

LIMAVADY DPP OVERVEIW

Limavady DPP prior to its first meeting in public, decided to use the meeting in public forum as an opportunity to educate the public on local policing issues and also for the DPP members to further understand issues which were in the policing plan.

In order to raise the DPP profile, ensure accessibility for a broad section of the community, and to encourage greater attendance and participation, it was decided to hold three meetings in public within a two week period across the Borough, to be held in community association halls and at different times throughout the day. In order to encourage greater participation and to obtain views on local issues, in association with the District Commander, it was agreed to allow questions from the floor by members of the public. For the first series of meetings, the police Domestic Violence Officer and a representative from Foyle Women's Aid provided short presentations on the issue of Domestic Violence.

The subsequent meeting in public had a drugs focus and included presentations from the Community Drugs therapist, Foyle Trust and the police Drug Squad which focused discussion.

Members of the public attending each meeting in public have been invited to complete a satisfaction survey. This information coupled with the input from the DPP and the police have meant that the format and content of meetings in public has continued to change and evolve.

This year, the DPP plans to hold four meetings in public which will concentrate on the District Commanders report with quarterly reports looking at crime data. Two further meetings will have a thematic approach identified from the policing plan, looking more in-depth at statistics and impact of the issue on society and how the DPP and police can seek to address the issue.

The DPP has been encouraged that all priorities identified were included in the local policing plan. This outcome has produced a detailed policing plan with 15 specific targets,

which reflects the commitment of the DCU to take on board, the comments and deliberations of the DPP.

The District Commander, Superintendent David Hamilton has shown the true spirit of co-operation, when he agreed to participate in three meetings in public within a two week period, which included questions from the floor. He has also been flexible to change, and prepared to adapt the process and templates to reflect requests from the DPP and to reflect the uniqueness of the Borough. The District Commander has made himself available to meet upon request with either individual members or the DPP corporately.

The highlight of the year, was when the District Commander at a meeting in public in February 2004, stated “as a result of deliberations with the DPP, and the survey which identified that 67% of respondents indicated that the main policing priority was enforcement of drug laws, I have established a team to look at this and other volume crime issues. During the first six weeks of the year there have been 21 People Arrested for Drug Offences, 31 People Searched for Drugs, 9 House Searches carried out, 11 Area Searches carried out, and 14 Vehicle Searches carried out, resulting in drug finds”. At the same meeting he stated “as a result of this question from a member of the public, I have had my town centre beat officer look at this issue, and as a result he has talked with all business owners and issued advice. However, if the situation does not improve, fixed penalty notices will be issued to those who flaunt the laws on restricted car-parking zones”. These examples reflect that the DPP and questions from the public can and does shape local policing.

The DPP is aware that it shapes local policing not just by the monitoring of targets and indicators as indicated in the local policing plan, but also by being a conduit between the public and the police, lobbying, engendering debate, and seeking to influence other groups to deal with community issues. This aspect will be more difficult to monitor, but there is a need to move beyond monitoring targets to measuring what the DPP values – a responsive, courteous, community based, problem-solving focused police service, which commands the respect of the community it serves, and therefore gains public respect and co-operation.

The DPP has engaged in discussions with the Parades Commission and the Police, as it has grappled with the issue of parades in the Borough. The DPP has sought to stay within its remit of policing issues, and therefore has looked at the policing of parades as opposed to the subject of parades.

Several members of the DPP and the DPP Manager undertook training in facilitation skills in order to meet with groups to facilitate a discussion to determine policing issues. Presentations have also been made to organisations within the Borough, and this in turn has generated further interest and submission of questions and issues into the process.

At the end of September, Coffee and shortbread set the scene for the evening where 90 people gathered together in the Radisson Roe Hotel for an evening event hosted by Limavady DPP. Invitations were extended to Ballymoney, Coleraine, Derry, Moyle and Strabane DPP's to hear presentations from Crimestoppers, Community Safety Unit, the Office of the Police Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Commissioner and how their work impacted upon the role of the District Policing Partnerships. Following the presentations, a panel session which also included a representative of the police and policing board allowed questions to be posed from members. The meeting was ably chaired by the then Limavady DPP Chairman, Jack Rankin MBE.

During the year, DPP members have identified other topics which impact upon the role of the DPP, and so another regional event is being planned. Topics will include the role of the Young People's Commissioner, and how can the DPP's tap into the work of the Commission as it seeks to hear the voice of young people in relation to policing, impact of the new Public Prosecution Service on the work of the police, a Community Service Order vs. a custodial sentence, and the youth conferencing service and youth diversionary projects.

The DPP looks forward to its second year of operation and seeking to further develop the work of the DPP and gain the co-operation of the public to work with the police.

June 2004.