

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Public Meeting of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership held remotely via zoom on 15 June 2021 at 7.03 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor M Guy (Chairperson)
Councillor N Anderson
Councillor R Carlin
Councillor A Ewing
Councillor A Gowan
Councillor H Legge
Councillor J McCarthy
Councillor S Skillen
Mr J Bentley
Ms G Conroy
Mrs Y Craig
Mr G Doran
Ms A Landa
Mr D McBurney
Ms A Twomey (Vice-Chairperson)
Ms P Yellamaty

IN ATTENDANCE:

Acting PCSP Manager
PCSP Officer (JB)
Member Services Officer

PSNI

Superintendent J Mullan, Police Service of Northern Ireland
Chief Inspector J Wilson, Police Service of Northern Ireland

Members of the Community

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairperson, Councillor M Guy, welcomed those present to the meeting extending a particular welcome to members of the community.

1. **Apologies**

It was agreed to accept an apology for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Councillor A McIntyre and Mrs P Leeson. It was also noted that Councillor S Skillen had advised she would be late and Mrs Y Craig had advised she would be leaving early due to another engagement.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy invited members of the Partnership to declare any interests they might have in any of the items on the Agenda.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. 12 Monthly Report from the PSNI in respect of policing of the district

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy, welcomed Superintendent J Mullan and Chief Inspector J Wilson to the meeting and invited Superintendent J Mullan to present her report. Superintendent Mullan then proceeded to work through her 12 monthly report, a copy of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting to members of the Partnership. As she progressed through the presentation, she invited questions from those present. The matters raised are outlined below.

3.1 Domestic Violence
Councillor N Anderson

Councillor N Anderson referred to unreported domestic abuse incidents and asked how police were working to address this particularly in light of the relaxation of regulations. Superintendent Mullan responded that police had been working closely with Women's Aid and other partners and she went on to outline how police had responded during the past year. She said contact had continued through zoom meetings and by telephone and that she hoped to see more face to face contact going forward however this had to remain within the Covid regulations in place.

Councillor Anderson asked whether contact had been made with government departments to try to make some of these engagements classified as essential services. Superintendent Mullan responded that this would not be within the gift of PSNI but would be a decision for the NI Executive, police can only try to maintain contact.

3.2 Domestic Violence
Mr J Bentley

Mr J Bentley said that he felt it would be beneficial to put policies and procedures in place so that vulnerable people had an escape route in certain circumstances for example a coded telephone number which could be used in dangerous situations. Superintendent Mullan outlined that the 999 number could be used but she was unaware of other technological procedures being currently available.

Ms A Twomey then provided some information on ongoing work between the Department, Women's Aid and PSNI on this subject and she also provided some information on how services through Women's Aid had continued during the covid period. She advised that new legislation was being introduced and training was being carried out regarding this.

3.3 Domestic Violence
The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy asked Superintendent Mullan if she had any suggestions as to how the PCSP could support victims. Superintendent Mullan suggested knowledge sharing / awareness raising projects stating that she would welcome any suggestions which might be forthcoming from the PCSP.

3.4 Incidents of Rape
The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy referred to the increase in the number of rape crimes and asked whether it was considered that this was due to increased reporting. Superintendent Mullan responded that the PSNI had rolled out a number of campaigns to encourage victims to report and the spikes in the figures correlated with these campaigns.

3.5 Format of PSNI Report
Councillor A Ewing

Councillor A Ewing thanked PSNI officers for the way the report had been presented as he felt the information within it had been made clear. He then went on to welcome the reduction in burglaries but expressed his concern at the drugs offences figures.

3.6 Drugs
Ms P Yellamaty

Ms P Yellamaty asked what types of drugs were being seized and what part did alcohol play in crime. Superintendent Mullan advised that she did not have statistics to hand however, in general, alcohol would be a motivator of crime.

3.7 Anti-social Behaviour
The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy asked whether the Superintendent considered that the relaxation in regulations coupled with better weather would see a spike in anti-social behaviour incidents. Superintendent Mullan responded that this would seem to be the case however work was ongoing with partners in an attempt to mitigate it. Councillor M Guy asked if the spikes were of typical levels or were particularly high and was advised by Chief Inspector J Wilson that the rise was in keeping with recent years and the usual effects of summer weather.

3.8 Operation carried out by police in connection with the use of an app
Mr J Bentley

Mr J Bentley outlined a large scale operation carried out by police in connection with the use of a mobile application. He commended this global initiative and what had been achieved. Superintendent Mullan responded that such large scale work would impact across the world and she felt it would have a significant effect.

3.9 101 Call Centre
Mr Gordon Fletcher (Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator)

Mr Fletcher outlined that he had been volunteering for the NHS in recent months and had been assisting with car park supervision at a covid-19 vaccination centre. He had tried to report traffic issues using the 101 number but had experienced issues with this as he kept being put on hold for long periods. He said that the issue could have been easily remedied and on one occasion he was able to ask a passing patrol car for assistance and they were able to rectify the traffic problems fairly quickly. He said he felt that Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators should be issued with a telephone number so that they could contact police directly rather than being held in a queue or on hold on the 101 number. The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy said that she also felt that, as an elected representative, it would be beneficial to have a direct number and she asked that police have a look at communications with elected representatives / Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators to see if a solution could be found. Superintendent J Mullan said she would have a look at this request however she advised that it had been a corporate decision to put the 101 system in place. She outlined that due to shift patterns and priorities she could not guarantee availability at a given time but would see what could be done.

3.10 Support for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators
Mr Gordon Fletcher (Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator)

Mr Fletcher referred to a specific incident in his Neighbourhood Watch area stating that as a co-ordinator he had not been notified about it, he said that it was his understanding that Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators would be notified of incidents within their area. He went on to outline how little contact he had with his local neighbourhood policing officers recently and said that he felt co-ordinators were not being supported by police. Superintendent J Mullan said she would follow the incident up with Mr Fletcher directly and would ensure that contact was made.

3.11 Crimes Against Society
Councillor A Ewing

Councillor A Ewing referred to the term 'Other Crimes Against Society' which was referred to in the report and sought clarification on this. Chief Inspector J Wilson then read out the list of crimes which were encompassed in this term.

3.12 101 Call Centre
Councillor N Anderson

Councillor N Anderson referred to the previous discussions on the 101 system. He said he had positive contact with neighbourhood police but felt it would be helpful to issue Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and Elected Representatives with a duty sergeant's telephone number. Superintendent Mullan undertook to feedback these comments and look at the possibility of issuing some telephone numbers.

Chief Inspector J Wilson advised that he had carried out some work with the 101 call centre and went on to provide re-assurance that new procedures were trying to address the maximum number of calls being handled, however he acknowledged that there had been some issues. He explained that operators were trained to ensure that the most serious calls were prioritised, he urged caution highlighting that this allowed for the risk of threat to be assessed. He went on to outline that new reporting systems were designed to make improvements.

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy said that she felt direct contact numbers for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and Elected Representatives would avoid these calls blocking the 101 system and welcomed some off-line discussion on the matter.

3.13 Incident in Dundonald
Councillor S Skillen

Councillor S Skillen referred to a recent incident in the Dundonald area and thanked police for the work they had done and the re-assurance provided to the community. She went on to advise of a positive experience when ringing the 101 call centre.

3.14 Policing during the Covid-19 pandemic
Mr J Bentley

Mr J Bentley pointed out the changes in society during the current pandemic and highlighted the impact it had on policing. He said he felt it was easy to criticise but he felt police had to be commended for their work during this period. Every officer he has met had been a credit to the service. Superintendent J Mullan stated that she appreciated these comments.

Councillor A Ewing said that he concurred with Mr Bentley's comments and commended police officers for the risks they have been taking during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.15 101 Call Centre
Mr Gordon Fletcher (Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators)

Mr G Fletcher outlined some improvements which he felt could be made to the call handling system and Superintendent Mullan undertook to feed this back.

(During the above presentation Ms A Twomey arrived at 7.07 pm, Councillor S Skillen arrived at 7.15 pm, Mrs A Landa arrived at 7.25 pm and Mrs Y Craig left at 7.20 pm).

4. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Conclusion of the Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairperson, Councillor M Guy, thanked those present for attending, particularly members of the Community.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 8.04 pm.

Chairperson