

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME AND VIOLENT CRIME/ COMMUNITY SAFETY

Monday, 18 June 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:	Councillor Danielle Stone (Chair), Councillors Mick Ford, Christopher Malpas and David Palethorpe	
CO-OPTED MEMBER:	Neil Bartholomey	Chair Northampton Pubwatch
	Sharon Henley	Crime Prevention Design Advisor Community Safety Team Northamptonshire Police
Officers	Debbie Ferguson	Safer Stronger Partnership Manager
	Will Finn	Community Safety Data Analyst
	Tracy Tiff	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
	Joanne Birkin	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brendan Glynane and Dennis Meredith and Chief Inspector Max Williams, co-optee to the Panel.

The Chairman welcomed the two co-optees, Sharon Henley and Neil Bartholomey to the Panel and thanked them for their participation in the review.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd May 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

5. BASELINE DATA

The Panel considered a series of data based on: -

- Performance Data by Crime Group
- 2011/12 Performance Data by crime type
- 2011/12 Performance Data by sector
- 2011/12 Hotspot location performance data by priority wards
- Most similar CSP Comparative Performance
- Cross County Comparative Performance.

The Panel were reminded that they needed to focus their attention on what Northampton Borough Council has influence over and what they have done or can do to improve the crime statistics.

The main points of discussion were as follows: -

Performance Data by Crime Group

There are 4 main types of serious acquisitive crime. These are: -

- Burglary from Dwelling
- Theft from vehicles
- Theft of vehicles
- Robbery

Since 2008/9 there has been a decline for all four types of crime. In 2011/12 however, there are increases in all categories apart from burglary of a dwelling.

Theft from vehicles has increased the largest amount; there had been a particular spike in October/ November 2012. There would be further work done to see if there were any correlations in where a car was parked, type of car etc. There are obviously many factors that could influence this.

Statistics on a year by year basis are on the old ward basis. Obviously these were no longer the existing boundaries.

Members of the Panel were eager to learn whether there had been any initiatives or campaigns in areas where there had been improvements.

In all areas of crime the statistics can obviously only be based on reported crime.

Cross County Comparative Performance.

Community Safety Partnerships are placed in groups of fifteen. The groupings are defined by the Home Office as having enough similar characteristics to allow reasonable comparison of their performance, this is known as the most similar Group.

For serious acquisitive crime then Northampton is very much on the average of the Group. The number of crimes per thousand population at March 2012 Northampton was 16.447 against the group figure of 16.451.

Northampton was below in numbers of domestic burglary at 12.739 as opposed to 14.707 and theft from vehicle at 7 rather than 7.108. It was higher in robbery at 1.772 as opposed to 1.631 and theft of vehicle 2.343 as opposed to 1.856.

Theft from vehicles had been decreasing but has been showing a steady increase since March 2011.

Members were keen to emphasise that even small increases meant that more people had been victims of crime and suffered as a result.

Members questioned whether there was any evidence that the switching off of streetlights had had an effect on the amount of street crime committed. It was thought that there had been some work done by the County Council, which was not in the public domain, but which had been inconclusive.

It was generally agreed that it would be useful if there could be further detailed analysis on the data, for example what time of day crimes occurred.

Violent Crime

Figures for violence resulting in injury have remained consistent whereas violence without injury has increased. Numbers of serious sexual offences have also been increasing. However there has been the introduction of "Serenity" which is a support centre/ advice centre for women. This had been in operation for about 18 months, backed by funding from the NHS and the Police. It has felt that the support that they offer could be leading to a higher number of women being willing to report crimes of a sexual nature.

Members queried whether it was possible to separate out domestic violence from these statistics. However it was generally felt that this review should concentrate on wider issues and that if initial figures indicated that the domestic abuse was disproportionately high then recommendations could be made for further dedicated scrutiny work.

2011/12 Performance Data by sector

The sectors are based on the neighbourhood and policing areas.

The Central area showed a spike in numbers in the summer. Conversely the north sector, which houses the university, goes down in the summer.

Members discussed the impact that the nighttime economy had on central area statistics.

There have been significant changes in the provision of nighttime entertainment over the last 12 months. The closure of Larva and Ignite has meant that there is no nightclub provision in the St Peters Square area, which means that the physical location of clubbers has changed. The Angel hotel in Bridge Street and the associated bar which were damaged by fire and have been closed has also affected the numbers of people on the streets in that area. Numbers had been reduced a little whilst these bars had been closed.

Significant progress had been made regarding the issues surrounding people attending pubs and clubs in the town centre area. The introduction of Night watch, the traffic light system and banning some key violent offenders from the town centre had all had a positive effect. It was noted that there did seem to be an improvement on the previous situation were there had been bottlenecks of youths in the town centre.

There was better communication between door staff and Police and it was felt that this had led to a reduction in the number of incidents within premises. There are some problems

with people pre loading before going out on the town, which also has an impact on town centre trade.

Members asked if there were any specific criminal activities on gun crime and gangs and were assured that there were no specific problems in those areas.

Demographics

There will be some further work done in overlaying data on population demographics and crime statistics.

Census data was also due to be released imminently and this will be available to the Panel.

Northampton had a higher than average level of males and females in the 20-40 year age category. This is the category that is statistically more likely to be the victim or perpetrator of a crime.

Within regard to ethnicity there is a perception that there is a higher proportion of white other nationals, particularly Eastern European, than actually appears to be borne out by the data.

The Community Safety Partnership is currently undertaking some work trying to engage with Eastern Europeans. Those who are economic migrants do not appear to be engaged with any community, simply being here to work and again perception is that their culture includes drinking to excess, which makes them vulnerable to crime either as a perpetrator or a victim.

6. BRIEFING NOTE: POTENTIAL SITE VISITS

The Panel considered a report on potential site visits.

It was considered that it would be useful to make a visit to an area where there were currently problems and also where work had been carried out to try and make improvements. The visits would concentrate on "hotspots" and be focusing on environmental improvements.

It was agreed that a visit be made to Spencer ward, where there are current issues and Spring Boroughs and Belling. Sharon Henley was involved in the improvement works when they were carried out in Belling.

AGREED:

1 That the Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Crime Prevention Manager, Northants Police and Panel members arrange site visits in Spencer, Belling and Spring Boroughs wards.

2. A report back on the findings of the site visits be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE REVIEW

The Panel considered the draft Equality Impact Assessment for this Scrutiny Review.

AGREED:

A full impact assessment is not required as any changes proposed as a result of the review will be impact assessed before implementation.

The meeting concluded at 7:45 pm