

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: FEAR OF CRIME

HELD ON FRIDAY 14th MAY 2010

PRESENT: Councillors Garrett (Chair), Bullock, Dolling, and Stewart.

Co-opted Member – Kayliegh Deamer

LBC SUPPORT OFFICERS / ADVISORS

Eunice Emuophe – Democratic Services Officer
Angela Fraser – Scrutiny Officer

WITNESSES:

Anita Briddon – Head of Youth Offending Team
Nicola Perry – Community Safety & Partnership Manager (CDRP)
Michelle Brawley – (CDRP Officer)
Lyles Osborne – Marsh Farm Community Development Trust
Marie Bacon – Marsh Farm Community Development Trust
Brian McFarland – The Mall Luton - Manager
Mark Whitcroft – Security Manager – The Mall Luton
Nadine Madi – Youth Council Representative
Deniece Dobson – Youth Participation Officer (LBC)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Barbara Felson
Mustapha Masha

ACTION

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Neale, Singh and Timoney. The Chair welcomed Councillor Bullock after a period of absence due to ill health.

35 NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (REF: 3)

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2010 and 29th April 2010 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36 EVIDENCE GATHERING (REF: 5)

The Chair invited Anita Briddon, Head of Youth Offending Service to give evidence to the Group.

The Head of Youth Offending Service (YOS) gave an overview of the Service and reported a positive outcome of the YOS. She explained that there were two areas within the national indicators that the service had performed well and achieved good performance and trend.

The Head of Youth Offending Service (YOS) further reported on the following:

- **NI/111:** Measures the number of first time entrance into youth justice by young offenders: In 2008/09 the number of young people who came into the youth justice system was reduced by 10%. In 2010 there was a reduction of 18%, however this may change when police database was reviewed around November 2010. In previous years the reduction had followed the same trend and huge discrepancy was not expected.
- **NI/1:** This was the local indicator in the Council's Local Area Agreement (LAA) about re-offending by young people aged 10 to 17 that were already known to the Youth Justice system. It enabled tracking the frequency of young people who re-offended. A positive outcome of 0.87% was achieved.

The Head of YOS also highlighted the following initiatives that supported and deterred young people from re-offending.

- **Deter Group:** This was one of the government's new priority schemes to tackle prolific adult and young offenders. In 2008/09 there was a reduction of re-offending in Luton of 68.1% compared to the national and family group average of 62.3%.
- **Prevention:** Lots of work had been carried out by multi agencies focusing on prevention of crime. A local programme called the "**Turn Around**" project carried out assessment and worked with multi agencies, families, schools, to address behavioural issues and other difficulties faced by young people. Since April 2010, the police received

training in restorative practices, an alternative process that prevented young people from re-offending without recourse to the criminal justice system.

- **Improving Review and Public Confidence.** The Head of YOS explained that it was difficult to get positive new stories into the local community as media focus tended to prioritise bad news rather than promote positive news. A new pilot scheme was in the process of being set up and the YOS would look at publishing positive stories on Lutonline.

The Peterborough and Cambridgeshire “**Kids are Alright**” campaign was a good example of a good news story and YOS Luton, would explore different strategies to carry out a similar campaign in Luton within the next year.

The Chair commented that only 60% of the borough received Lutonline within the borough but it could be an area to explore.

Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:

Question

Response

What was the age limit of young people in the Deter group?

The Deter group joining age was from 15-17.

In terms of the reduction by 22% in young people offending, would you say young people now offended less?

The reduction was due to the high level of support and joint working by multi agencies and YOS, which prevented young people from re-offending. Prevention procedures were also being reviewed to prevent young people from re offending.

Did the family workers who worked with the victims and their families get the full cooperation from the parents and family members of the offenders?

Yes. Once the situation had been explained, they would generally cooperate voluntarily and were supportive of the situation. A court order was requested and imposed on parents and carers to ensure cooperation.

Was the statistics reflective of the same individuals?

The cohort was of the same young people that were monitored over a three-month

period and tracked over twelve months period. Some of the young people may not reoffend but others continued to re-offend.

What about information sharing? Did you receive information via agencies with a trend that indicated when a young person was in trouble?

The sharing of information amongst agencies was good and YOS maintained good working relationships with Bedfordshire Police, Health Service and Beds Probation Service. Also intensive assessments were conducted by all agencies to ensure that young people received the right support.

Had there been any contact with victims of crimes?

The Team contacted victims of all young people known to the YOS in accordance to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) in Bedfordshire. This process enabled the Team to establish the preferred level of involvement and option in the best interest of both the victim and the offender. Victims could be involved in a number of ways:

- Face to face meeting with the offender,
- Involvement at referral meetings
- Contact by letter – This was the offender's opportunity to explain reasons for their action.

What level of support was offered to victims who retaliated and would the victim (who retaliated) receive the necessary support?

In all cases the Team would carry out risk assessment and ensured that all health and safety issues were covered. Also support was offered to both the victim and offender as required.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) allowed a wider access to victim support. A victim could be referred and supported on a longer-term basis. If they were much younger they would be referred to Children support services.

How would you compare family average and national average?

In terms of family group comparison Luton Youth Offending Service was compared to Slough by the Youth Justice Board. The support age starts at 8 years old. The early intervention ensured preventative and restorative measures.

What skills were required to ensure that both the victim and offender received adequate support?

Support workers receive necessary training to ensure that clear boundaries were set and that offenders were made to understand the consequences of their behaviours and actions.

The Chair commented that in court, offenders received a stern warning of the consequences of breaching a court order. This ensured that the offender was aware that there were grave consequences should they re-offend or breach a court order.

Resolved: That the Head of Youth Offending Service be thanked for attending the meeting and the contribution made towards the review on the fear of crime in Luton.

Brian McFarland – General Manager of Luton Mall
Mark Whitcroft – Luton Mall

The Group invited Brian McFarland, General Manager of Luton Mall to give evidence to the Group.

Brian McFarland informed the Group that a customer survey was carried out in 2007 to establish reasons why people did not visit

Luton Arndale Centre for shopping and some of the following reasons came to light.

- Perception of Luton as a viable place to shop is poor and cannot compare with shopping centres like Milton Keynes
- Luton's Architecture was old and out of date e.g. the railway and car parks etc. There was a genuine need to update and revamp the buildings surrounding the town centre to make them more appealing. The work on completing the new frontage to the Mall was a step in the right direction
- Behaviour of Young People was perceived as threat and barrier which and caused people from coming to Luton town for shopping.
- Reported Gangs and young people in hoods
- Congestion – the build of traffic around the town and the length of time it takes people to get in and out of the Mall and is a problem faced by all towns.

Brian McFarland explained that several measures, including joint working and partnership with external agencies were explored and put in place to address some of the issues highlighted.

- Image Programme: There was need to publish good and coherent stories about Luton to help people's perception.
- Need for the Council to tackle car park difficulties
- Presence of PCSO's in the Streets
- Presence of Security Officers
- Strategic transport plan in Luton

Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:

Question

Response

Would you record all types of crimes committed in the Mall or did you only record anti social behaviour incidents?

A Home Office Scheme called "Luton Against Crime" funded a part time coordinator who recorded all crimes and the police were kept informed accordingly. This scheme allowed the Mall an exclusion order to ban certain individuals from the town centre and had resulted in a reduced amount of incidents reported last month.

Would you say, the crimes,

The records showed that the

which were committed in Luton, had reduced or remained the same?

overall crime in Luton had reduced including car theft. However, the number of anti social behaviour incidents continued to increase.

Whilst daytime crime had reduced, the nighttime economy had suffered as most people felt that parking in the town was not conducive and safe.

Would you be able to provide the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group with evidence of stats?

Information recorded by the Mall regarding the number of anti social behaviour incidents could be made available to the Group. The Police kept all other records.

Resolved: That Brian McFarland General Manager of the Mall Luton and Mark Whitcroft the Security Manager be thanked for attending the meeting and for their contribution.

Lyles Osborne – MFCDT
Marie Bacon – MFCDT

The Group invited Representatives of Marsh Farm Development Trust to give evidence to the Group.

Lyles Osborne gave a presentation on the fear of crime in Marsh Farm area. He reported that fear of crime in Marsh Farm had reduced over time. The biggest fear generally was around burglary and the Purley Centre was seen as a high-risk area.

Difficulties in Marsh Farm

- Stigma - distortion of facts and negative publication. Marsh Farm is still remembered for the riots that took place in the 1980s. The tower blocks also act as a stigma in the area that creates fear among people who live outside the area
- Social Mix – Constituted working class majority. This social make up caused people to have the wrong perception of Marsh Farm and high level of fear

- High Density
- High concentration of young people
- Small elderly population
- Large number of unemployed people
- High support needs, including drug related crimes and high number of vulnerable people

Activities

The crime perception had been reduced by 50% over the last 8 years and some of the following measures had been undertaken to further reduce crime and its perception in Marsh Farm.

- **£1.7M investment:** on state of the arts street lighting of the estates. Streetlights were remotely controlled and could be converted into CCTV cameras. The system achieved a very positive impact and made a huge difference in reducing crime in the Marsh Farm area;
- **Community Warden Scheme:** Under this scheme, 6 community wardens were employed. They worked closely with residents and local people and supported them where issues had been identified. Unfortunately, this scheme had been discontinued due to lack of funding.
- **Alert Boxes for Local People:** These were given to residents in high-risk areas and could be activated to alert other people about crime. The boxes were linked to safety neighbourhood teams who responded immediately. Also the alert boxes created a common spirit amongst the community.
- **New Lock on Doors:** This ensured safety and security.

Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:

Question

Response

What was the cost of the Community Warden Scheme?

The cost of the project was about £500K over 4 years.

Was the Marsh Farm market a positive image for the area?

The market was no longer as busy as it used to be. It was hoped that it would continue and be moved into the new centre when built.

Were there street champions in Marsh Farm?

Not at present.

What was the number of PCSO's funded by the Police?

There were 3 PCSO's in number.

Resolved: That the Representatives of Marsh Farm Community Development Trust be thanked for attending the meeting and for their contributions.

Nadine Madi – Youth Council Representative
Deniece Dobson - Children & Young People's Participation Mgr

The Group invited Nadine Madi, Youth Council Representative to give evidence to the Group. Nadine was accompanied by Deniece Dobson, Children and Young People's Participation Manager.

Nadine Madi informed the Group that she was currently involved with the Youth Council and working with Arriva to look at transport issues facing young people. She was also a member of the Community Cohesion Committee.

A report of young peoples survey and consultation about crime in Luton was circulated to members.

Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:

Question

Response

Did the consultation cover all ethnicities?

Nadine explained that young people age 15 – 17 voluntarily took part in the consultation. Therefore, no particular ethnicity had been targeted in the survey. However, as much as possible the consultation targeted black, minority and ethnic (BME) as well as all other ethnicities in Luton.

What was the role of young people regarding crime?

Young people were encouraged to encourage their friends not to commit crime and to encourage good behaviour. Also they were encouraged to condemn bad behaviour at all times.

Why was the percentage of Irish low in the report?

Most young people did not understand the term ethnicity unless there were specific boxes to tick.

Was it difficult to convince young people to complete the forms and did they receive any help?

Young people received adequate support with form filling and were quite happy to take part in the survey once they had understood the importance of the survey.

Nadine informed the Group that the consultation suggested the following:

- Most young people felt there were lots of good things in Luton
- That a large number of young people in Luton were not involved in criminal activities.

Resolved: That Nadine Madi be highly commended for her presentation and vital contributions to the evidence gathering.

Nicola Perry – Community Safety Manager (CDRP)

Nicola Perry gave an overview of the Community Safety Partnership in relation to community safety and the perception of fear of crime in Luton.

Nicola Perry advised that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership changed to Community Safety Partnership from 1st March 2010 to be more reflective of its objectives, which was mostly based on community safety evidence. She further advised that the Partnership had statutory membership list which included some of the following; Fire & Rescue Service, PCT, Police and the Council etc. However, there were other sub groups from the Council, which also formed very active membership of the Partnership.

The Partnership had a responsibility to carry out a yearly strategic assessment to produce a plan that tackled crime and disorder in Luton. The Team's plan list of priorities included initiatives to tackle burglary and anti social behaviour. There were also a couple of cross cutting priorities on crime and perception of crime, which linked all the other priorities.

Question

Response

What was the work of the Community Safety Partnership?

The community safety partnership worked in partnership with other statutory members to help tackle crime and the perception of crime in Luton. The Team was conscious to improve public confidence in community safety.

Would your team tackle complaints about warring neighbours?

The Council – Town hall was the main contact regarding complaints linked to anti social behaviour. The town hall reception would direct such calls to the relevant departments for further investigation and prompt action.

In response to a question, members of the public at the meeting agreed that the meeting had provided them with vital information on available contact, help and support. They agreed that the experience had been worthwhile.

Nicola Perry commented that scrutiny was open to members of the public. She advised that the work of the Group should also bear focus on public perspective of safety and crime.

Resolved: That Nicola Perry, Partnership Manager (CDRP) be thanked for attending the meeting and for her contributions.

37 FUTURE MEETINGS

The Scrutiny Officer advised that consultation by Members needed to be completed and reported back to the next meeting of 4th June 2010 that will ensure its inclusion in the final report.

The Group were informed that the 4th June 2010 is the last evidence gathering meeting and that the following have been invited:

- Portfolio Holder for Crime and Disorder – Councillor Ashraf
- Divisional Commander - Mike Colbourne
- Gleynis Allen – Drugs and Alcohol Partnership
- Feedback on the joint consultation with Community Cohesion by Chris Owen -BMG

Resolved: (i) That the Member consultation on the fear of crime be completed and reported back to the 4th June 2010 to enable the Scrutiny Officer and Chair to enable the findings to be included in the final report.

THE MEETING ENDED AT 16.10PM