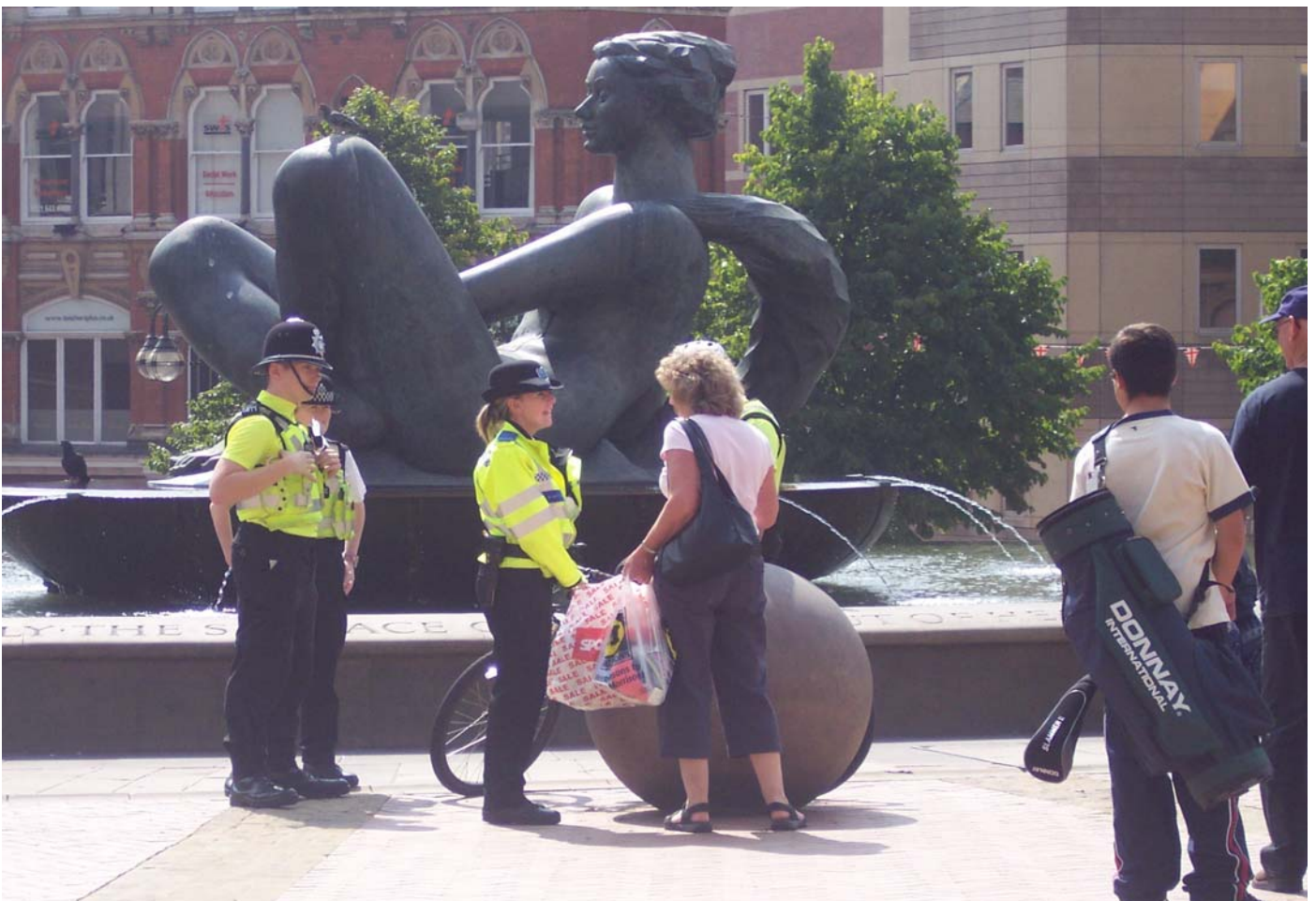




Overview Report of the
Local Services and Community Safety
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview of the Management of Community Safety



City Council, 13 September 2005



Foreword

By Councillor Timothy Huxtable

Chairman, Local Services and Community Safety
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

September 2005



"Our vision is to reduce crime and disorder and make our communities feel safer".

Paul Scott-Lee, Chief Constable, West Midlands Police.

That vision statement of West Midlands Police is a shared vision of Birmingham City Council. We want our residents, our workers and our businesses to be and feel safer. The aim of every Councillor should be to make a positive difference to Birmingham and to their local communities which he or she has the honour to serve.

One of the areas Councillors can make that positive difference is in the field of Community Safety. Community Safety forms a substantial proportion of the postbag, the inbox and the telephone calls and advice bureau problems to Councillors.

Although a highly complex subject as it involves working with many partners - statutory authorities (e.g. the Police and Fire Service), council departments, the business sector, housing associations and voluntary and community organisations - it can be very rewarding. Making the community safer and feel safer makes a substantial improvement to the quality of life of each and every resident affected.

This overview into the management of Community Safety in Birmingham should hopefully clarify what we as a City Council along with our partners are doing to fulfil our corporate objective of making Birmingham a safer city. This overview also suggests actions to improve the management of Community Safety in Birmingham so that everybody who lives, works or studies in Birmingham will both be and feel safer.

Timothy Huxtable



Glossary

BANF	Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums
BASBU	Birmingham Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
BCEN	Birmingham Community Empowerment Network
COSMOS	Community Safety Mapping Online System
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DAT	Drugs Action Team
DAAT	Drugs and Alcohol Action Team
DSP	District Strategic Partnership
FSB	Federation of Small Businesses
LAA	Local Area Agreements
LDG	Local Delivery Groups
LPSA	Local Public Service Agreements
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PSA	Public Service Agreement
WMP	West Midlands Police



Preamble

Elected Members are accustomed to receiving Scrutiny Review reports from O&S Committees. However, the Overview element of Overview and Scrutiny is equally important to the 'critical friend' role of O&S Members.

Overview is essentially assisting the Executive in shaping policy by considering issues prior to any firm decisions being taken. This has long been a feature of the Committees' work but, in line with the evolving nature of Overview, has not been presented under this banner before.

The Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore pleased to present this first formal report of Overview to the City Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 This overview was conducted by the Local Services and Community Safety O&S Committee, all Members of which had input during the course of the work. The membership was:

- Cllr Gurdial Singh Atwal
- Cllr Susan Axford^o
- Cllr Keith Barton
- Cllr Peter Douglas Osborn
- Cllr Zoe Hopkins^x
- Cllr Timothy Huxtable
(Chairman)
- Cllr Peter Kane^o
- Cllr Tariq Ayoub Khan^x
- Cllr Hugh McCallion^o
- Cllr Yvonne Mosquito^x
- Cllr Sandra O'Brien^o
- Cllr Philip Parkin^x
- Cllr Carl Rice
- Cllr Sybil Spence^o
- Cllr Jim Whorwood
- Cllr Robert Wright

^x Up to May 2005

^o From May 2005



1.2 The officer team was led by Rob James (the Committee's Link Officer), Ian Coghill (Director of Community Safety) and Inspector Dave Reilly of the Community Safety Partnership. The Chairman would also like to thank Sue Griffith and Emma Williamson (Overview and Scrutiny Managers) for all their valuable help and assistance they provided, and Bethan Clemence, Delphine Gibrat and Amanda Simcox from the Scrutiny Office for the research support. Louise Nisbett and Ruth Macklin were our Committee Managers who captured the discussions so ably and accurately.

2. Background

2.1 Community safety is one of the most important issues facing the City Council and its partners in Birmingham today. This is because it is one of the most important priorities facing those who live, work, or study in Birmingham. In recognition of this fact, the Local Services and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee began, in September 2004, a process of taking an overview of the issues of community safety and the Community Safety Partnership's response.

2.2 Birmingham is a large, diverse and vibrant City of over a million people. Like all cities in the developed world it has problems in relation to crime and community safety. Inevitably, dealing with community safety in a large, complex, modern City is itself a substantially complicated task. It was the intention of the Committee to look in detail at key elements within this large and complex picture and bring additional insight into how the City Council was supporting the Community Safety Partnership and how it might improve the City Council's contribution in coming months and years.

2.3 The Committee recognised early on that dealing with community safety in Birmingham necessitates multi-partnership working, and that this necessity cannot be overstated. Because the delivery of community safety is such a complicated task, it requires all the partners involved to be aware of what each can bring to the table, and to pull in the same direction towards the same objectives. The Community Safety agenda can *only* be achieved with all the partners working together for the common good. The Committee does not apologise for referring to this idea of 'shared targets, shared ownership' throughout this document.



3. The Problem

- 3.1 It was clearly demonstrated to the Committee that the instances of some types of crime have been decreasing, and overall the crime statistics are showing improvement. However the Committee was aware that these improvements have occurred from an unacceptably high starting point and whilst everyone was pleased to see the improvement, there is still a long way to go.
- 3.2 Furthermore, the decline in crime is not reflected across all crime types and some show a disconcerting stubbornness, in particular some key crime types around violence against the person. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that some crimes, for example domestic violence, are known to be substantially under-reported. Therefore, whilst the Committee was happy to celebrate the improvements that have been made, it was their strongly held view that more must be done.
- 3.3 The City is fortunate in having established an excellent data capture and handling system called COSMOS (Community Safety Mapping Online System), the operation and effectiveness of which was demonstrated to the Committee. It has been the source of much of the data which has enabled a precise geographical and operational understanding of crime and community safety in the City. What was clear to the Committee was that crime, either as a whole or in specific categories, is not distributed evenly across the City; it is concentrated in certain areas.
- 3.4 The Committee examined possible explanations for this concentration and it was clear that explanations differ with crime type and circumstances. For example with regard to street violence, the presence or absence of licensed premises was a key determinant factor. In burglary, the presence of a particularly vulnerable group of potential victims, such as the University student population in the Bournbrook area of Selly Oak, was an issue and in other areas crimes mirrored deprivation.
- 3.5 The Committee whole-heartedly commended the crime mapping and data analysis techniques available to the Community Safety Partnership and their existing use. They also supported the production, as is now planned, of an annual Citywide community safety assessment based on the COSMOS mapping system with text containing appropriate analysis, supported by 11 district strategic assessments.



- 3.6 In addition, the Committee recognised the importance of the perceptions of residents as measured in the Annual MORI Survey. In 2004, over a third of residents (37%) felt unsafe walking outside alone after dark; 25% in parks and play areas; 22% on trains and 14% never go out alone.

Suggested Action

- A. *The Community Safety Partnership should use an intelligence-based approach to crime issues tackling specific crimes with well thought out strategies and tactics which focuses on areas of high intensity.*

4. Community Safety Strategy

- 4.1 The Committee was involved in, and enthusiastically supported, the process of developing Birmingham's Community Safety Strategy. This was agreed on time by the Cabinet, the Community Safety Partnership and the City Council. Whilst recognising the particular problems which existed on this occasion and delayed the start of the Strategy development process, Members felt that it would be unacceptable if, on future occasions, these problems were repeated. The Committee was pleased however, with the appointment of a Director of Community Safety, with whom Members have been closely working on this report.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the challenges generated by a tight timescale, the Committee was pleased with the structure of the Strategy, which incorporated in full amendments suggested by the Committee, and the commitment to a target-based approach supported by regular monthly and quarterly monitoring. The Committee will receive quarterly monitoring reports as to progress against the Strategy and Action Plan.
- 4.3 The Committee was able to discuss the nature of the targets which the Community Safety Partnership will be seeking to deliver with support, where appropriate, from the City Council. Our shared target is a 20% overall reduction in crime and disorder. The Committee recognises that the 20% overall reduction in a basket of crime set out in Public Service Agreement (PSA) 1 was challenging but achievable. It supported the inclusion and shared ownership of LPSA targets for crime reduction being included in the basket of LPSA targets being negotiated with Government.



Suggested Action

B. That the Committee receive quarterly monitoring reports on progress against the Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan. This information should also be readily available to local partners, including the District based Local Delivery Groups.

5. Domestic Violence

- 5.1 The Committee looked in detail at the serious and all too often overlooked issue of Domestic Violence. Members formed the view that, whilst the Government's targets to increase reporting of Domestic Violence and to reduce the instances of Domestic Violence, were, at first sight, paradoxical, there was no reason for not seeking to achieve against these performance measures. It was recognised that there was substantial under-reporting of Domestic Violence which was allayed in part whenever Police or other agencies focused on this issue and gave appropriate cross-agency support to the victims.
- 5.2 The Committee endorsed the high priority given to Domestic Violence by the Community Safety Partnership and looks forward to receiving regular updates on the developing Domestic Violence Reduction Strategy and the necessary follow-up actions.
- 5.3 An example of work in this area is the Lantern Project, based at Bournville Lane Police Station. Supported by NRF funding it has operated within 6 wards in the south of the City, offering personal support and advice to victims of domestic violence, as well as practical assistance during legal proceedings or with re-housing.

Suggested Action

C. That a Domestic Violence Reduction Strategy, which includes educational packages, be formulated and implemented.



6. Youth

- 6.1 The Committee heard that the 'Feeling the Difference' survey, designed by West Midlands Police to gather the public's views on key Community Safety issues, confirmed previous research that indicated that youth issues were the most important Community Safety matter in Birmingham. This did not mean that the population of the City were anti-youth or saw them necessarily as a major source of crime, indeed it was recognised that young males are often the most likely victims of crime.
- 6.2 The Committee and the public were conscious that young people needed a stable, stimulating and productive environment in which to develop as fulfilled, safe and happy citizens. Failure to achieve this can lead to a minority of disaffected, unhappy and otherwise disadvantaged young people drifting into anti-social behaviour and other forms of crime.

Suggested Action

- D. *The Community Safety Partnership work with the relevant Directorates within the City Council to ensure that Young People are able to access youth diversionary activities, training facilities and other opportunities which will lead them away from criminal and anti-social behaviour and support them in reaching their full potential as individuals and citizens.*

7. Transport

- 7.1 The Committee discussed the impact of crime on public transport and supported the view that more should be done to tackle anti-social behaviour and criminality on, or associated with, the major public transport routes. This would be the subject of detailed data analysis which would allow resources to be focused on hotspot areas. This analysis would recognise the need for shared working, and investment into safety on public transport behaviour, by the WMP, Centro and the City Council.
- 7.2 The Committee will be examining the proposals to bring about safer travel on public transport which is essential to help achieve the modal shift needed to produce a Sustainable Transport Strategy. These measures are to be delivered in partnership with Centro, the Police and other partners - again sharing ownership of the issues involved. Safer Routes to School is another scheme which delivers not only safer routes in traffic terms, but helps parents and children feel safer from crime and anti-social behaviour.



7.3 The Committee noted that the Safer and Cleaner Core Priority Group of the CSP will (at the time of writing this Overview) be bringing forward proposals for the spending of £700,000 on Improved Safety and Security on Public Transport in Birmingham. Some of the suggested projects include:

- Expansion of the WMP Safer Travel Team;
- Passive Drugs Dog, Handler and vehicle;
- Expansion of 'Pupil Watch';
- Enhanced Intelligence of the Birmingham Bus Network;
- Bus Behaviour Improvement Campaign;
- BASBU/Civil Court Orders Work;
- Broad Street Taxi Rank Security Patrols;
- Hurst Street Taxi Rank Patrols; and,
- City Centre Bus Stop Security Patrols.



7.4 Of all these suggested projects, there was a cross-party consensus on the Committee that the first of these should be the top priority.

Suggested Action

E. That the Community Safety Partnership generates a coordinated response to the problems of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with public transport.

8. Role of Members

8.1 The delivery of the Strategy is based on the twin concepts of the Community Safety Partnership dealing with pan Birmingham matters and Local Delivery Groups (LDGs) dealing with matters within Districts. The Committee heard of the important link between District Strategic Partnerships (DSPs) and LDGs in terms of identifying and addressing Community Safety priorities. The Committee's discussion of this led to a focus on the disparate nature of LDGs and in particular the presence or absence of Elected Members. The Committee



recognises the important role Elected Members have to play in supporting the delivery of community safety initiatives.

- 8.2 However, it was noted that in some districts Members had determined to not attend LDGs on the basis that these were delivery mechanisms not policy-making fora, and that day to day delivery was a matter for professionals from within the Partnership. In reality, several models were emerging, some involving active participation of several Members, some no Elected Members at all.
- 8.3 It was considered essential that whatever LDG structure was put in place, a process is established to ensure that the District's Elected Members were:
- thoroughly informed of the activities undertaken by the LDG and how their District was performing from a community safety point of view;
 - given the opportunity to provide an input into the development of priorities.

Suggested Action

F. To establish a process through which increased involvement of Elected Members can be promoted.

9. Street Scene: Tackling crime and fear of crime

- 9.1 One of the main priorities within Birmingham is that of being a 'clean and safe' city. Addressing the multiple facets of deprived and neglected environments may have the dual-benefit of deterring anti-social behaviour and incidents of crime, as well as instilling a greater perception of 'clean and safe' within the community. For example, tackling litter, graffiti and fly-tipping, providing street trees, flowers and attractive open spaces. Conversely, as mentioned earlier, demonstrable links can be seen between degradation, external arson, abandoned vehicles and crime. Furthermore, these are highly visible aspects to an area's 'street scene' and may influence people's perceptions of how safe an area is.



- 9.2 'A dirty street, especially one that is evidenced by the presence of litter, is often the first sign of a neglected environment'.¹ A neglected environment has been identified as a trigger for crime, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour and is further likely to promote a perception as being 'unsafe' within the local community. Tackling neglected environments can instil a sense of pride and community, whilst also deterring would-be criminals who perceive the area to be cared for.
- 9.3 The perception, however, that an area is not cared for only increases the feeling of being 'unsafe' as fewer pedestrians venture out, when a key way to prevent street crime, aside from increased policing, is to encourage more people to become pedestrians. Numerous studies have illustrated that pedestrians provide 'natural surveillance' and that increased pedestrian numbers equates to a higher degree of perceived safety.
- 9.4 Surveys have highlighted that a significant minority avoid going out alone after dark, both nationally and at a local level. The 2001 British Crime Survey indicated that, at a national level, this figure stood at 13%. However, at the local level, Birmingham's 2004 Annual Opinion Survey indicated that 37% of residents felt unsafe walking outside alone after dark.



¹ Living Streets, 2004. Living Streets and Safer Environments Fact Sheets: Briefing Paper 9. www.livingstreets.org.uk/download/208-10_background_briefing_papers.doc. Accessed 25/07/05.



- 9.5 Improved street lighting has been shown to reduce crime. In a review of five British case studies during the 1990's, a Home Office Systematic Review found that improved street lighting led to a significant 30% decrease in crime, whilst two of these studies also indicated financial savings from reduced crime exceeding the financial costs of improvements. However, other studies have illustrated a number of caveats, including the need to assess local characteristics, the nature of the crime and territorial displacement of crime.
- 9.6 Improved street lighting is also a factor in addressing perceptions and fear of crime amongst communities. In 2003, Lincoln City Council completed a £225,000 street lighting upgrade scheme covering around 45 streets in which almost 250 new lights were installed. A subsequent evaluation of the new lighting on the level of crime and people's perceptions concluded that the scheme had had a significant impact on residents' perceptions, improving how they felt about the area, reducing their fear of being a victim of crime, and giving them a choice about whether to go out after dark.
- 9.7 CCTV is a further measure to tackle street crime but has not always been found to be as effective in the prevention of both crime, or the fear of crime. Indeed, NACRO have reported that whilst street lighting improvements can potentially reduce crime by 20%, for CCTV this figure is significantly lower, with reductions of around 5%.
- 9.8 Street lighting and CCTV coverage should go hand in hand as where CCTV has been proved to be more effective (in terms of identifying culprits), the area covered has had better street lighting.

Suggested Actions

- G. (i) *An integrated approach should be adopted, combining numerous measures to tackle multiple issues.*
- (ii) *Tackling fear of crime is a cross-partnership issue, and should be addressed accordingly.*

10. Key Issues

- 10.1 The Committee noted, and were unsurprised by, the top community safety issues within the City which were:
- Youth Crime;
 - Anti-Social Behaviour;



- Drugs;
 - Clean and Safe.
- 10.2 These issues, identified as the most important by the citizens, had to be delivered at the same time, and in conjunction with, meeting the targets emanating directly from Central Government set out in PSA1 and PSA2. Whilst the Committee saw this as an operational challenge, it was also something they considered was reasonable and achievable with good management and a reasonable resource base.
- 10.3 The last issue - that of clean and safe - has already been considered by this Committee as part of the Scrutiny Review of "You Are Your City". This found demonstrable links between degradation, crime, external arson and abandoned refuse. The report recognised partnership work already undertaken by the Council, with the Police and Fire Service in, for example, producing Safety Packs for householders with information leaflets and a security pen to mark expensive goods.
- 10.4 The Committee recognised the importance of making Birmingham cleaner, greener and safer to achieve our Community Safety objectives and PSA targets through the continuation of the Your City Your Birmingham campaign.

Suggested Actions

H. That the Community Safety Partnership ensures the issues identified by Birmingham citizens which are outside the Government-set targets, are fully incorporated into the Community Safety Strategy Delivery Plan.

11. Priority Neighbourhoods

- 11.1 It is clear from the mapping information and other sources of data that crime is not evenly distributed across Birmingham and it is therefore equally clear that action to tackle crime cannot be uniform across the City.



- 11.2 The Committee endorses the idea of identifying what are now being called "Priority Neighbourhoods" where resources and skills should be concentrated to drive down crime in areas of greatest prevalence. This would not be done at the expense of other areas but would begin the process of reducing the difference between the best and worst areas for community safety and would be carried out in conjunction with the rigorous tackling of persistent offenders. Thus the problem is approached both through the areas affected and the perpetrator. Such an approach would support the Council priority of providing a city of Vibrant Urban Villages.

Suggested Action

- I. That the Community Safety Partnership endorses the concept of Priority Neighbourhoods and implement a process of neighbourhood management including wherever appropriate joint tasking with partners to tackle community safety issues on a regular basis.

12. Alcohol

- 12.1 The Committee recognised the detrimental role that alcohol plays in community safety issues. The data provided clearly demonstrated a link both in time and space between on-street violence and the detrimental effects of alcohol. It was noted that steps are already in place to control these matters and a close watch will be kept on the effectiveness of interventions such as Alcohol Restricted Zones, and consideration given to their potential effectiveness in other areas of the City. The process for introducing Alcohol Restricted Zones requires evidence of, and consultation on, current/historical levels of anti-social drinking and disorder. This necessitates working with the Police and in consultation with Crime Reduction and Disorder Partnerships and local stakeholders.

- 12.2 Other measures, including licensing restrictions and on-street enforcement by Police, Special Constables, Community Police Support Officers and elements within the City Council such as Licensing Enforcement and Taxi Marshals, were observed by Members of the Committee, who undertook a visit to Broad Street one early Sunday morning in February this year.





Suggested Action

- J. (a) Discussions should take place between the Drugs Action Team (DAT) and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to ascertain what opportunity exists to convert the DAT into a Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).
(b) To work more closely with the NHS/PCTs through the partnership.*

13. Business Crime

- 13.1 The Committee heard representations from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) highlighting the concerns of the business community in relation to the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour on the success of businesses and through them the prosperity of Birmingham. The meeting and outcomes were reported in the FSB's newsletter, Oracle, in June 2005 (see Appendix 1).
- 13.2 Discussion indicated that business crime was not always easy to define as it could potentially include crime which takes place around businesses or which affected the customers of businesses rather than the business itself. In addition, members highlighted the challenges faced by small and medium enterprises in funding resources to engage with community initiatives including community safety as they would wish to. However, the Committee wholeheartedly supported the view that business crime was an important issue which should be tackled in an urgent and sustainable manner.
- 13.3 The City Council works closely with local partners as part of the Birmingham City Centre Partnership (BCCP) to address issues such as retail crime and anti-social behaviour. Through successful partnership working and pioneering initiatives such as the Retail Crime Operation (RCO) scheme and the introduction of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the BCCP is progressively targeting retail crime whilst boosting the viability of shopping centres.

Suggested Action

- K. Learning from the achievements of the BCCP, that the Community Safety Partnership support the proposed Business Crime Group based at the Chamber of Commerce with a view to both furthering the West Midlands Police Force's efforts to tackle crime and criminals in business locations, and to facilitate businesses capacity to help themselves.*



14. Boundaries

- 14.1 The Committee was struck by the lack of coterminous boundaries relevant to community safety in Birmingham. There are 11 City Council districts, 9 WMP Operational Command Units, 4 PCTs, 3 Social Services operational areas, 4 Waste Management depots and operational areas and so on. This was seen as a significant barrier to joint working and a potential waste of resources, although it was being overcome in imaginative ways. Other City Councils, notably Leeds, have adopted this coterminous approach and the benefits of this will be examined by the Committee.

Suggested Action

- L. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage partners to realign their operational boundaries to create coterminous, cohesive units within the areas covered by the CSP.*

15. Community Engagement

- 15.1 The Committee took the view that the roles of citizens (both individually and in communities of place and interest) have a vital role to play in improving community safety in Birmingham. They recognised that there are excellent examples of good practice within the City but felt strongly that it was important to take every opportunity to:
- enhance community engagement;
 - empower communities and individuals to support the forces of law and order; and
 - make communities stronger, more vibrant and more resilient.
- 15.2 The existence of Local Delivery Groups is potentially an important step to ensuring that local action involving, wherever possible, local people, becomes a reality. The Committee will be following their development and success with interest.
- 15.3 The Birmingham Association of Neighbourhood Forums (BANF) and the Birmingham Community Empowerment Network (BCEN) provide direct links to local communities and voluntary organisations. This enables both consultation and the engagement of a wide range of groups in the process of local decision making.



- 15.4 The importance of community cohesion as a major factor in establishing safe and strong communities has been recognised in a Local Government Association guidance report on this issue. Appendix 2 contains chapter 12 of that report, which sets out the key elements in working with partners in the police and fire services.

Suggested Action

- M. The Committee endorses the establishment by the Community Safety Partnership of a sixth Core Priority Group specifically intended to further community engagement.*

16. Funding Arrangements

- 16.1 The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) exists and functions on a mixture of funding from core budgets of partners including the City Council and by accessing relevant temporary funding streams such as Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF), Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and Performance Reward Grants.
- 16.2 The Committee recognises the general unsatisfactory nature of these funding arrangements, creating as it does an ongoing uncertainty about the funds available for tackling community safety over and above those core budgeted sums drawn from Partner budgets. The City Council, through the auspices of the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP), has applied for and acquired Local Area Agreement (LAA) status. This is likely to result in several funding streams all with different spending and allocation criteria being amalgamated into a single budget. This should grant the Council greater freedoms and flexibilities to address the priorities developed in our Community Safety Strategy. It is hoped that this would allow a capacity to focus more effectively on the business of improving community safety by facilitating the budget process with the attainment of the strategic aims of the Community Safety Partnership, City Council and other partners.

Suggested Action

- N. (i) That the Community Safety Partnership plays a leading role in the development of the LAA Plan and ensures that resources are adequate, aligned with the Partnership Strategy and Action Plan, and take into account the concept of Priority Neighbourhoods.
(ii) The Committee will examine the Birmingham LAA this year, to examine the opportunities to tailor the Agreement to meet the priorities and unique problems faced in Birmingham.*

ORACLE

The Voice of the
Birmingham Branch

June 2005



FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

INPUT INTO CITY'S SAFETY STRATEGY

An assertion that the safety of local communities cannot be properly discussed without taking account of the needs of the local shops and services on which the communities depend was the core argument of a letter sent to the City Councillors heading the team formulating the Birmingham Community Safety Strategy. In it, the branch committee voiced its concern that the Strategy document appeared to pay little attention to the safety of owner-managers of small businesses and their staff – even though they suffered the consequences of a great variety of crimes, frauds and scams, many of which were not reported.

Cllr Talib Hussain, Cabinet Member for Local Services & Community Safety, wrote back expressing agreement with this view, stating that the needs and potential contribution of local shops and services had to be considered by the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership.



Kings Norton in south Birmingham has The Green as its focal point, and retains a village feel. Nearby can be found the Old Schoolhouse and The Saracen's Head, which won the BBC's last Restoration series.

Further agreement plus a more detailed reply came from Cllr Timothy Huxtable, Chair of Local Services & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who drew attention to concerns that the impact of crime on businesses was integral to local communities and damaging to the social and economic development of the City and its wider reputation.

With his letter he supplied additional documents that provide points of reference for further liaison on this matter between the City Council and the FSB and its members. Part 2 of the Community Safety Strategy Targets for 2005-08 includes a statement of intent *to focus on business crime and seek to work more closely with the business community, to understand their needs and explore solutions.*

Similarly, a Local Centres document states: *There are over 60 local centres in Birmingham, providing for essential local facilities ... and their continuing health is important to the delivery of the vibrant urban villages element of the Council Plan 2005.* It also observes: *If centres are to be successful people need to feel safe when they visit them and so measures to address local security issues need to be a priority.*

In a positive response to the FSB approach, Cllr Huxtable invited FSB representation at his Committee's (then imminent) next meeting, a role that was fulfilled at short notice by our Regional Organiser, Denise Craig. She heard that the Committee regarded it as essential to find neighbourhood solutions, invest in sports, and involve education and social services.

After noting that small-business owner-managers were typically concerned about low-level crime, Denise was asked why so much of it went unreported, and replied by observing that apart from the time it typically took to obtain a crime number in order to make an insurance claim, extra problems were that liability premiums were rising and insurance was becoming more difficult to obtain. The excess was often higher than the claim, and too many claims affected a business's insurance history. Owner-managers also had little free time available for meetings of local Neighbourhood Watch and Business Watch schemes.

AGM NOMINATIONS

Nominations are invited for the offices of Birmingham Branch Chairman, Branch Vice Chairman, Branch Secretary and Branch Treasurer, to be elected at the Branch AGM due to be held on 8th November at the Eaton Hotel, 279 Hagley Road. See the nomination form enclosed with this newsletter.

12 working with the police and the fire service

12.1 Good, effective policing makes a vital contribution to community cohesion and police forces will be key partners in the delivery of cohesion locally. Community cohesion should be central to the work of the police, and policing strategies and operations should be consistent with local community cohesion objectives. It will be important for local authorities to know how they can work with their policing partners to best effect and to support their work in this area.

12.2 Police are often called upon to act as peacemakers or as mediators to bring people together in order to resolve problems. Police forces also have a key role in systematically identifying ‘priority areas’ where community tension is high or rising, recognising the causes and policing accordingly to sustain long-term change. By responding in a strategic way to short-term rises in community tension identified by the police, local authorities can shape their community cohesion policies to respond to the reality of their communities. In return, through supporting neighbourhood renewal and other initiatives in partnership with local agencies, police forces can strengthen their crime reduction work in the local area.

The role of local authorities

12.3 Section 6 of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act places a statutory obligation on local authorities and the police to co-operate in the development and implementation of a strategy for tackling crime and disorder. The strategy must be formed following a review of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder in the area. Local authorities must prepare and publish an analysis of that review and obtain the views of people and bodies in the area on the report by holding public meetings or otherwise. Community cohesion should be a key theme throughout crime reduction strategies and for the crime and disorder reduction partnerships that oversee them.

12.4 These requirements reflect the seriousness of the impact of crime and disorder on individuals and provide opportunities for working in partnership to consider and address the impact of crime on

community cohesion. Working in partnership on issues such as removing provocative graffiti and raising awareness across communities contributes to community cohesion by maintaining civic pride, increasing local ownership and securing collective responsibility for neighbourhoods.

The role of police authorities

12.5 A police authority is an independent body made up of local people. Police authorities have a duty to consult local people on policing issues and to make sure that there is an efficient and effective local police force which gives best value to local people. The police authority sets the strategic direction for the force and holds the chief constable to account on behalf of local communities for the policing service delivered. In this strategic role, one of its main functions is to align community safety plans and crime reduction strategies coming from local people and partner organisations (such as local authorities and crime and disorder reduction partnerships), with wider policing plans for the force area, and then monitor the police force on their delivery against the targets set. Police authorities can therefore take a key role in ensuring that policing strategy reflects local community cohesion objectives and ensuring local communities are directly involved in improving local policing.

The role of police forces

12.6 Effective policing strategy requires meaningful community links. This not only helps with the provision of community information but is also vital in dealing with community tension and reassurance. Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance to forces states that should tension occur amongst local communities, it is important those Basic Command Units (BCUs) commanders:

- identify affected and vulnerable communities;
- establish links or develop existing links where necessary. It is important that community members

have an avenue through which they can communicate with the police and parts of government;

- gain information from all sources and build the picture of tension within communities, the level of crime reporting and the effectiveness of the police response;
- reassure communities by disseminating information;
- distinguish between extremist and moderate opinion;
- involve staff associations and advisory groups;
- assign family liaison officers to affected families;
- form new or involve existing community forums to create links between communities;
- brief members of the affected communities; and
- involve elected representatives eg MPs, police authority members and councillors.

12.7 Police intelligence units should consider the context locally, nationally and internationally so that communities are prioritised for contact. Forces are also encouraged to develop contacts with other forces that have similar communities to their own. In that way an incident happening in one community would allow early warning to be given to other forces.

12.8 Partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies, business and community groups and lay involvement will be essential. Every area and community has its own particular group of stakeholders and key community contacts, who form opinion, lead and influence. They can also, when properly engaged with, help police and the wider community to reach a mutually acceptable understanding of each other. These stakeholders may include:

- local authorities – town/parish councils
- independent members of police authorities
- local businesses
- licensees and associations
- schools and colleges
- neighbourhood managers
- community and voluntary organisations
- cultural/religious leaders
- racial equality councils.

12.9 Independent advisory groups (IAGs) are used at a strategic level by many police forces. They should be regularly used to inform decision-making on general policing matters. They offer a different perspective on policing and help to build lasting links with communities. It is important to ensure that members of IAGs are truly representative in terms of age, gender, faith etc and can speak on behalf of local communities and groups.

12.10 In considering the various sources of information and advice the role of minority staff support associations (for example, the Black Police Association) will be very important. Many members of these associations live or carry out voluntary work in the communities the police wish to consult with. Those members may be an excellent source of information about relevant communities and may have detailed knowledge about cultural, religious and other issues and may have a good knowledge of the communities and their cultural issues.

12.11 Achieving a police service that reflects the communities it serves is essential to achieving community confidence. Forces need to ensure that they have the right people who can provide an appropriate service and communicate effectively with

minority communities as well as the majority community. Recruitment from local communities and the involvement of local community members in the selection of police officers will continue to be encouraged.

Monitoring tension

12.12 Police will also have a key role in monitoring and responding to community tensions. Forces have well-established criminal intelligence systems upon which to base their operations and direct strategy and tactics aimed at crime and disorder reduction. Integral to these intelligence systems are often warning or tension indicators, which provide information on community tension with varying degrees of effectiveness.

12.13 Basic command units should have in place the following systems:

- reliable community profiles which are routinely updated;
- reliable lists of community contacts and their skills and responsibility for maintenance of these lists invested in a BCU management team member;
- routine intelligence analysis of relevant crimes and incidents of disorder;
- a skills audit of their own staff;
- access to training for police, support and other agency staff (for example in negotiation/mediation);
- a community tension risk assessment, included as an agenda item on the weekly BCU management team meeting;
- management information in respect of policing activity which could affect communities, eg stop and search activity; and
- weekly tasking meetings to allocate tactical options.

Ongoing work at police service, force and basic command unit level

12.14 There is a range of work underway embedding and mainstreaming community cohesion within the Police Reform programme:

- National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) are currently running a pilot of work around the police response to community cohesion which will be an important part of developing knowledge and expertise in community cohesion, and disseminating good practice.
- Central government, together with Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and practitioners, is currently developing good practice so that forces are able to systematically identify priority areas where community tension is high or rising and why, and to commit resources necessary to achieve long-term change. These include: National Crime and Operations Faculty Guidance on Policing Community Disorder, ACPO Operational Guidance on the Management of Inter ethnic Conflict, ACPO Guidance on Identifying and Combating Hate Crime and further ACPO work on effective community involvement, and the development of tactical policing options to support community cohesion.
- Gaining the trust and confidence of all sections of the community through the elimination of discriminatory practices and the development of appropriate policing methods remains crucial to the delivery of effective policing and community cohesion. Ongoing systematic analysis of the recording and response to hate crime and stop and search data has an important role in managing community tensions and cohesion. In 2004, the Lawrence Steering Group, with the support of government ministers, held a series of community consultation events under the banner of 'The Lawrence Steering Group Community Involvement Strategy'. The final report of the Community Involvement Strategy events will be published later this year.

The fire service

12.15 Other emergency services, particularly the fire service, can also play an important role in promoting community cohesion. This is partly because they are not involved in law enforcement but have a strong presence within local communities. The Fire white paper *Our Fire and Rescue Service* published June 2003 recognised that firefighters are widely seen as contributing much to a positive community ethos and can be seen as role models for young people. Firefighters have taken the lead in local working with young people, either in young firefighter associations, Prince's Trust or similar schemes. They have also engaged in outreach programmes, taking fire safety lessons to schools and community groups. Community fire stations that provide facilities for community use and partner organisations are already established in many areas. Retained fire stations, which provide most of the cover in rural areas but are often under-used buildings, could also be used in this way.

Practical steps

- Ensure crime and disorder reduction partnerships have effective stakeholder representation and that community cohesion is a standing item on the agenda of meetings.
- Establish community cohesion targets and actions with the crime and disorder strategy, ensuring that these are reviewed and measured.
- Ensure wide consultation on the crime and disorder reduction partnerships and strategy involving all sections of the community.
- Ensure that there are good relations between police authorities, police forces and the local authority with regular meetings to ensure close working.
- Police authorities, police forces, local authorities and other partners should work together to develop

strong links with all sections of the community, with clear and rapid communication channels, especially with local young people, and the ability to respond to and manage rumours.

- Police authorities, police forces and local authorities should review the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour at the local and neighbourhood community level and work together to ensure that resources are appropriately targeted and used in a non-discriminatory way.
- Assess the local authority contribution to crime reduction and to safer, more cohesive communities across the full range of strategic and service delivery responsibilities.
- Police authorities, police forces and local authorities should ensure consistent high standards of diversity/community and race relations training in public agencies.
- Local authorities should encourage effective multi-agency arrangements for addressing racist incidents and where possible set in place third party reporting arrangements.
- Develop a contingency plan for any future disturbances and to identify and respond to triggers that may increase community tensions or potential social disorder.
- Ensure that the links needed to implement contingency plans exist before they are needed. This needs regular, testing and detailed community profiles.

Peterborough Pathfinder: Evening Economy Project

Peterborough found that anti-social behaviour has many forms; it can be noisy neighbours, graffiti, litter, and abandoned cars on the street, or drunken

disorder. Anti-social behaviour can hold back the regeneration of disadvantaged areas and damages quality of life. It also has a negative impact on community cohesion. Anti-social behaviour can make people afraid to go out or visit certain parts of a city; the resentment and unhappiness it causes can be one of the reasons why some communities make scapegoats of others; and alcohol-fuelled disputes between different groups can lead to raised community tensions.

Peterborough city centre suffers from a high level of anti-social behaviour during the evening periods and the city council saw the idea of an evening strategy developed in partnership with the police and local businesses as an effective way of tackling the problem.

Sponsored by the Community Cohesion Pathfinder programme, the Evening Economy project is led by Peterborough Community Safety Partnership. Its aim is to bring together the key stakeholders, agencies and organisations to minimise the level of anti-social behaviour and maximise joint partnership working. This approach concentrates on ways to reduce current tensions and problems and looks at targeting work with 14-17 year-olds who are the next generation of visitors to the city centre.

The first action of the project was to host a conference in May 2004 at Peterborough Unity Football Club. The conference featured an update on the new licensing laws, a presentation on the Nightsafe project in Blackpool and group workshops on how to develop and progress the strategy. The conference generated a lot of interest with good representation from the business sector, and its findings will be incorporated into the next stage of the development of the strategy.

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Leicestershire Constabulary

In 2002, following a report into community relations in the city and widespread consultation, Leicester City Council developed a community cohesion strategy. Crime and disorder and community tension were key elements, giving Leicestershire Constabulary a central role. However the council recognised that fostering community cohesion in this area was not the sole preserve of the police. The strategy therefore set the stage for close partnership working at a strategic level.

Alongside this, Leicestershire Constabulary has been working with the National Centre for Policing Excellence to pilot the integration of community cohesion policing strategies into mainstream policing within Leicester Central BCU. The project is still being developed but there are three key strands looking at:

- how local police officers relate to the communities they serve, how they deliver their services and resolve vulnerability and criminality;
- close partnership working with statutory and voluntary bodies at a neighbourhood level and through the Leicester City Crime and Disorder Partnership; and
- strategic level issues including deployment, officer alignment, micro-beats, community intelligence, strategic assessment tasking and communications strategies.

The project focussed on three areas. One of these, South Highfield, is a large multi-cultural community where approximately 32 languages are spoken and a large number of faiths are practised. The project here is doing a number of things including:

- developing an in-house policing course, involving local people, to raise police awareness of different religions and cultures. This includes short regular

sessions where basic languages are taught to the police by members of the local community;

- supporting community events and meetings to ensure existing community relations are improved;
- police officers are encouraged to visit places of worship and talk to community leaders;
- communities are encouraged to have contact with the Local Policing Unit on a formal and informal basis;
- police are working with the community to develop a shared understanding of key concerns and issues to be tackled;
- two community support officers have been deployed to work in the heart of the local communities; and
- the BCU is developing micro-beats to get down to street level understanding of communities and tackling criminality.

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Cheshire Fire Service – total community protection

Cheshire Fire Authority has clearly set out its strategy, which aims to 'Secure a Safe and Cohesive Community', based on a vision of 'total community protection'. The scale of the objectives set out in the vision and strategy reflect the nature of the issues and how they target resources. For example, 'at risk communities' and 'at risk people' are normally characterised by other factors such as age, inequality, high crime, poor health and poor socio-economic conditions. By directing resources to these areas, a

big impact has been made on fire related issues and, as a consequence, contributed to improving the quality of life and the cohesion in our communities.

Much of their community work has been carried out by firefighters who actively engage the communities they serve. The organisational policy has also established direct links and membership to each of the district, unitary and county authorities, local strategic partnerships and crime and disorder groups.

This approach has resulted in range of success factors, including:

- Cheshire was the first fire service in the UK to establish a franchise with the Prince's Trust Volunteers. Over 1000 of Cheshire's young people have been through the scheme returning 80 per cent to full-time work or education, which has resulted in national recognition;
- over 140 young people aged 13-18 in Cheshire are now fire cadets many of whom have received recognised NVQ achievements; and
- over 8,000 home fire safety checks carried out. In partnerships with social services and health workers they have been successful in identifying those most vulnerable, resulting in a national award for their work with health workers.

Cheshire Fire Authority's dissemination programme will focus on the following key messages:

- the benefits of working with young people;
- the fire service's role in effective partnership working;
- how the fire service can improve community cohesion;
- more than just a fire service 'a template for success'; and
- communicating success.

A CD-ROM, featuring the cast of *Hollyoaks*, has been produced highlighting the fire services work in relation to cohesion.

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Further information

12.16 Guidance for police forces includes:

- *NCOF Community Disorder – a Tactical Police Guide* (April – July 2002);
- *ACPO Operational Guide for the Management of Inter-Ethnic Conflict* (Dec 2003);
- *ACPO Hate Crime Manual* (March 2003) is available on the ACPO website at www.acpo.police.uk; and
- practical advice on community cohesion is currently being piloted through the National Centre for Policing Excellence – contact CENTREX on 01256 602100 or at www.centrex.police.uk/home.html