

## **SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: FEAR OF CRIME**

**HELD ON FRIDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2010**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Garrett (Chair), Bullock, Neale Singh and Stewart.

### **LBC SUPPORT OFFICERS / ADVISORS**

Eunice Emuophe – Democratic Services Officer  
Susan Rowland – Democratic Service Officer  
Angela Fraser – Scrutiny Officer  
Dean Stokes – Head of Strategic Planning Policy & Performance  
Sandra Hayes – Community Development Services Manager  
Christien Durant – Participation Officer

### **WITNESSES**

Mike Colbourne – Chief Superintendent – Divisional Police Commander for Luton  
Glynis Allen – Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Manager  
Deniece Dobson – Youth Participation Officer (LBC)  
Chris Owens – BMG Research

### **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Mustapha Masha  
Mahvish Arit – Youth MP  
Nadine Madi – LYTE  
Muzzafer Hussain – LYTE  
Matt Everitt – CDAP

### **ACTION**

#### **38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Dolling and Timoney.

#### **39 NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (REF: 3)**

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**40 EVIDENCE GATHERING (REF: 5)**  
**Mike Colbourne – Chief Superintendent – Divisional Police**  
**Commander for Luton**  
**Glynis Allen – Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Manager**  
**Councillor Ashraf – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety**

**Mike Colbourne**

Mike Colbourne reported that the police had carried out lots of work in different areas of Luton but there was more to be done. He highlighted the following;

- Provision of services
- Investment on anti social behaviour
- Good staff motivation but not very good at making people aware of activities
- Appointment system – commenced in April 2010.
- In terms of people satisfaction 90-95% in some areas and very high level of satisfaction round individual contacts
- Trying to expand the appointment system in neighbourhood terms
- Commander control centre – centralised function, huge investment by the police
- Lacking on the seriousness of the perception of crime

The Chair stated that parking on pavements by cyclists was a common occurrence in Icknield. He enquired whose responsibility it was to stop cyclist from parking on pavements.

Mike Colbourne replied that in terms of the law and unnecessary obstruction the police could get involved in terms of enforcement of the law. He stated that he would find out more about whose responsibility it was to prosecute.

**Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:**

1) Was domestic violence a major fear of crime in Luton.

**Answer**

Domestic violence forms 30% of serious crime in Luton. In terms of fear, there was need to look at the causes, concerns and the consequences of domestic violence as a crime and the way it was perceived.

2) Was domestic violence alcohol related.

**Answer**

Domestic violence incidents tended to increase during football tournaments. The police would continue to encourage victims and members of the community to report all incidents of crime. Plans to tackle and improve issues of crime were on the agenda. Also issues around domestic violence incidents were difficult and complicated.

Mike Colbourne also advised that information on domestic violence incidents could be included on the fear of crime task and finish group final report.

3) Was there an increase in the issue of police penalty notices in Luton and had this helped people's perception of crime

**Answer**

Mike Colbourne stated that the police had received very good outcomes in relation to police penalty notices and it was vital to get the offender to understand the impact of the crime that they had committed. However, the police were looking at different methods of delivering outcomes and there were plans on the agenda for officers to be trained accordingly.

The training would look at the following;

- Repeat offending
- Conditioning – could potentially reduce crime
- Not deliberately withdrawing cases from court

Mike Colbourne further explained that there was need to ensure that the punishment was proportionate and that it fitted the circumstances. He stated that it was not uncommon for people to feel uncomfortable about the consequences of police penalty notices.

4) Did members of the Community Safety include the Council's Elected Members

**Answer**

The Local Public Service Board (LPSB) had the statutory partnership, which fitted into the theme group of Local Area Agreement (LAA), and one of the themes was Stronger and Safer Communities Board (SSCB) and Community Safety Executive (CSE) and elected members form part of these theme groups.

Cllr Neale enquired what robust role Councillors could play in order to make a difference with regards to fear of crime.

5) Would the involvement of Councillors in Community Safety help to make a positive impact with regards to the perception of the fear of crime.

**Answer**

Mike Colbourne stated that his personal view was that the councillors could make a difference in the fear of crime if they were effectively involved in community safety.

6) What was the input of the police at ward level in relation to community safety group.

**Answer**

The police could explore the area of community level and councillors may also wish to work together in a community safety group to consider and explore options.

Sandra Hayes explained that the west area neighbourhood board pilot was considering some changes and a new way of working to ensure that area committee meetings became more effective. However there was need to encourage members of the community to be more engaged at ward and community levels.

**Glynis Allen – Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Manager**

The Scrutiny Officer explained that Glynis Allen had been invited to give evidence with regards to the general perception and reality of drugs and alcohol in Luton.

Glynis Allen explained that there was need to be cautious about surveys on drugs dealing and the perception of the use of drug and alcohol.

She stated that there were two main factors to consider.

1) Age of person that was being asked the question

2) Misconception of the situation being observed.

The following issues were raised and discussed regarding the use of drugs and alcohol;

**Drugs**

- Drug dealing from a partnership observation was a private

activity so dealers would keep away from the eyes of the law and it worked like a pizza style delivery.

- Cannabis was a bit different and it was used or smoked in the streets by social groups, young people out in the streets and parks etc.
- Activities in clubs – usually hidden people would inform the people they know, that they know where they could get drugs.
- With regards to supply, the objective of the police was to make drug dealing activity a number one priority.
- With regards to the use of heroin and crack, due to the way it was used and the vulnerable people involved; People would report them to the police when they were seen using in the streets.
- Takeovers – Vulnerable people were mostly affected by heroin and crack and the dealers of drug could take over the lives of the vulnerable. In these circumstances, the work of the community or support worker was vital to the rehabilitation of the user.

## **Alcohol**

Alcohol attracted different perception of crime. The use of alcohol was associated with rowdy behaviour at night and could lead to several anti social behaviour difficulties. Younger people would tend to congregate and drink in groups especially at night in Luton town centre.

There were various anti social behaviours caused by drugs and alcohol and the SOS bus was operated in to help tackle some of these issues.

### **The following questions, responses and comments made:**

1) Had the fear of crime in relation to drugs and alcohol reduced compared to 20 years ago.

## **Answer**

The use of alcohol had always been seen as a problem, but not sure whether people were now more tolerant of it or used to its

activities. However nationally, the use of alcohol in terms of percentage appeared to have reduced.

Mike Colbourne commented that this was an interesting point in terms of tackling drugs and alcohol difficulties. There were regular and ongoing arrests in terms of drug use and recently the police had made over 30 arrests in Luton for supply and criminal use of drugs.

He further stated that in terms of demand and access, there was still a substantial market for drugs in the community and the police were doing a lot to ensure that strategies were put in place to tackle these difficulties.

2) How was the PSA being transmitted into LAA to reduce drugs and alcohol.

**Answer**

Alcohol was expected to increase by 25% over the next period. The target for 2009/10 was to reduce the rate of increase by 10%.

3) How would this be measured in terms of the Council as a partner.

**Answer**

There were 890 in effective treatment, which had now been reduced to 815. There was also a report recently about drug trend, which had shown that the number of police drug testing had fallen due to good policing, good treatment and good social care.

4) In your professional opinion, had LBC and NHS as partners done enough to tackle the issue of drugs and alcohol

**Answer**

The available services were anorexic and there was need for more resources, but the national defence budget was in support of several measures, which would ensure that drugs and alcohol issues were tackled. The NHS received £2.2M two years ago in support of their activities to curtail drugs and alcohol difficulties.

5) To what extent could the voluntary sector contribute and what resources were available to them.

**Answer**

The NHS was off putting for some people on treatment. The voluntary sector employers do a brief intervention but the NHS intervention was essential in tackling the problem of drug and alcohol as they provided the medical support.

Mike Colbourne commented that in terms of harm reduction, huge amount of work had gone into partnership working to tackle these issues. He stated that there was need to look at drug testing treatment.

Discussions took place with regards to the following;

- Concerns about how far the process could go and how to keep the balance
- Issues of grants and funding
- Monitor and commission key services around community safety (i.e. neighbourhood governance projects)

### **Councillor Ashraf – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety**

**Note:**

Members of the Task and Finish Group noted that Cllr Ashraf had been invited to attend this meeting to help with the evidence gathering process but that he had not been able to do so on this occasion. The Group thought that this absence by the Portfolio Holder was regrettable.

#### **41 FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION (REF: 6)**

- **Presentation from BMG on Fear of Crime Consultation (Chris Owen)**
- **Sandra Hayes/Marek Lubelski**
- **Young people's presentation (Nadine Madi) & Deniece Dobson – Children & Young People's Participation Manager**

#### **Presentation from BMG on Commissioned Fear of Crime Consultation – Chris Owen**

Mr. Chris Owen representative from BMG gave a presentation on result of the consultation carried out on the fear of crime in 5 areas in Luton. The five areas were Saints/Biscot, Stopsley, Brammingham, Fareley Hill and Lewsey areas.

The consultation covered 56 people and included a wide age range of 16 to 24 and 60 and above as a good representation of cross section of the community including people of Asian background, black people and other groups of BME. The consultation also

covered High Town area to include Polish respondents to make up a 60 people survey.

In terms of whether people felt safe or not, there were clear variations in the result of the consultation.

**The following lists the issues raised in the five areas of the consultation.**

**Sainst/Biscot**

- Low area of crime
- Major issue were congestion and parking
- Report of vandalism
- Door kept locked at night

Residents felt generally safe in their own streets.

**Lewsey**

- Crime described as a big problem as with the rest of Luton
- Problems generally generated by local people
- Post code gangs of young lads
- People did not feel safe
- Age groups of 30-40 felt confidence going out as they knew lots of people
- People felt the area was generally run down and needed investment and attention

**Brammingham**

- Low Crime
- Issues with burglary
- Concerns about dog fights and difficulties with prosecution
- Young people with knife crime
- People generally felt safe in their area

**Stopsley**

- Low level of crime and antisocial behaviour
- High level burglary
- Anti social behaviour motorbikes
- Felt generally safe
- Concerns about St. Thomas's road parking, fear of alleyways, Bradgers
- People were generally positive about alleyways gates
- Concerns about Stopsley travellers site

**Fareley**



- Significant crime
- Felt curfew had helped
- People weary of problems with drug dealers
- Problems made worse by groups of kids from other parts of town
- Parrot Pub – racist and focus of trouble
- Discussions to tackle crime, CCTV evictions,
- Concerns about ASBOS
- Tenant eviction process take too long

### **Worst Areas in Luton**

#### **M/F**

Stigma and bad reputation (maybe media driven)

#### **Hockwell Ring**

Group of kids congregating

#### **Bury Park**

Negative comparison (People said their areas were not as bad as bury park areas)

### **Luton Town centre**

- People felt safe during the day
- Unsafe at night
- Concerns due to high level of fighting
- Drunkenness
- Issues made worse by drinking and drink spiking
- Use of drugs, taxi drivers not trusted

### **Who Committed the Crimes (Blamed)**

1) It was generally assumed that young people expelled from education were to blame. Also lack of activities to keep young people occupied during school holidays was also an issue. Gang culture and difficulties around culture and respect and territory were some of the others.

2) Travellers: particularly in Stopsley area, difficulties with prosecuting

### **Who was Responsible**

- Lack of parental control
- Lack of punishment
- Police focus on other issues
- Judicial system
- Council – lack of activities for young people
- Media, celebrity culture, gang culture etc

### **What would make residents Safer**

- Visible PCSO's and police
- Good use of policing time
- Lightening & CCTV
- Regeneration
- Addressing community cohesion
- Preventing crime through work schemes
- Punishment as a deterrent

The Chair stated that in Ickneild the emphasis was more on policing and lack of quick response by the police and also members of the public not knowing whom to contact. He felt this was a good report.

Sandra Hayes commented that the report appeared not to have considered to positive work carried out by other groups in the community and did not consider any positive solutions particularly with Bury park area. She further commented that the police had achieved lots of positive changes and the work of neighbourhood governance project pilot had achieved a lot in area west. She felt that 60 people survey across Luton was quite limited and not representative of Luton.

The Chair commented that the consultation was more about the perception of crime, concerns about parental control, anti social behaviour and bad language etc. There was need to have more policing on the streets but there were also financial constraints.

### **Listed below are questions, responses and comments made:**

1) Where you aware that a year ago, a consultation was carried out and were also you aware of the conclusion of that consultation.

### **Answer**

No. The community cohesion survey was used to gather information on fear of crime, although the initial survey was based on community cohesion issues. The people consulted represented broad section of the community in terms of their perception of crime.

2) One of the big issues in Luton was prostitution, was this covered in your survey.

**Answer**

The only time this issue of prostitution was raised was in relation to responses in Bury park area.

3) In terms of the 60 people, how many of these lived in marsh farm.

**Answer**

Possibly 50/50 although in a focus group situation, too much comparison was not encouraged. However, most people felt safe in their own areas and different age groups had different types of experiences. Also there were some differences between concerns raised by men and women.

4) Were there discussions about what people feared most.

**Answer**

Most of the survey was on community cohesion but there were discussion about gang violence amongst different ethnic groups. There were also views around drinking in the town centre.

Cllr Stewart stated that there was need for alleyways to be properly lighted to ensure safety. The alleyways gates, which were introduced sometime ago, helped to reduce crimes in alleyways.

A young person commented that it was extremely unfair to compare other parts of the town with the Bury park area. She stated that the issue faced by young people was lack of awareness of available resources and activities. She advised that younger people below the age of 16 could be encouraged to be involved in consultations for a wider representation.

5) How were the 60 people recruited.

**Answer**

The team carried out a door-to-door survey to ensure a cross section of views to reflect the wider population.

**Mike Colbourne Chief Superintendent of Police Commander for Luton reported on the following;**

**1) More policing in Luton:** MC commented that this was a national problem.

**2) Community Safety:** Was this a priority or not. Community cohesion was vital with each partner holding the same responsibility.

**3) Feedback and Community Awareness:** Lots of the surveys around policing were satisfactory but the key was feedback as this could take a long time to happen. There was a massive investment around neighbourhood governance and the issue of what could be done by the police was vital.

**4) Recognising Available Resources:** Prioritisation was the key and there was need for equality of split resources around areas in Luton. This should be focused on need due to different level of need in the various areas.

**5) Review of the Current Situation:** Any piece of information would be welcomed and there were clearly issues around anti social behaviour in Lewsey Farm and the police was looking at working in partnership to ensure that issues of drugs, gangs, burglary and motor theft etc were tackled and reduced.

Discussions also took place regarding the following:

**Lewsey** – Reporting would mean significant reduction in all categories of crime and especially issues around abandoned vehicles.

**Prostitution related anti social behaviour** – There had been reduction in central, south and to a degree in north area of Luton. The partnership process would be a good progression.

**Knife Crime at Cash Points** - Over the last 12 months there had been a 30% reduction and the police had carried out extensive work around gangs.

Mike Colbourne explained that plans for more policing and visibility around Luton commenced in April 2010. So far there had been very positive feedback.

With regards to who was responsible: In the current economic situation there was general assumption that there would be increase in crime, however, there had been reduction in crime and this was positive. He also stated that the police was only able to focus and tackle issues that were reported. Therefore, there was need to continue to encourage people to report crime in all circumstances.

**Resolved:** (i) That Chris Owen be thanked for his presentation

(ii) That Mike Colbourne Chief Superintendent of Police, Commander in Luton also be thanked for his detailed comments and contribution.

#### **Feedback on Consultation – Sandra Hayes/Marek Lubelski**

Sandra Hayes, Community Development Service Manager gave a brief summary of the activities of the community centres in relation to fear of crime.

- Working closely with the police
- you said we did leaflets – will be distributed to every home in Luton within the next 3 weeks.

In terms of LAA and Sustainable communities strategy, a survey was carried out in the following 3 areas in Luton.

- Challney encourage people to engage more (85 voted)
- Lewsey (100 people and more voted) for environmental improvement on St. Dominic's square
- Leagrave – Youth clubs and bylaws to stop drinking

Sandra Hayes further reported that about 250 thousand visitors a year visited the community centres this gave an average of 30thousand visitors a year.

The Chair enquired if Sandra Hayes could submit evidence to help with the report.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Community Development Service Manager be requested to submit evidence to be included in the Fear of Crime final report,

(ii) That the Community Development Service Manager be thanked for her contribution.

#### **Young people's Presentation (Nadine Madi) and Deniece Dobson – Children & Young People's Participation Mgr**

Nadine Madi and two other young people gave a presentation on the perception of crime from young people's perspective.

The Young people informed the Group that the biggest fear faced by young people was gun and knife crime and that most young people were positive that there could be improvement with the right support from older people.

The Chair commented that there was a general perception of every generation where young people get the blame for most crimes and it was up to this generation to do something about it.

A young person commented that young people looked up to the older generation for support and positive change.

Mike Colbourne commented that the fear around gun crime affected both young and old. The prevalence of guns was small but the issue was a big one and the police would continue to look at different ways to tackle the issues of gun crime.

The Chair stated that without a doubt the media had a lot to answer for with regards to bad press in Luton, as they tended to make things worse by focusing only on the bad things.

Cllr Neale asked if the young people had come up with any ideas with regards to the nature of support expected from older people and how they could work with older people in order to make a difference.

There were ongoing plans for young people to work in care homes and be involved in several activities, including socialising with older people in the community to encourage change.

Cllr Neale advised that there was a wide scope in older people's luncheon clubs and encouraged the young people to explore this opportunity.

Deniece Dobson stated that there were whole scheme of projects where young people were volunteering and working with over 50's but depending on funding some of these projects may not continue after March 2011.

Cllr Neale also advised the young people to work closely with the media to ensure that their good work projects and activities were publicised.

Cllr Bullock commented that there was need to develop and foster a clear understanding to work closely together on community cohesion and enjoy cultural values and be tolerant of each other. He further advised that good work should be praised whilst we take time to tackle the issues of crime.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the group that this meeting was the last evidence gathering meeting. The final meeting of the Fear of Crime Task & Finish Group would be held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**Resolved:** (i) That the young people be thanked for their presentation and contributions to the evidence gathering process.

(ii) That the final meeting of the Task & Finish Group be held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**THE MEETING ENDED AT 16.15PM**