

Area North Committee – 23 March 2011

## 8. Area North Community Safety and Neighbourhood Policing

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### Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide the basis for a short discussion, including an opportunity for questions to the Neighbourhood Policing team, or to refer issues for further discussion within SSDC or by the Area North Community Safety Action Panel.

*If councillors' require any clarification of information contained within this report, you are asked to contact either Sgt Bell or Les Collett, prior to the meeting.*

### Public Interest

Promoting safer communities, through reducing crime and the fear of crime is a vital aspect of work by most public services in Somerset.

Sergeant Alan Bell - Avon & Somerset Police, Steve Brewer - SSDC Community Safety Co-ordinator and Les Collett - SSDC Community Development Officer (North), will attend the Area Committee to take questions and support the discussion.

### Recommendation

Note and comment on the report, identifying local issues affecting community safety for consideration by the appropriate group or service.

### Background

Background information on the Area North Community Safety Action Panel and the Neighbourhood Policing team are included in Appendix A.

#### **Neighbourhood Police Report from Sgt Alan Bell:**

The aim of the Neighbourhood Team on Area North continues to be reducing the public's fear of crime and increasing their confidence with the police service. On our area, this is achieved by concentrating on the core tasks of crime prevention, the detection of crime and the apprehension of offenders. These are of course the main roles and functions of the police. Since this approach was adopted the neighbourhood team alone have seen a 5.8% increase in the amount of crimes solved where an offender was sanctioned this year to date. This approach has contributed towards a 33% rate of all crime solved on the district, which continues to see crime falling. PCSOs are becoming more accountable

for identifying and responding to identified crime trends and for taking responsibility in achieving positive outcomes where one is identified.

A decision has been taken to cease public access to the Somerton Police Station. This was not as a response to the availability of funding, but after a number of reviews, which showed a significant decrease in the footfall into the office on the days it was open. The reviews also found that the majority of people reported incidents/crimes to the police either by telephone or via the Internet site or email. A sensible decision was then taken to maximise the use of staff at those stations by utilising them at those with the busiest footfall. As to what will happen with Somerton, I will address this under the section "Police Posts".

Like the District and County Councils, the Constabulary is addressing cuts in funding and has and continues to review its area of business. However the expectation remains the same, if a member of the public telephones and requires help, we will attend and give support. There are no plans to replace PCSOs or Beat Managers and withdraw from neighbourhood policing.

### **Staffing Structure**

There has been movement within the Neighbourhood team since the last report. PC Iain Selley has been transferred to Yeovil Police Station to take up a position on the Response teams. Iain had been a Beat Manager for four years and we wish him well with his new posting. PC Jon Watson joined us from Crewkerne and has settled in well and has a firm grasp of the issues within his community.

To this end I have had to look at the areas of responsibility of the remaining beat managers and these will be as follows: In addition to the areas they already cover, Jon will assume responsibility for St Michaels ward and PC Toni Lines will become responsible for Turn Hill and Wessex Wards. Both officers are committed to neighbourhood policing and will offer stability and reassurance for those wards. I have secured the services of another Police Officer (PC Terri Lines) to assist Jon and Toni and expect her to make an impact on those three areas. The PCSOs; Mel Austin, Elaine Seaward and Karen Pack remain the points of contact as before.

### **Crime reports and trends**

Area North continues to remain a safe place for our communities to live and work. Reported crime (which now includes Anti-social behaviour (ASB)) remains average for our geographical type of area. There is now a nationally produced website with a crime mapping feature to show the type of crime recorded in your area. This can be accessed via [www.police.uk/crime](http://www.police.uk/crime). It requires you to enter your postcode and the screen is then populated with details of the policing team and a map. (It should be noted of course that as allegations are investigated they may subsequently be reclassified).

The monthly reports sent to Town and Parish Councils have been standardised and should contain the positive sides such as notable arrests and good news stories to help spread the positive message that crime does get investigated and offenders are arrested.

I have asked that all District and County Councillors are added to the mailing list and have asked the beat managers to ensure these reports are sent prior to your meetings so any issues are raised and addressed prior to the public meeting. If this is not happening then Councillors should contact me (contacts details are at the heading for this report).

As we are mainly a rural area, we remain vulnerable to the theft of farm machinery and thefts from garages and sheds. This is a request for councillors to impress on their constituents the necessity for ensuring the public take all reasonable steps in securing their property through the use of property marking to using good standard locks and padlocks on their outbuildings.

Due to the increase in the cost of fuel, there have been a number of thefts of oil and bottled gas, particularly in rural areas. I am sure that the instances of theft of red diesel from farm buildings and machinery is under reported and should the fuel duty come into force, it could be anticipated further thefts take place.

Advice has been given to fuel suppliers, especially delivery drivers, to take note if they think they are being followed as often thieves will follow delivery trucks to identify households which have received fresh supplies. Householders should consider the security of their tanks and perhaps consider the volume stored, should they become a victim of this type of crime. Householders are always able to contact their PCSO to arrange a crime prevention advice visit.

### **Police Posts**

We continue to have access to two Police Posts in Area North, at Martock and South Petherton.

Martock remains at the Fire Station and is used not only by the neighbourhood team but by a range of officers from the wider policing district. Since January however, we have secured the services of a number of volunteers who currently work within the Community Office in Martock's Market House. These volunteers will become a point of contact between the public and the neighbourhood team, as are the South Petherton volunteers and will be able to supply members of the public with crime prevention leaflets.

As you are aware, I reviewed the numbers attending beat surgeries in the past and stopped committing officers to surgeries where no-one attended. With the closure of the front office at Somerton, I have reviewed these and to make contact with the neighbourhood team more accessible to those without transport and who prefer some face to face contact, there are PCSO surgeries in Martock, South Petherton, Langport and Long Sutton. There will be a similar surgery operating from Somerton when public access to the station ends. These will be advertised through the web pages and the press.

### **Neighbourhood Watch (NHW)**

The audit of schemes and co-ordinators has been completed and I have held a meeting with the Neighbourhood Inspector for Mendip to ensure the whole policing district follows the same format in terms of Neighbourhood Watch. The emphasis for all beat managers now is to encourage people to join an existing scheme, if one exists. Schemes are encouraged to become more proactive and encouraged to recognise that these are their schemes, supported by the police, rather than police run schemes.

Curry Mallet have demonstrated how a proactive scheme can implement a cold calling aware zone and their hard work and effort will be used as a model for every other scheme within our area and indeed the district. We have advertised for volunteers to become involved with taking on the responsibility for maintaining the "ringmaster" system and database of co-ordinators and a number of NHW members have expressed an interest and are in the process of completing administration forms.

### **Farm Watch and Horse Watch Schemes**

The Horse Watch scheme continues to be administered on Area North by PCSO Support Officer Tess Smith. We will be looking at recruiting a volunteer to assist in this role in the future. Free tack marking and signs are available as well as crime prevention advice for those owners with horses who sign up to the scheme. Those wishing to become members can contact Tess either through 0845 456 7000 or by the My Area page on the force website. [www.avonandsomerset.police.co.uk](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.co.uk)

Farm Watch on Area North continues to grow. PCSO Mel Austin is our lead and is targeting those rural areas where we have seen a rise in the theft of fuel. Mel can be contacted on the force website under the "My Area" pages [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk) or again on 0845 456 7000.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with your queries on this report, or other matters affecting community safety in Area North.

Alan Bell

Neighbourhood Sergeant

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### **Community Speedwatch (CSW)**

Due to funding issues a review of SSDC input to CSW was recently carried out which decided that ongoing input to support CSW in South Somerset was unsustainable.

The Co-ordination and support to the schemes has now been transferred to the Police. The Devon and Somerset Fire Service continue to carry out the letter processing on behalf of the Police.

Further information: Community Speedwatch is on both the SSDC and Avon and Somerset Constabulary websites:

[http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/units\\_and\\_departments/operations/rpu/speedwatch/index.aspx](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/units_and_departments/operations/rpu/speedwatch/index.aspx)

<http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/community-safety/speed-watch-and-road-safety>

### **Onside Football Programme**

The Community Safety Partnership via Local Action Groups continues to run weekly Onside football sessions in South Petherton and Martock where young people can take part in skills training with Yeovil Town Community Sport Trust coaches. A review of all the South Somerset schemes has shown that the most successful are those with community volunteers. South Petherton and Martock continue to run successfully with full support from their communities. Young people, volunteers, youth workers and PCSOs involved with the scheme are being given the opportunity to attend the Yeovil Town versus Huddersfield game on 5th March. All the schemes will meet in the annual tournament on 18th June sponsored by Yarlington Housing Group.

### **Zero – Night-time events for young people**

Zero events are organised by a multi-agency group to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour and binge drinking in the 14 to 17, age range. The project provides young

people a safe environment where they can enjoy dance and music, giving agencies the opportunity to use informal education to change behaviour. The events currently taking place at Club Neo, Yeovil have successfully attracted up to 700 young people with only 4 to 5 found to consume alcohol prior to entry.

Although the events do not take place in Area North it is a provision used by many young people from the area. For full details please request a copy of the Annual Report.

### **Financial Implications**

None from this report.

### **Corporate Priority Implications**

- 4.4 Increase understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police.
- 4.5 Improve perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- 4.8 Improve dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police.
- 4.9 fear of crime by maintaining a level of 92% of the population that feels safe in their community by 2012.

### **Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)**

None from this report

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Addressing causes of crime can help promote community cohesion.

**Background Papers:** Area North Community Safety Action Panel – Agenda, minutes and action plan.