

Area West Committee – 15th August 2007

8. Community Speedwatch Report (Executive Decision)

Head of Service: Andrew Gillespie - Head of Area Development (West)
Lead Officer: Bob Chedzoy – Community Development Officer
Contact Details: bob.chedzoy@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01460) 260359

Purpose of the Report

To advise members on the current state of the Community Speedwatch programme across South Somerset and in Area West in particular.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- (1) members note the contents of the report;
- (2) members agree that the remaining balance of £7,900 be no longer ring-fenced for Community Speedwatch within the Area West Reserve.

Background

There are currently a number of Community Speedwatch teams operating across South Somerset, which seek to reduce incidents of speeding in their area. The teams are currently supported by SSDC and the police. Much of the information in the report has been provided by John Wolff (Chair – South Somerset CSW Co-ordinator's Group).

Report

General

Currently there are 34 trained community speed watch (CSW) teams in South Somerset of which 28 are active. Over 20 additional communities have expressed varying degrees of interest in forming CSW teams. It should be noted that members of teams are unpaid volunteers who meet virtually all administrative and travel expenses out of their own pockets.

In Area West there are 9 active teams: Broadway, Donyatt, Chard - Forton Road, Chard – Thorndun Park Drive, Chard – Tatworth Rd, Haselbury Plucknett, Ilminster, Wadeford & Combe St Nicholas and North Perrott. One team, Horton, is inactive. No team has ceased operating in the last two years with the exception of Chard. However, Chard has now reformed and has been re-issued with appropriate equipment. Experience has shown that some towns such as Chard are best organized by smaller communities such as individual roads each with their own Co-ordinator.

South Somerset CSW Co-ordinators' Group (CSWCG)

CSWCG represents the active South Somerset CSW teams. It has an elected chairman, vice chairman, treasurer and a steering team as well as a written constitution and standing orders. All teams within the Group operate independently or in concert with adjacent CSW teams under a Group initiated and police signed Code of Practice (CoP). The Group chairs a quarterly meeting with police and South Somerset District Council (SSDC) representatives.

New Teams

The onus for setting up and running a CSW scheme rests solely with the individual community. Contact with the Group can be initiated via the police or SSDC. The Group, if requested, will give a presentation to the interested community and maximum assistance to new teams including attending their first CSWs. Misterton is the latest Area West community to express an interest and a presentation is scheduled to take place very shortly. Information, created primarily by the Group, on the SS CSW can be found on the SSDC website.

Warning Letters

CSW detected first time speeders are sent a police signed warning letter by the Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership CSW Co-ordinator. Two times are sent a firmer letter. In South Somerset, from July 2006 to July 2007, some 8,000 letters were sent and some 2,000 of these were sent to speeders detected in Area West. The declared aim is to send out letters within 2 weeks although this target is currently not being met. Clearance for the Partnership Co-ordinator to access the PNC is being processed and this should improve performance.

Police/Speeder Contact

Speeders detected 3 times or more and who have been sent the warning letters are referred to police so that direct contact can be made with them. This contact is in the form of a telephone call or a visit by the local Beat Manager or other available officer. During the July 2006 to July 2007 timeframe in Area West there were 46 referrals to the police. Of these referrals, 15 (33%) were written off as time expired (this was agreed in November 2006 by the CSW Co-ordinators' Group). However, of the remaining 31, seven (23%) have been actioned and twenty four (77%) are outstanding.

Police Support

Some CSW sessions are attended by Beat Managers and on some occasions PCSOs attend. However PCSOs are not empowered to stop vehicles that they detect speeding.

The Roads Policing Unit (RPU) has been training CSW teams and approving CSW sites for the past 2 years. Since 20 June 2007 they have also been regularly attending CSWs and carrying out direct and active on-the-spot action against speeders by stopping them and either prosecuting them there and then or offering "strong advice". Their frequent presence and positive actions are warmly welcomed and add considerable credibility to the CSW teams.

It is expected that more PCSOs will shortly join in CSWs. However the chair of the CSW Co-ordinators Group has expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the PCSOs as their powers are strictly limited when compared to regular police officers. They are not able to issue notices to drivers committing an offence.

Records

For some time there was no central point for collating CSW information. This has now changed with a new system lining up the data from all the CSWs in South Somerset.

All CSW teams now submit data in a prescribed email format that is easily transferred into the database and correlated to give information on speeders. Since then the resulting database has been improved significantly. It is now run on a 24 month rolling

basis and currently has over 23,500 entries, some of whom appear more than once as they are repeat speeders. Importantly, from a data protection point of view, the registered owners of the speeding vehicles are not identified. This database, which is still being managed and improved solely by the Group, is invaluable to the Partnership Co-ordinator. Both the RPU and the Safety Camera Partnership are aware of the database but do not currently use it. Neighbourhood Watch does ask occasionally if it contains information on vehicles that may be used in other crimes. The Yeovil RPU is sent the latest list of repeat speeders that have been detected within the past few days.

Effectiveness

CSW has been proved to be effective in South Somerset. The results of ten cases studied are most encouraging. They show that in nine cases CSW has resulted in a decrease in the percentage of detected speeders with a drop of over 33% in seven cases. Effectiveness data can be used by team co-ordinators to determine where best and at which times to deploy their teams. However, care must be exercised in the interpretation of the results. This is for many reasons and includes the fact that type of speeders for one community may well not be the same as those of another. For example, the majority of speeders in one community may be local inhabitants on a B class road whilst those in another may be vehicles on an A class road that only transit the community rarely.

Equipment and Funding

Each team is equipped, at no direct costs to their community, with a tally counter, a clip board, tabards, letters to give to motorists who may query their presence, a blank recording form, a Dictaphone and one or two speedguns. The initial cost of equipping a team is in the order of £250.

The speedguns used are of 2 types. The Velocity is a radar speedgun that is very fast acting but cannot discriminate individual targets in a bunched traffic situation. The Velocity costs circa £100. The SpeedHunter is a laser based pulse correlated system that is slightly slower acting than the Velocity but can isolate a specific vehicle within a group. It costs £1,800 and is therefore only issued to teams whose need is confirmed by a member of the Steering Team. The Group also possesses 2 laptop computers, a projector and a supply of tri-signs for mounting on telephone or power poles at the approaches to communities.

South Somerset CSW has been funded by the SSDC, Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership and by two County Councillors.

Consultations

No direction from outside South Somerset has been sought or offered. Virtually all procedures including data reporting and collation, the CoP, and effectiveness measurements have been initiated by the Group and developed by members, sometimes with police and SSDC advice. The Group has been consulted by several outside police forces, county and district councils as well as communities in Dorset. DEFRA used one South Somerset village team as a CSW case study and published a report in their Rural Service Review (2006).

Partnership Arrangements

CSW is not currently part of the Road Safety Partnership (RSP) although they would be happy to become involved with this group. The Safety Camera Partnership (SCP), at manager level, has been briefed on South Somerset CSW. They have also been advised

by County & District Councillor Henry Hobhouse on the database and other facets of the CSW. CSW would welcome the idea of working with SCP. In addition contact is maintained with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and a presentation has been made to the Group by them.

Support by Councillors

This Group is strongly supported by several key District and County Councillors. They are proactive and take a continuing interest in CSW. Two way communications with the councillors is very good.

Somerset County CSW

The Government's casualty reduction targets for 2010 include a 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured compared with the average for 1994-98. The CSW makes a significant contribution to achieving these targets.

Ingredients

CSW is successful within South Somerset. However, the Partnership have advised that the following are necessary ingredients to ensure that it so remains:

- a. Long term genuine support from all local authorities.
- b. Long term genuine support from all police levels. This includes visible and active roadside support.
- c. Reliable administrative support.
- d. Rapid data processing of letters to first and second time speeders.
- e. Rapid police contact with reported three time speeders, intimidators, obscene gesturers and verbal abusers.
- f. A well managed and efficient speeder database.
- g. A competent and proactive Co-ordinators' Group with a strong Steering Team of complementary talents.
- h. Rapid feedback to CSW team members.
- i. Communication between all parties.
- j. Persistence – and the will of the community to win.

Financial Implications

In April 2003, £20,000 was allocated by Area West for Community Speedwatch from which the following has been purchased:

2004-05 Ultalyte 100 laser speed camera	£5,000.00
2005-06 Speed Hunter radar gun	£1,834.69
2006-07 Speed Hunter radar gun x 4	£6,594.68
Bushnell Velocity radar gun	£226.82
2007-08 Speed Hunter radar gun	£1,577.00

There have also been payments of £312.77 between 2003 and 2006 for batteries and minor costs.

The total payments made are £15,545.90.

Of these payments £3,446 has been funded from grant money including £1,500 from the Area West Community Safety Panel.

The remaining £12,100 has been funded from the amount set aside by Area West for Community Speedwatch.

The balance remaining in the reserve is £7,900.

At this time officers are not aware of any unmet financial need for Community Speedwatch operating in Area West.

Officers therefore propose that this remaining balance of £7,900 be no longer ring-fenced for Community Speedwatch within the Area West Reserve. This will not prevent speed watches in Area West accessing money in the future.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

- Work in partnership with others to improve the health prospects for all
- Maintain above 80 per cent the people satisfied with their neighborhoods as a place to live
- To have SSDC as one of the top exemplar councils in the country in reducing CO2 emissions by 2012.

Background Papers: *None.*
