

Area West Committee - 21st November 2007

## 6. Community Speed Watch Update

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### Purpose of the Report

To provide an update for members on Community Speed Watch following issues that were raised at a previous meeting of the Area West Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007.

### Recommendation

Area West Committee is requested to consider and note the report.

### Background & Overview

Community Speed Watch is now gaining greater support and forms an integral part of the Crime and Disorder Strategy and Delivery Plans. The scheme first started back in 2001 with the first group being at Ash closely followed by Long Load. There are now over 40 volunteer groups operating in South Somerset. South Somerset District Council employs, on behalf of and funded through the Mendip & South Somerset Community Safety Partnership, an administration officer. This role will ensure that the warning letters are sent to offenders as well as coordinating the schemes acting as the link to the Police and other agencies.

The Police have identified co-ordinated support through its Beat Managers and PCSOs for day-to-day operations, allocating responsibility for training to named personnel within the Road Policing Unit. The Road Policing Unit also attends the sessions on average one in three sessions. There is now a very active co-ordinating group in South Somerset, chaired by John Wolf, who have further developed procedures and a Code of Practice that all operatives and support teams have signed up to.

The first Speed Watch Awareness Day (SAD) held on October 21st 2006 has since been repeated to support the Police in Operation Relentless. All groups were invited to operate simultaneously across South Somerset. The media supported these days, all sections of the Police and the Camera Safety Partnership were out in force to assist the teams and deal directly with offenders. These were seen as very positive events and will no doubt be repeated on a regular basis.

Communities wishing to start up a Speedwatch group will need to pull together a minimum of three volunteers but six or more volunteers is more effective. Training for new groups or volunteers wishing to join existing groups can be arranged through Gemma North, the Speedwatch administrator. The administrator will then arrange with the Police to deliver the training and carry out the risk assessment on the sites to be used.

### Response

The report submitted to the Committee in August raised some questions that were left unanswered. These were noted in the minutes of the meeting (minute 46).

There are many people who share the member's disappointment with regard to letters not being sent within the target time. The reason for the delay was due to a build up of letters through the months of May, June and July, when, due to longer daylight hours, better weather and increased number of groups operating saw a rise in activity resulting in more letters having to be produced and sent. This unfortunately coincided with lack of capacity to complete the necessary owner checks required before sending the letters. Additional capacity was given to pull forward the backlog on the owner checks in August. This was successful but then created a backlog of some 4,000 letters. The letters were still being sent out by date order resulting in a delay from the time of the report to receiving a letter of about three months.

In October the Community Speed Watch Management Team took the decision to find a solution to this issue and I am pleased to report that as of November the backlog will be cleared allowing the administrator to action the letters in real time, normally within 48 hours of receipt.

A new structure has now been adopted that will dramatically reduce the time required to carry out the owner checks and transfer the information into the letter format. The Speed Watch Management Group will monitor activity closely to ensure that the situation is not repeated with additional administration capacity being offered by the police as required. The letters that are sent have also been revised in an attempt to cut down the number of replies that are received from the recipients that the administrator then has to deal with. These replies increased substantially during the backlog causing unnecessary additional work.

Ongoing positive support from the Police is required for the successful operation of the scheme as Community Speed Watch is in fact a Police devised and driven programme. Without the input on training of volunteers, site risk assessment, owner checks, day to day support, contacting and if required, targeting of prolific offenders, the scheme would not operate. Managing the expectation of the volunteers has and will continue to be a focus for the Community Speed Watch Steering Group. The Police Road Policing Unit have agreed to attend on average 1 in 4 of the on street sessions, at the time of writing they are on average attending 1 in 3. The Code of practice is regularly reviewed to reflect operational issues and identifies what is required to ensure that support is available from the Police.

Police Beat Managers and PCSOs are also involved in the on going support of these groups and attend sessions. The current average attendance is slightly less than that of the Road Policing Unit. The level of support given by the Police on the roadside has dramatically improved over that of two years ago with additional background support being given by the administrator and the very committed volunteers who form the Management Group.

The Fire Service has recently taken an interest in Community Speed Watch now that they have a major focus on road safety. It is early days yet and although they have already agreed to lead the Partnership road safety action plan and attended the Community Speed Watch Steering Group we have yet to determine the kind or level of support for Community Speed Watch. The Camera Safety Partnership through the Road Safety Partnership is also revising operations, which will result in additional support to communities.

South Somerset Community Speed Watch has been recognised in Somerset and beyond as best practice and to this end there is shortly to be a drive to replicate the operational structure throughout the county.

The focus for Community Speed Watch is speeding vehicles with an aim to educate motorists to observe speed limits while passing through their community. The groups will record the registration mark of the vehicle, recorded speed, colour and make or type of vehicle. At no time has any of the Speed Watch groups been asked to record anything other than the reported speeder information but there is an option should they wish to record other distinguishing features that might include, broken lights, unserviceable lights or they may wish to report if the driver was using a hand held mobile phone or not wearing a seat belt. This is not a requirement but left as an option for the operators to use as they see fit.

The equipment used by the groups is now centrally controlled so that should a fault develop a replacement can be supplied while the other is being repaired.

The administrator maintains an equipment register and where monies have been provided for a certain scheme or area to purchase equipment this is recorded and the equipment ring fenced. This does cause concern and adds to the administrator's burdens. Over a period of time we look to have all equipment available to all groups as required across South Somerset, the purchaser of the equipment will still be identified for audit/ownership purposes.

All schemes new or old have access to all the required equipment with batteries and other consumables being provided from the centre.

Interest in Community Speed Watch is still growing with 40 schemes in South Somerset, eleven of these with one in the process of starting (Misterton) are in Area West. These groups between them have had more than a thousand letters sent to speeders and have been responsible for lowering the speed and educating a countless number of motorists.

Members seeking information about local groups may do so by contacting the individual co-ordinator for that group. If members are unsure who the local co-ordinator is, they may make an enquiry through Gemma North, the Speed Watch Co-ordinator, telephone 01935 462462.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no new financial implications in this report. SSDC does not directly fund Community Speed Watch with the exception of an allocation within the Area West Reserve, which was approved in April 2003. The current schemes have received funding, through a bidding process, directly from the Mendip and South Somerset Community Safety Partnership and other sources.

**Background Papers:** None.

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