

Joint Area Committee North – 26 August 2009

9. Area North Community Justice Panel

Portfolio Holder: *Cllr Tony Fife*
Lead Officer: *Val Keitch, Panel Co-ordinator*
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Purpose of the Report

This report is to give members an introduction to operation of the new Community Justice Panel covering Area North.

Val Keitch, Panel Co-ordinator, will attend the meeting to make a brief presentation and answer questions.

Recommendation(s)

To note and comment on the report.

Background

The Panel was initially set up in Chard in response to local concerns about anti-social behaviour and the perception of low police numbers. These perceptions and concerns were investigated and the findings identified that the problem lay with the community not having closure to incidents occurring in the town. A steering group was formed to look at options available to alleviate these concerns and perceptions. Plans were eventually submitted to the Home Office who agreed funding for the project. The panel went live on 28 January 2005, initially dealing with incidents involving adults only but due to its success it was asked by the police Deputy Chief Constable to look into the possibility of including youth victims and offenders. In September 2007 the panel commenced dealing with both Youth and Adults.

The panel has gone from strength to strength in Area West and has now established another panel in Area East. With the support of our communities and our partner agencies it is proposed to have 4 panels operating in Areas West, East, North and South by early 2010.

Case studies have been included for information at **Appendix A**

Progress report

Since the panel was established over 700 people have participated in Restorative Justice conferences. The repeat offender / relapse rate with the panel currently sits at 3%. The Panel has evolved in its way of working and has a greater emphasis on the restorative aspects. The coordinator is currently advising other areas nationally on setting up similar schemes, including two panels in Sheffield. The Wellington project continues to be mentored by the Area West panel.

Training

Training courses have been delivered to the police, volunteers, councillors and Yarlington Housing Group staff and continue as the expansion develops.

All volunteers undertake the three day facilitator training in restorative conferencing, which is accredited by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP).

Further expansion of the Project

The Justice Panel in Area East went live in May 2009 and work is in progress to expand into Area North. The police officer that has been with the project from the start has recently been seconded to assist with this process. The management group structure will change shortly and it is planned for there to be a strategic management group to oversee all four projects in South Somerset but the local management committees will remain.

Financial Implications

None

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The creation a new Community Justice Panel meets the corporate plan priority 4.12: 'Build on existing restorative justice methods to increase the number of panels in the district and widen the crimes for which the method can be used by 2011'

And aims to contribute to priority 4.3; 'increase satisfaction with the way that police and local council deal with anti-social behaviour'. (NI 24)

Other Implications

Area Priority 8 – 'Increase levels of **community safety and cohesion**, reducing crime and the fear of crime, and anti-social behaviour through partnership work to target local priorities'

Background Papers: *none*
