

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 6 JUNE 2005 AT 7.30PM
IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, 50 BALLYRONAN ROAD,
MAGHERAFELT**

PRESENT Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson
Cllr P McLean, Vice-Chairman
Mr J Conlon
Mrs M Donnelly
Cllr T J Catherwood
Mr J Campbell
Ms S Ewing
Cllr G Shiels
Ms F Symington
Dr Shortall
Mrs M McCormack

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 Miss A Scott.

2 Declarations of Interest

No member had any interest to declare.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

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

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

4 Matters Arising

(a) Dr Shortall informed the meeting that he had sent his apologies for the previous meeting and asked that this be included in the minutes.

(b) Cllr McLean raised the issue of the promised “police house” having still not having been established in Castledawson.

Chief Inspector Wiggins advised that a community beat officer had recently been appointed and that this person’s sole job was to police Castledawson. He stated however that it was difficult to obtain a suitable premises for a “police house” and was of the view

that adequate finance may not be available in order to provide this. Inspector Martin supported the District Commander and stated that it was more effective to have an officer on patrol rather than have a “drop in” type centre.

Cllrs McLean, Catherwood and Shiels expressed their disappointment at the District Commander’s response, stating that they viewed this issue as being a case of the PSNI not keeping a promise and not taking the DPP seriously.

PROPOSED by Cllr McLean,
Seconded by Cllr Shiels, and

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the Partnership write to the Chief Constable advising that since a promise had been made to establish a “police house”, then on point of principle it should be provided, as not to do so would be to undermine the credibility of the DPP.

(c) Ms F Symington enquired as to when the local DCU would lose the part time reserve and if any of that manpower would be replaced.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the local DCU would have lost 14 officers by the end of current month and that he did not envisage them being replaced.

(d) Cllr Catherwood enquired how the District Commander envisaged policing the area effectively bearing in mind the loss of personnel resources.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he had changed shift patterns in order to have more officers on the ground at times when crime was more likely to be committed. He had also introduced targeted patrols.

5 Report by the District Commander

Chief Inspector Tom Wiggins presented the report (Appendix I) for the period 1 October 2004 - 20 March 2005. He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic burglary - 21 incidents compared to 31 during same period the previous year
- (b) Vehicle crime - 17 compared to 33 during the same period the previous year.
- (c) Drug seizures - 12 compared to 19 during the same period the previous year.
- (d) Violent Crime - the detection rate for the period was 69.8%.
- (e) Criminal damage - 197 incidents compared to 223 during the same period the previous year.

Members Questions

(a) Mr John Conlon asked the District Commander how the statistics presented in his report compared to those in other DCU’s.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that these statistics were the best for any DCU in Northern Ireland. He advised however that because they were so good it would be difficult for him and his officers to improve on them during the current year. However they were committed to trying to achieve this improvement. He pointed out the most

satisfying figure was the clearance rate for violent crime, which indicated that in 7 out of every 10 violent crimes committed, the police would prosecute the perpetrators.

Chief Inspector Wiggins advised however that one of his greatest concerns was the continued high level of road traffic deaths and serious injuries. To date, during the current year there had been 8 road deaths and 22 serious injuries within the Magherafelt DCU.

In reply to a question from Mrs M McCormack he advised that approx 350 fixed penalty notices had been issued during the current year for the non wearing of seatbelts.

(b) Ms F Symington asked if the District Commander could give an age profile of those who had been seriously injured as well as for those who had receive fixed penalty notices for not wearing seat belts or for using mobile phones.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he did not have this information to hand but that he would get this for the next meeting of the DPP and/or he would write to Ms Symington directly.

(c) Cllr Shiels enquired about signs warning of known “accident black spots” and highlighted the recent fatal accident on the Tobermore Road.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the most effective way to get signs placed at known “accident black spots” was for both the DPP and PSNI to write jointly to the Road Service.

(d) Mr J Campbell raised the issue of drivers parking in disabled bays who were themselves not disabled.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that anyone found guilty of this offence would receive a fixed penalty fine.

Mr J Campbell also raised the issue of the excessive all day parking now taking place in locations such as Queens Avenue. This had been caused by the recent introduction of “pay and display” car parking in some of the town centre car parks. In places like Queens Avenue it had led to numerous complaints of private driveways having been blocked.

Several other members gave anecdotal evidence in support of Mr Campbell.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that the Police were not aware of this issue but could only take action if motorists were parking in prohibited areas.

(e) Cllr McLean raised the issue of what appeared to him to be an increase in theft and vandalism throughout the area particularly from building sites. He was of the view that these were professional, well organised criminals who were targeting specific areas. He enquired what measures the police were taking in order to target this type of crime.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that targeting this type of crime was very much intelligence led but that it was also being subjected to analyses by the local crime analyst.

(f) Mrs M Donnelly raised the issue of drugs being widely available within the area and being used by youths as young as 10.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that in relative terms Magherafelt had very little of a drugs problem. There was no evidence to suggest it had a major problem. However if any member of the public had information they should contact the local DCU or call “crime stoppers”.

6 Questions from the Public

Cllr Shiels asked the following question on behalf of Mr Lennox from Castledawson (Appendix II).

Cllr Shiels stated that since a member of the public was not a liberty to discuss the issues raised in the question with the District Commander at a DPP meeting he would ask that Chief Inspector Wiggins would agree to a private meeting with Mr Lennox and Cllr Shiels.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he was happy to agree to such a meeting. However he was also happy to answer the question at present. He advised that all parades are policed equally, that the flying of flags on Police Stations are governed by an Act of Parliament, namely the Flying of Flags (NI) 2002 and that the police have no record or no intelligence of drug parties in Castledawson.

7 Nomination of Two Members to sit on Selection Panel

The members were requested to nominate two Councillors to sit on the panel for selecting independent members for the next DPP. Two training days would be provided in order to help Councillors perform this duty

PROPOSED by Cllr McLean,
Seconded by Cllr Shiels, and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Cllr Lagan and Cllr Catherwood sit on the selection panel for choosing independent members for the next DPP.

8 Road Safety

Members agreed that road safety would be the focus of a DPP awareness raising campaign. It was agreed that £3,500 would be used to fund this initiative. Chief Inspector Wiggins and Michael McCrory will meet to discuss this and report back at the next meeting.

9 Any Other Business

(a) It was unanimously agreed that the Youth Forum should be invited to the October 2005 meeting.

(b) Ms F Symington requested that all information should be forwarded to the members as soon as possible on all information requiring an urgent decision.

(c) It was agreed that the next meeting of the DPP should be held in Maghera Leisure Centre, Coleraine Road, Maghera on Monday 1 August 2005 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.05pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)