

30th January 2008 7.30pm - University of Bath in Swindon, Oakfield Campus

In excess of 50 people were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, Cllr Rod Bluh, who opened with a brief overview of the way the evening would run.

The new BCU Commander Swindon, Wiltshire Police, Chief Superintendent Paul Howlett introduced himself and said that he spoke on behalf of himself and Brian Moore the new Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police, when he said that the vision for Wiltshire, including Swindon, is to become the safest county in the United Kingdom and the mission that the people feel safe and satisfied. 'Safe' encompasses free of gun and knife crime, a thriving crime free town centre, both day and night, and homes free of domestic violence. 'Satisfied' is identified from statistics, gathered from information given to him, and his officers in engaging with the people. Neighbourhood Policing, with 23 teams across Swindon, is being consolidated and works by responding to community intelligence. All members of the Partnership are demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment.

The objective is to build safe sustained communities with cohesion, inclusivity, protection for the vulnerable and embracing all faiths. There is no precedent in history for the present high-level threat of terrorism. The future lies with respect and understanding for each other and our faiths – it only takes one act of violence to destroy everything.

Swindon is a great place to be and Paul said he was confident that it would only get better in the future.

Richard Palusinski, Head of Community Safety gave a presentation (copy attached) on who and what is The Community Safety Partnership, how it is managed, what it is charged by the Government to deliver, the Strategic Assessment and the Partnership Plan, introducing the five areas of delivery, with a brief run down of each area and it's Executive Board champion lead.

Cllr Bluh said that the graffiti campaign has resulted in a massive reduction in the amount of graffiti and with the will and passion to get it right all other areas of concern in Swindon could move the same way.

Brian Ford, vice chair of the Police Authority and Chair of the Resources Committee reported that the Wiltshire Police Authority is charged with holding a consultative meeting every year regarding the budget and had decided to join with the CSP on this occasion. The budget figures for 2007/8 and the proposed budget for 2008/9, rate to be fixed at a meeting on 7th February, were circulated (copy attached). Comments on the 4.5% increase were called for, but none forthcoming.

A Police representative from the South West Counter Terrorism Unit gave a presentation on Raising Awareness of Counter Terrorism (brief attached). There are 46 terrorist organisations, the most well known being Al Qaeda. The threat will not diminish and everyone should be aware that terrorists all live and work somewhere; Mr Badat, who was involved in the plot to blow up an American airliner with a shoe device came from Gloucester, only 30 miles up the road. Communities can work

together to defeat terrorism and anyone with information should ring one of the given numbers.

Cllr Bluh then invited the audience to put questions to the panel, comprising himself, Paul Howlett, Brian Ford, Richard Palusinski, Diana Fulbrook (Chief Executive for the National Probation Service) and Mark Gaskarth (Divisional Commander for Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service).

Q. The national Police phone number, 0845 408 7000 is answered, but then you are left holding. The website gives a local phone number, would the Police consider publishing that?

A. Paul Howlett: The organisation has been reshaped for efficiency savings and from performance and IT monitoring the current rate is 90% answered and over 70% connected to the control room within the appropriate time scale. This is a big improvement in the last 12 months but the problem is recognised and improvements will continue.

Q. At a recent Neighbourhood Safety Team meeting, Emmanuel Church in Old Walcot was suggested as a meeting point, but a PCSO had said that meeting in a church could offend ethnic minorities.

A. There had been some concern about using the Church itself however there are community facilities available and this will be followed up. It is the intention to use this site.

Q. On a Friday and Saturday night Haydon Wick lose most of their local police to the town centre – they are part of the community and need looking after too.

A. Paul Howlett: Resources are diverted, however the 24/7 response team, traffic cars and dog handlers are all on call, and the best use of available resources has to be made. It is difficult, when anyone rings the emergency services they expect a prompt response. The long-term solution to alcohol related issues is not having the police waiting in the town centre for something to happen and they are working with the Licensing Authority to reduce binge drinking, eradicate the binge culture, and build an environment where people feel safe.

Q. During the evening it was stated that an ASBO is the last resort – what are the specifics of how ASB is being tackled?

A. Richard Palusinski: ASB investigators work with victims and perpetrators to resolve local issues, and where they are council tenants housing is involved. A Families Officer can help if there are family tensions and Community Mediation, a registered charity can also assist.

The official steps are:

- a. A warning letter is sent.

- b. Log sheets sent to victims to record all events –this is needed if the case goes to court as evidence. Support from Family Mediation, Social Services, Housing and Community Mediation can be provided as appropriate.
- c. An ABC can be put in place. This is an Acceptable Behaviour Contract, which is completely voluntary, and sets out the limits of what can and cannot be done.
- d. If everything else fails an ASBO is applied for.

Mark Gaskarth: There is a draft strategy in place for the reduction of ASB in Swindon. We look at the people, the hot spots, themes i.e. graffiti, abandoned vehicles, empty buildings. The ASB team runs safe and clean days and everyone is encouraged to help with these in his or her area.

Rod Bluh: ASB is the number one issue raised with all councillors, but it can be tackled; remember a large amount of ASB stems from a small amount of people.

Neighbourhood teams are working with the Partners to tackle ASB, they identify the perpetrator, talk to them and if necessary target. It is not a lost cause and there are signs that it is being contained in some areas. It is a community issue and people need to work as a community, helping to identify those involved.

Wendy Hall, Chief Executive of Family Mediation said they can assist in conflict with neighbours, helping them to review their behaviour and see the impact it can have. Leaflets were available at the end of the meeting.

Paul Howlett: For community engagement and intelligence two things are needed:

1. Trust –to build a relationship with the police
2. Communication

Q. There is such a quick turnover of staff in the police force, which is a big issue when talking about trust. How can you stop the constant flow?

A. Paul Howlett: Community Beat Managers are now expected to give a minimum two-year commitment. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are relatively new and will hopefully stay in the same locality for longer, although some use this route to become regular police officers. There is an increased focus on volunteers and this empowers communities, police need to be given information so talk to your community beat officer. I have confidence that Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Partners will deliver local services.

Q. 24% of crime involves domestic violence, which costs more than £11 million per annum. 11,000 adults and 8,000 children can expect to be involved in at least one occurrence of domestic violence in Swindon in the year and one or two domestic homicides occur every year. What initiatives are in place to address this?

A. Paul Howlett: Perpetrators of domestic violence will be arrested, sadly it has often already happened many times before the victim reports it. Domestic violence is high on the police agenda and will be met with a robust response; we work with both perpetrator and victim to try and reduce low-level assault and violence in the home.

Every Partner in the CSP is on board and reduction of repeat incidents of domestic violence is a specific outcome under the local area agreement (LAA).

Diana Fulbrook: We must educate our young people that any kind of violence is unacceptable— Probation have a huge role to play in this area. As Chair of the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board I am working with the CSP and other agencies to get a better, more coherent strategy. It is difficult to obtain funding to pump-prime action that will eventually start to make savings.

New domestic violence courts are about to be put in place plus a multi-agency approach to tackling repeat offenders. Perpetrators are put through a 12-month programme, which is very expensive. If offences were reported earlier preventions could be put in place so that courts only had to deal with more persistent offenders. We must educate our young who think it is OK for a girl to be slapped about a bit if she steps out of line.

Mark Gaskarth: The Fire Service designs, and has a key part in the setting up of sanctuary rooms. Fire is used as a weapon in domestic violence incidents in some cultures and a careful check is made if there is any suspicion that this may be the case with any fire attended.

Q. Parents complain about teachers ill-treating their offspring and invariably when checked out these are the troublemakers in schools. Teachers are not allowed to discipline students and parents don't. We need to tackle the problems early – how do we get started?

A. Diana Fulbrook: There is a major problem in society, some people expect punitive measures and everyone locked up; this only causes overcrowding in prisons. There has been along-term cross party crime strategy spanning 30–40 years to tackle the preventative end. It is a serious problem; if the Criminal Justice system is overloaded then the job of dealing with dangerous people cannot be done properly.

Rod Bluh: The Academy 0-19 project could go a long way towards Identifying problems with children in the 0-5 year age group in this area.

Q. When will the Neighbourhood Policing Teams be fully staffed?

A. Paul Howlett: Neighbourhood Policing is at the heart of local policing, budgets are tight but we are working to consolidate.

Q. A house in Beech Avenue has been left vacant for 7 months; other houses have recently been burnt down. Why aren't empty houses demolished quicker?

A. Rod Bluh: These houses have been passed over to the developer and are therefore out of the council's responsibility.

Q. Moredon Primary School has been empty for 18 months, why hasn't that been demolished?

A. Mark Gaskarth: The Fire Service is working hard with the developers to get this building demolished.

Rod Bluh: Maybe Council needs to look at this issue and make it a policy issue to get empty buildings demolished quickly.

Q. Broadgreen is one of the most diverse areas in Wiltshire and a wonderful place to live. 2 of the 4 PCSOs for the area have been moved, are they coming back?

A. Paul Howlett: An audit completed this month will develop local plans around roll-outs, closing gaps and other initiatives, including volunteers and new ideas to engage with public.

Brian Ford: The Police Authority recognise the problems, we are losing PCSOs to other police forces and regular services, and with a 3-4 month training period this does leave a gap. We are trying to get the time down but there are only so many places on training courses and training does cost money.

Q. The Wiltshire Police Authority budget figures show use of £300k reserves. What are the total reserves and what percentage is this of the total budget?

A. Brian Ford: Unaware of these figures at this time will find out and respond.

Response:

The latest Statement of Accounts for 2006/2007 show that the following reserves were held by Wiltshire Police Authority as at 31st March 2007:

£ million

General balances	2.986
Capital reserve	7.611
Revenue earmarked reserves	3.396
Total	13.993

The general balances represent 2.9% of net annual spending.

Q. Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Police/Partnerships working together. When will this start and how will it work?

A. Paul Howlett: Everyone is already working together very closely now, involving all Partners, wards and parish councillors, everyone.

Rod Bluh thanked all for attending and telling us what is going on. Everyone needs to be part of this partnership. If anyone still has questions they can speak to people over the next 5 minutes, email or telephone. Notes from tonight, together with copies of presentations will be on the CSP web site at www.swindon-csp.org.uk