

UTTLESFORD POLICE AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE GROUP held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES HIGH STREET GREAT DUNMOW on 10 MARCH 1997

Present:- Councillor G C Waterer (Chairman),
Councillors F W H Cummings and R C Smith (Uttlesford District Council), P G Leeder (Parish/Town Councils), M Perry (Chambers of Trade and Commerce) and C Cooper (Neighbourhood Watch).

In attendance:- M T Purkiss (Secretary to the Group - Uttlesford District Council), Superintendent I Brown, Chief Inspector S Nessling and Inspectors A Rayner and S Humbles (Essex Police).

I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from M Le Q Herbert (Essex Police Authority), Messrs J Drummond and S Bolton (Parish/Town Councils), R Board (Education), G J Thompson (Churches) Rev C Bishop (UCVS), I Mackenzie (Rotary) and Superintendent A Hills (Stansted Airport Police).

I. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

I. MATTERS ARISING

In response to a question from Councillor Smith Superintendent Brown confirmed that the Home Office had only given approval for trials for the use of CS Gas. The use of pepper sprays had been rejected.

Councillor Smith thanked the Police for attending the joint meeting with Uttlesford District Councillors and stated that it had been very useful to work with the Police in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Councillor Smith also confirmed that there were two Police Constables covering the Takeley area.

I. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported on the last two meetings of the Police Authority. He mentioned that the force had received a Charter Mark for quality and had also received a favourable HMI report. The revenue budget for 1997/98 had been set at £157.8m (an increase of 3.2%). In addition, a special grant had been received from the Home Office to fund the recruitment of 55 additional officers. The Chief Constable had agreed to make these appointments on a phased basis. The Capital Programme for 1999/2000 included provision for the Dunmow Police Station and the likely start date was October 1999.

The Chairman also raised the question of whether Members of the Consultative Group would be interested in being involved in lay visiting for prisoners held in police custody within their own locality. Members of the Group expressed an interest and further details would be obtained.

Councillor Smith referred to the policy of Essex Police in its policing of hunt meetings. Superintendent Brown replied that Essex Police had a pro-active policy which was constantly under review. The police made the best use of intelligence which helped in assessing the level of policing required. It was considered that this was the most effective way of dealing with these matters.

Councillor Smith also referred to the use of the police helicopter and asked for an assurance that it was only used when essential and also asked whether it could be used in a dual role as medical back up. The Chairman considered that the police helicopter was used cost effectively. He said that an additional helicopter was being shared with the Cambridgeshire Constabulary and would provide greater value for money. Superintendent Brown added that the value of helicopters had been proven during the IRA break out from Whitemore Prison. He considered that the use of helicopters saved a considerable amount in terms of police

time. It was also invaluable as a "eye in the sky" during firearms incidents. The use of helicopters in conjunction with paramedics would be kept under review.

Superintendent Brown undertook to see whether it was possible for a presentation on the use of the helicopter to be made at the next meeting.

I. POLICE REPORT

Superintendent Brown reported on the recent murder at Ashdon. Several lines of enquiry were being followed but no one had yet been charged. He reported that the "prove it" campaign had been launched in Stansted and Dunmow to combat underage drinking. Cycle coding was proceeding. Two officers from the Division had been commended for apprehending two armed robbers. He referred to an incident on the A12 where a police constable had pulled a child from a burning car.

He also reported on a survey of victims of domestic burglary. In the county as a whole 96% of those questioned said that the first contact with the police had been helpful. In the Division the rate had been 100%. Overall satisfaction in the Division was 83.3% (compared with 65.1% county wide), satisfaction in the Division with the initial visit was 94.7% (county wide 77.2%) and satisfaction with staff efficiency was 82.4% in the Division (65.1% county wide).

Members of the Consultative Group congratulated the police on this achievement.

I. LONG TERM AND ANNUAL PLANS

Chief Inspector Nessling reported on the consultation process which had been undertaken as a precursor to preparing long term and annual plans. The concerns which had previously been raised about telephone answering had been taken into account. The introduction of FIR (Force Information Room) would put all communications under one control. This would be undertaken in a phased approach and would be completed by the summer. It was hoped that this would free up staff to concentrate on other priorities. In response to a question Superintendent Brown confirmed that professional operators were trained to ask the right questions to identify the location of callers.

Chief Inspector Nessling also stated that the Divisional objectives would be based upon the latest crime figures which would be available later this month. He stated that the plans would be circulated to Members of the Consultative Group in April 1997.

Clive Cooper mentioned that at a recent seminar it had been mentioned that a future Labour Government could put a legal obligation on local authorities to produce Community Safety Plans.

I. KEY OPERATIONAL GOAL TARGETS

Superintendent Brown reported that in the calendar year to 31 January 1997 there had been a 5.7% decrease in crimes for the Division (the county rate was up by 1.4%), house burglaries were down by 19.8% and the detection rate was currently running at 23% (the target being 31%). Other burglaries were also down by 9.6%. The detection rate for violent crime was running at about 75% (the target being 85%). This equated to 470 offences. Vehicle crime was also down by 22.1% which was better than any Division in the county. 88% of emergency calls were responded to in the target time.

Inspector Rayner then reported on the accident statistics. During 1996, 504 people had been killed or injured in the Division, a fall of 2.1% from the 1995 level. This was the first reduction since 1991. In the Force planning year from 1 April 1996 to the end of January there had been 451 injuries or fatalities, an increase of 7.1% (the target was to reduce accidents by 3%).

He reported that in October 2,200 people had been stopped for speeding within the Unit's area and 1,245 of these had been within Uttlesford. In December 862 people had been breathalysed within the Unit area and 8 arrests had been made. Within Uttlesford, 292 people had been breathalysed and no arrests had been made. Inspector Rayner also reported on future campaigns to deal with particular problems at Dunmow, commercial vehicles and the national speed campaign.

Superintendent Brown drew attention to the fact that people were more at risk of being involved in a road traffic accident than they were of being a victim of violent crime.

The Chairman added that there had been a further reduction in the number of injuries to police officers. He was also pleased to report that the time taken off in sick leave in Essex was half the national average.

I. COMMUNITY SAFETY

Clive Cooper reported that despite the low level of crime within Uttlesford the fear of crime was particularly high. He suggested that information be provided to help reduce the fear of crime to a realistic level. He also stated that the Community Safety Action Team within Uttlesford had been looking at incidents of burglary and had found that these were mainly concentrated in certain properties in the corridor running from the M11 and along the A120 and B1383. It was intended to target information at the owners of certain properties in these locations.

Councillor Cummings had been informed that Leaden Roding Parish Council had been disillusioned with the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and had suggested that there was a lack of co-ordination. Superintendent Brown said that the success of the schemes often depended on the ability of the local co-ordinator.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith, Superintendent Brown undertook to look at ways of improving the selective use of Power Dialler.

I. QUESTION TIME

A member of the public referred to problems with answerphones not being able to record the full text of Power Dialler messages. This had been a problem in the past and Inspector Nessling suggested that if a message was not properly relayed a call could be made to the Braintree Police Station between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm and the researcher would pass on the message.

Councillor Smith then suggested that it would be useful if a representative was invited from each of the Crime Prevention Panels. It was agreed that this would be acceptable and invitations would be sent to the Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Crime Prevention Panels prior to the next meeting.

(The meeting was attended by 3 members of the public and 1 representative of the press).

I. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Group would be held at the Thaxted Guildhall on 16 June 1997 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

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