

**MINUTES OF THE DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 3 OCTOBER 2005 AT 7.30PM
IN THE RURAL COLLEGE, DERRYNOID ROAD, DRAPERSTOWN**

PRESENT Cllr P McLean, Vice-Chairman
Cllr Rev Dr R T Wm McCrea, MLA
Mr J Conlon
Mrs M Donnelly
Cllr T J Catherwood
Mr J Campbell
Ms S Ewing
Mrs A Scott-McKinley
Cllr G Shiels
Ms F Symington
Mrs M McCormack

Also present Mr J A McLaughlin, Chief Executive, MDC
Mr M McCrory, DPP Manager
Ms P Shaw, Secretary

1 Apologies

Cllr K Lagan, Chairperson.

Cllr McLean assumed the chair. He explained that Cllr Lagan was in hospital and proposed that flowers be sent to Cllr Lagan on behalf of the DPP.

It was unanimously agreed that flowers be sent to Cllr Lagan.

2 Declarations of Interest

No member had any interest to declare.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

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

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

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Presentation from Kit Chivers, Chief Inspector Criminal Justice

Mr Kit Chivers, Criminal Justice Inspector, gave a presentation outlining the work of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate.

Members sought clarification on a few issues, particularly the inspection of the Prison Service.

Following the discussion the Vice-Chairman, Cllr McLean, thanked Mr Chivers for his attendance.

6 Report by the District Commander

Chief Inspector Tom Wiggins presented the report (Appendix I) for July - August 2005. He highlighted that the most significant features were:

- (a) Domestic burglary - 7 incidents compared to 4 during same period the previous year, an increase of 75%.
- (b) Vehicle crime - 8 compared to 5 during the same period the previous year, an increase of 60%.
- (c) Drug seizures - 41.25 grammes and 6 tablets seized compared to 1440.03 grammes and 32 tablets during the same period the previous year.
- (d) Violent Crime - the detection rate for the period was 42%.
- (e) Criminal damage - 114 incidents compared to 90 during the same period the previous year, and increase of 27%.

Chief Inspector Wiggins explained that although the figures for the past two months had shown an increase on the same period during the previous year, the local DCU was still on course to meet most of its targets for the year.

- (a) Ms F Symington enquired what locations were the local traffic accident black spots.

In reply Inspector Johnston stated that they were on the Moneysharvin Road Swatragh, the Tobermore Road Magherafelt and the Glenshane Road. In addition he advised that the cause of most accident was excessive speed and/or careless driving.

The DPP Manager, Mr M McCrory, advised the meeting that on Sunday 23 October 2005 an event was being held at the Castledawson Roundabout, which was targeted at the 18-24 year old "boy racers" which aimed to demonstrate to them the dangers of excessive speed and dangerous driving.

Both Cllrs McCrea and McLean expressed their dismay at such an event being held on a Sunday. They stated that Sunday was the Lords Day and as such it was not an appropriate time to hold such an event.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins advised that the organisers were of the view that Sunday was the day on which they would attract the biggest attendance of young people since none of them would be working on that day.

(b) Mrs M McCormack raised the issue of lorry drivers having being recently stopped in Toome and having their fuel tanks dipped for both “red diesel” and “laundered diesel”. She advised that many of the local lorry drivers had viewed this as harassment by police.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that this exercise had been driven by Customs and Excise and not by the PSNI. Customs and Excise do not have the power to stop vehicles on the road and so it was necessary for police to be present to stop the vehicles in order for the Customs and Excise to check for illegal fuel.

Chief Inspector Wiggins further advised that using “red diesel” or “laundered diesel” was breaking the law, that it was providing a market for the produce of organised crime. For this reason there was no way that the PSNI or the Customs and Excise could be accused of harassment.

7 Questions from the Public

(a) Mr J Campbell asked the following questions:

(1) There has been a worrying spate of attacks on church and other properties in the Magherafelt District in recent weeks as well as a proliferation of sectarian graffiti. What is the District Commanders considered view on what element of these attacks is paramilitary inspired and co-ordinated as opposed to anti-social behaviour by single individuals or groups of individuals. Have lines of enquiry resulted in arrests (or likely arrests) of suspected culprits and what is his prognosis for future weeks?

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he empathised with all of the concerns raised by Mr Campbell. He stated that PSNI intelligence suggested that there was only a very small number of individuals engaged in this type of activity. The police had responded by carrying out high visibility patrolling in the vicinity of Orange Halls, Gaelic Clubs and Churches, etc. To date three people had been brought before the courts in relation to these crimes and the local PSNI are working hard in an attempt to bring further prosecutions.

(b) Cllr McCrea stated that there was nothing new in this type of crime. For ages the Fairhill, the Ballyronan Road, the Carparks and the Greenvale Estate had been adorned with graffiti and slogans. Some individuals had even had their windows broken. It amazed him that the population did not seem to know anything about this or who was committing these crimes. The community had to act in unison and give these people up. It was obvious to him and to every other right thinking person that members of the community were hiding these individuals.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he agreed with Cllr McCrea, particularly with his comment that the community had to act and give these individuals up. If the police did not have information or evidence they could not prosecute. He also advised that this problem had become particularly bad in August and September.

(c) Mrs A Scott-McKinley enquired if those arrested had been adults or juveniles.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that they had been juveniles.

(d) Ms F Symington enquired if the Council could remove all of the graffiti.

Mr J McLaughlin advised the meeting that the Council could only remove graffiti from its own property.

(e) The Vice-Chairman stated that possibly the ownership of the different areas could be identified and those organisations could be asked to make the removal of this offending graffiti a priority issue. He gave the example of the Road Service and the NIHE.

(f) Mr Campbell then posed a question regarding the annual abuse of fireworks as follows:

(2) Halloween is not far away. What action will be taken against illegal users of fireworks and will the local press be used to advise the public of any proposed actions by the PSNI?

In reply Inspector Johnston advised the meeting that all vendors of fireworks must now be licensed to sell these, without a licence was a crime and the police would respond quickly to anyone found doing so. He advised the meeting that a press release had been issued in conjunction with the USPCA, informing the public of the distress which these fireworks cause to pets and in particular, to guide dogs.

(f) Mr Campbell then raised the issue of road safety as follows:

(3) The Magherafelt Roads Safety Committee have been advised that there will only be one PSNI representative at future meetings as opposed to two. What is the reasoning behind this change?

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that he was making most effective use of his staff.

(h) Cllr McCrea enquired if the criminal damage to Council property which was reported to the Council at every monthly meeting was included in the statistics for criminal damage.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins assured the meeting that they were.

(i) Cllr McCrea highlighted the thousands of pounds of criminal damage which was done every year to public toilets and enquired if the police could not do something to stop this.

In reply Chief Inspector Wiggins stated that public toilets were an easy target for the vandal and that police could not easily mount CCTV surveillance as this would be deemed to be an invasion of the public's rights.

(j) Cllr McCrea then enquired if the police would take any action in order to have the parking fines cancelled, which had recently been issued on a Sunday morning in Wesleyan Mews.

Both Chief Inspector Wiggins and Inspector Martin outlined the background to these parking tickets having been issued, however they did state that they were of the view that in this instance the motorists has a reasonable defence and the local DCU are seeking to have the fines cancelled.

8 Any Other Business

Mrs A Scott-McKinley stated that this meeting marked the end of the current DPP. Mr M McCrory, DPP Manager, stated that Mrs Scott-McKinley was correct and advised that there would be a new DPP in December, although as of yet no one knew who the independent members would be.

The Vice-Chairman, Cllr McLean stated that since this was the last meeting of the first DPP he would like to thank all of the Independent members and Councillors for all of their work over the past number of years.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DPP should be held in The Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt on Monday 5 December 2005 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.15pm.

J A McLaughlin

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)