBride, and

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

4 Matters Arising

Mrs M Donnelly enquired what progress had been made in relation to finding a “police house” in Castledawson.

Both Chief Inspector Wiggins and Inspector Martin explained that they were in the process of arranging a meeting with NIHE in order to ascertain if they could provide a suitable location. Chief Inspector Wiggins promised to write to the Partnership, informing them of the outcome of the meeting.

Cllr McBride raised the matter of “accident black spots” and enquired if there were any within the precincts of this DCU and if so what action had been taken in order to reduce the level of serious accidents at these locations.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that this area did have several “accident black spots” which the PSNI regularly targeted with speed control and careless driving operations. In the last six months there had been six fatalities on the local roads.

As a result of this discussion it was

PROPOSED by Cllr K Lagan,
Seconded by Ms F Symington, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Members write to the DPP Manager, Mr M McCrory, with a list of “accident black spots” so that the DPP can arrange a joint meeting between the DRD the PSNI and representatives of the DPP in order to discuss what action could be taken in order to the give the public more warning of these “accident black spots”.

5 Report by the District Commander

Chief Inspector Tom Wiggins presented the report (Appendix I) for the months of January - February 2005. He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic burglary - 3 incidents compared to 15 during same period the previous year
- (b) Vehicle crime - 5 compared to 15 during the same period the previous year.
- (c) Drug seizures - 3 compared to 8 during the same period the previous year.
- (d) Violent Crime - the detection rate for the period was 69.5%.
- (e) Criminal damage - 55 incidents compared to 61 during the same period the previous year.

In summary Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that Magherafelt was now the safest district in Northern Ireland in which to live. He added that the district did not have a huge drug problem when compared to other districts, but that his officers were still being proactive in their efforts to reduce the level of drug activity within the area. He stated, however, that his one major concern, in relation to crime generally, was the level of violent crime in Maghera. He highlighted that there had been fifteen such incidents in February, most of which occurred between midnight and 2.30am.

Members Questions

(a) Cllr McLean enquired if the three drug seizures were of a major or minor nature.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that they were of a minor nature, that they were for soft drugs, and the district had no major drugs problem as such.

(b) Cllr McLean then enquired if the trouble in Maghera was due to drunkenness, sectarianism, or rival factions fighting. In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the trouble was not sectarian and the police had no proof that it was factional. He explained that compared to Magherafelt, Maghera had a different crowd dynamic, which seemed to be alcohol related. He added that Maghera would see an increased police presence as a result of these incidents.

(c) Cllr Montgomery enquired if the fighting in Maghera was amongst local individuals or with people from outside the district. He added that the late opening of takeaways was probably exacerbating the problem. He stated that the introduction of ASBO's in mainland Britain had been very successful and enquired if the District Commander had considered using them.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the introduction of an ASBO was the last resort and that the police would have to show that they tried every other possible measure.

Inspector Johnston added that the police had mounted several operations in an effort to control this problem. He stated that it had resulted in a decrease in the problem but what concerned him most was that the severity of these incidents was getting worse. One recent incident had resulted in a young man having to be placed on a life support machine.

(d) Cllr Lagan enquired if there was any merit in working with the licensees and the Community Safety Group, in addition to mounting a poster and leaflet campaign in order to tackle this problem. She stated that one had to be careful that these incidents did not spiral out of control and added that the increased police patrolling had to be welcomed.

Miss A Scott enquired if the possible introduction of 24hour licensing (as proposed by the Labour Government) would exacerbate the problem and asked what powers the Council had in relation to this.

In reply Mr John McLaughlin stated that the Council could only implement the law and that in reality the terms of the entertainment licence effectively determined the opening hours.

(e) Cllr Catherwood raised the issue of a man (he was a Protestant) cutting a lawn being intimidated by an individual who had been waiting for him. He stated that this was a serious matter and that it would be too late to take action when something happened. He also cited the case of 3-4 bands parading individually on 17 March and slogans being shouted.

Acting Inspector McAuley stated that he was not aware of the incident of the individual cutting grass being intimidated. Inspector Johnston stated that he thought that Cllr Catherwood was referring to a parade on Easter Monday, which was a notified parade and which had been policed.

Cllr Shiels agreed with Cllr Catherwood that slogans had been shouted and stated that the matter had been reported to the parades commission.

6 Youth Forum

The Youth Forum were unable to attend the meeting.

7 Local Policing Plan

It was agreed that launch of the Local Policing Plan should be delayed until after the Council elections in May.

8 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

Cllr Lagan raised the matter of the police issuing parking tickets after 6pm. She highlighted the case of an American visitor who had received a ticket after parking outside the Hotel in Maghera.

Both Chief Inspector Wiggins and Inspector Johnston stated that this was not a change of policy and that double yellow lines were there for a purpose 24 hours a day.

Ms F Symington raised the issue of graffiti being painted on a pensioner's wall. The pensioner concerned had called the police but had got the "brush off". Cllr McLean confirmed that he also had received a telephone call from this distraught pensioner who also stated to him that she had received the "brush off" once she had called the Police Station.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that someone receiving the "brush off" from the police was not acceptable. He assured the meeting he would personally investigate this incident and would again personally ensure that a member of the PSNI called with the pensioner.

Cllr Shiels raised the matter of the recent introduction of pay and display car parking in Magherafelt. He highlighted that it had caused a problem of the excessive parking on the roads in residential areas such as Queens Avenue, or opposite the entrance to public building such as schools. He enquired what action the police could take to alleviate this problem.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the PSNI could only issue parking tickets, if justified otherwise it was a matter for Roads Service.

9 Advertising

The DPP Manager, Mr M McCrory put forward the following options:

Mailmatters - Mail delivered to households. This will cost 13.9p per letter. Production costs will also have to be included.

Viacom Outdoors - The meeting would be advertised for eight weeks on fifteen buses at a cost of £1800. Production costs of posters would also need to be costed.

Adshell - Advertising on Bus Shelters. There are only seven advertising bus shelters in the district.

It was agreed to go with Mailmatters and prepare a mailshot to advertise the next meeting.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next public meeting would be held in The Council Offices, 50 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt on Monday 6 June 2005 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)