

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2016

A MEETING of the COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2016 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Mark Houlbrook, Majid Khan, Cynthia Ransome and Clive Stone

Invitee: -

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Bill Hotchkiss – Head of Service, Community Service
Superintendent Thomas – South Yorkshire Police
Helen Conroy – Public Health Specialist
Carolina Borgstrom – Acting Head of Service Enforcement
John Davis – Enforcement Manager

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Iris Beech and Susan Durant and

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
2.	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>	
	<p>Challenge it, Report it and Stop it is the Government's Strategy to address hate crime.</p> <p>I am therefore grateful to the Deputy Mayor for recently acknowledging the significant harm to the equalities agenda in Doncaster.</p> <p>This Scrutiny Panel is today looking at crime figures including 92 Hate Crimes for the reported 12 months.</p> <p>And whilst I have no idea whether the figures are accurate or not, I would welcome clarity on what hate crime definition is being used, how many of the 92 hate crimes resulted in an arrest and/or charge and how have victims and BME citizens been involved in the evaluation of reporting centres and improving hate crime outcomes in Doncaster.</p>	

Taken at face value Cllr Jones comments regarding the stated significant harm to the equalities agenda could be seen to undermine not only vulnerable groups confidence in reporting hate crime but also cast doubt on the integrity of the partnership arrangements in Doncaster.

It is my understanding:

A hate crime is defined as “any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic”.

The stated significant harm to the equalities agenda in Doncaster is to be frank a euphemism for racial abuse. The well documented cuts to services and support appeared to be based on racial characteristics and continues today.

At the time as now only a few people have stood up and challenged it and tried to understand how this impacts on people's lives and the governance of the public authorities in Doncaster.

It is my understanding that misconduct in public office is an offence.

Concerns about the inciting of racial hatred which are reflected in the Audit Commission Report 2010 para 87 were similarly down played by those with the power to perpetuate institutionalised racism and racial inequalities in Doncaster.

Through a protracted FOI process we learn that important equalities briefing notes were kept away from the then democratically elected Mayor of Doncaster and the decision making process.

To this day, black and minority ethnic citizens are being denied proportionate and meaningful opportunities to participate in the policing and community safety issues that impact on their lives: These include

Hate crime
CSE
Police and Crime Plan
FGM
Radicalisation
Forced Marriage
Honour Base Violence
Cyber Crime
Stop and Search
Human Trafficking

Victims of hate crimes are excluded from influencing where reporting centres are located and evaluated.

Ideas are put forward and then ignored, including the promised feedback from the meeting which was held to discuss people's concern regarding the BME cuts and the alleged inciting of racial hatred.

Chair , you may recall attending this meeting. It was the one I was asked by DMBC to Co chair. I did so in good faith whilst expecting that DMBC would have the decency to provide some feedback and information regarding what they were to do to address the significant harm to the equalities agenda.

Hence, the figures on hate crime are simply figures with no real meaning until there is a real effort to engage with victims, understand the under reporting and to provide information in a manner which makes it easy to compare and contrast.

As a victim of hate crime all I would want is for the authorities to take hate crime seriously. I would like my voice to be heard and the perpetrators held to account.

I should not have to wait 6 years to find out why DMBC should fail to apologise to me for sending me a FOI response with a fake signature of its most senior Asian Officer.

Just to be very clear, the signature on the letter in front of you is not Mr Murtuja's and the act of faking his signature and sending me the FOI letter was still done even when he said no.

The blame the victim mentality has resulted in this incident being played down without any real understanding that it is such behaviour by DMBC and its partners why increasing numbers of black and Asian people are openly stating that they have little or no confidence in the public authorities in Doncaster.

Before coming to this meeting, I visited a co owner of one of the largest taxi firms in Doncaster. I am reliably informed that the vast majority of racial abuse and attacks on predominantly Asian taxi drivers are still going unreported, such is the problem that some drivers are taking the law into their own hands!

In conclusion and to finish on a positive note, I would like to explore the merit of piloting an initiative which harnesses the enthusiasm, experience and knowledge of BME citizens and its many credible voices, including Cllr Khan who many years ago attended Police Liaison Meetings with BME citizens.

Such people could help to raise awareness of hate crime and other policing/community safety issues, whilst helping to determine and evaluate the location of the reporting centres.

	<p>Hate crime damages society and undermines the diversity and tolerance we should instead be celebrating. I hope from this meeting today there is renewed effort from DMBC and its partner agencies to listen to victims and supporting the most vulnerable as it is important that the public and public authorities come together to challenge, report and stop hatred wherever they see it.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p><u>CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair thanked Mr Brown for his statement and explained that it would be taken into account during discussion the item on the agenda at the meeting.</p> <p>The Panel gave consideration to the Crime and Disorder update, which fell into four categories, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Policing Team and impact • Safer and Stronger Doncaster Partnership priorities • New Psychoactive Substances (NPS/Legal Highs) • Enforcement <p><u>Doncaster’s Local Policing Teams (LPT)</u></p> <p>Superintendent Thomas gave the Panel an overview of the Doncaster LPT, stating that it was the first district to move to the new structure, which coincided with the formation of Force Crime Units, but it was noted that the Command Team at Doncaster remained unchanged in structure. The most significant change was the merging of Response and Safer Neighbourhood Teams. He also highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in PCSOs had achieved the 2017 required level with 14 in the East, 17 in the West and 18 in Central, working on both a daytime and evening shifts; • Visibility and Engagement through PACT, Neighbourhood Inspectors and Managers, use of ASB legislation and combined patrols of the town centre by NRT and PCSOs; • Additional Police Teams in Doncaster for example, Performance Crime Team, Airport Team and Prison Investigation Team; <p>Members considered the following issues:</p> <p>Monitoring of PCSOs – at a recent community meeting that Members had attended, concern was expressed that morale seemed to be low within the PCSO workforce. It was noted that PCSO’s had recently been faced with redundancy and this may be account for their current feelings. The position was noted and would be addressed by South Yorkshire Police.</p> <p>Superintendent Thomas explained that South Yorkshire Police did not</p>	

have the resources to now attend every meeting in wards and parishes, but would concentrate the Inspectors and Neighbourhood Managers attendance at PACT meetings. It was stressed that the Police would always attend meeting that they were statutorily obliged to attend. He reminded the Panel that he had designed the new structure to deliver neighbourhood policing, which he was keen to protect, but Members must note that a Police Officer or PCSO would no longer be visible on every street corner.

Neighbourhood Response Team powers – Members recognised that PCSOs were not warranted officers but were of the opinion that more powers would make a significant difference. PCSOs were provided with as many powers as possible, but anything additional to existing had to be devolved by the Chief Superintendent and Central Government consideration. It was highlighted by Members that confiscation powers would be useful. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Response Team was a very proactive team, was able to use the Police radio airways and was intelligence led. Whenever a PCSO was provided with information it was fed centrally to ensure resources were deployed into the right place and at the right time.

Is crime worth reporting – this was a message that communities were giving to Councillors, as they were of the opinion that nothing reported was receiving attention. Concern was expressed particularly with regard to hate crime towards taxi drivers who were claiming they had a list of people who are barred from using taxis but they do not inform the Police as they feel nothing was done about it. It was stressed again, by Superintendent Thomas, that all information/intelligence was gathered centrally and used if required when investigating a case. Just a small piece of information may not mean much at the time, however, when added to other information could assist with prosecutions.

How to raise awareness with the community that all crime should be reported, was noted as an issue that required addressing. It was accepted that all organisations needed to be smarter with social media to publicise successes and that when the public provide information to the Police, it is possible they would not receive a call back, but no call was wasted.

Special Police Officers – It was noted that Special Police Officers had the same powers as a regular Police Officer.

Town Centre Anti-social Behaviour – a public place protection order was currently being applied for in the town centre to cut down on ASB, for example, street drinking. The use of such an order had been successful in the Hexthorpe area, but again it was stressed that the positive from its use required publicising.

Chairs of PACT Meetings – it was confirmed by Superintendent

Thomas that South Yorkshire Police would continue to chair the PACT meetings, however, it was discussed that if there was a real wish for a Councillor to chair a meeting then that could be discussed.

Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership

The Head of Service for Community Safety outlined the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership priorities for 2014-17 as follows, including an overview of the statistics:

- Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending – consistently one of the most important issues for residents;
- Protecting vulnerable people – key aim of the Partnership as it encompasses a number of agendas
- Reduce substance and alcohol misuse and the associated effects on crime – substance misuse impacts on crime levels as well as other priorities within the Partnership eg. Domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Breakdown of statistics – Members expressed a wish that in future reports statistics be broken down further into areas including ethnic groups, geographical location and gender to ensure the figures could be given proper scrutiny.

Hot spots – these are detailed on South Yorkshire Police Website.

Prosecutions – It was confirmed that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) make the decision whether or not to prosecute, weighing up all evidence provided. There was ongoing dialogue on cases to ensure charging standards were consistent with the Police challenging the CPS if there were inconsistencies. It was noted that the CPS could not be challenged by the Crime and Disorder Board, however, a representative from CPS attends to take up issues that required consideration. There were ombudsman processes that could be followed if a challenge was to be made.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – it was recognised that figures had reduced for a number of reasons including local and national campaigns, training for taxi drivers, hotels and guest houses. There has been an active campaign to encourage reporting. There had been an increase in referrals but when investigated there was no actual increase. It was noted that there was not the same organised criminality in the Doncaster as in the Rotherham area but was more associated with age inappropriate relationships. There had been an increase with historical cases due to confidence in reporting.

Theft with violence – there had been a massive increase prior to Christmas relating to robbery from delivery vehicles.

Arson – there had been a recent trend with wheelie bin fires however the fire service was investigating the issue. It was stressed this was not just an issue effecting Doncaster.

Thrive meetings – these were a new concept where key partners met on a fortnightly basis to share sensitive information and address potential threats over the coming weeks ensuring correct resources were put in place.

Prevention – This was a large and important part of the Police tool kit and resources would always be put in place no matter how serious the crime was.

Domestic Abuse – support for this service was a risk due to its short term funding.

New Psychoactive Substances

The Public Health Specialist outlined a number of key milestones that had been reached including:

- Establishment of the NPS forum to respond to concerns;
- Established NPS.reporting@doncaster.gov.uk
- Delivered targeted training to children's homes staff following identified training needs;
- Closure of 'Heads of Donny' under ASB powers;
- Poster Campaign at Accident and Emergency;
- Project 3 and Police undertake joint outreach work;
- Psychoactive Substances Bill comes into force to make importation and supply unlawful.

It was noted that NPS could still be obtained from websites and that it would be unlawful to import or supply but users would not be charged with an illegal act. It was noted that NPS fits well within the ecstasy and party drugs category.

Prevention – was key to avoiding people developing a habit, with focus on vulnerable groups, particularly children in care. Successful early intervention had been undertaken with parents to assist with understanding the impact it has on their children.

Open Access System – Public Health invests in the robust substance misuse and prevention programme, with a treatment facility at Balby.

NPS impact on Health Service – there was currently no specific data available to assess the impact from people attending, for example, Accident and Emergency, however, there has been an increase in cases and like any substance misuse, there would ultimately be an impact on the Health Authority. It also has a costly impact on partner

services, individuals, families and communities.

Enforcement

A presentation to the Panel outlined the structure of and what the Council's enforcement service was able to achieve addressing the following issues:

- Littering;
- Houses in multiple occupation;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Planning and parking enforcement;
- Pollution;
- Illegal encampments and horse fly-grazing;
- Trading standards;
- Licensing and business safety;
- Food and animal health; and
- Health and safety.

Resources - in response to questions raised, the Panel noted that the team was extremely stretched, but were proactive in how they were addressing specific issues.

When to Prosecute – the Enforcement Team makes its own decisions on whether to prosecute, depending on evidence, for example if a garden was untidy but the residents were not physically able to undertake the work, then the case could be signed off with no prosecution but other mechanisms put in place to help.

Sale of Tobacco and illegal substances – this was highlighted as always an issue but a recent search of local traders, including the use of sniffer dogs, found nothing which highlights that people were realising they could not sell such goods.

Parking – it was acknowledged that houses were not built to take so many cars and in turn created bad parking including concern that it could create restrictions for emergency vehicles. It was noted that the team was working with Planning to address car parking and air pollution. Specifically with regard to parking evidence was being collated from resident complaints to help with providing a more proactive service.

RESOLVED:

1. that the discussions be noted;
2. that the Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Board be made aware of the Panel's concern relating to the use of NPS by children in care;
3. encourage reporting of crime by giving realistic feedback to the community and highlighting success stories; and

	4. consider a possible visit for the Panel to the Neighbourhood Response Team.	
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