

JOINT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF CHORLEY AND SOUTH RIBBLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Present: Mary Robinson (South Ribble Councillor) (Chair) and Kath Beattie (South Ribble Councillor), Alan Cullens (Chorley Councillor), Melvyn Gardner (South Ribble Councillor), Harold Heaton (Chorley Councillor), Adrian Lowe (Chorley Councillor), June Molyneux (Chorley Councillor), Mike Nelson (South Ribble Councillor) and Debra Platt (Chorley Councillor)

Also in attendance: Jean Hunter (Vice-Chair of Chorley and South Ribble Responsible Authorities Group and South Ribble Council Chief Executive), Chief Inspector Richard Robertshaw (Lancashire Constabulary), Eric Bell (Chorley Councillor - Executive Member for Neighbourhoods) and Jim Hothersall (South Ribble Councillor - Cabinet Member for Streetscene)

Officers: Gary Hall (Chorley Council - Director of Transformation), Simon Clark (Chorley Council - Head of Environment), John Dakin (South Ribble Council - Corporate Director (Policy and Neighbourhoods)), Mark Gaffney (South Ribble Council - Head of Streetscene), Darren Cranshaw (South Ribble Council - Community Engagement Manager), Paul Lowe (Merged Crime and Disorder Reduction Manager), Ruth Rimmington (Chorley Council - Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Dianne Scambler (Chorley Council - Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Others in attendance: Colin Clark (South Ribble Councillor)

10.01 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited each person to introduce themselves.

The Chair thanked Chorley Council for hosting the meeting.

10.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Nora Ball (Chorley), Rene Blow and Colin Coulton (South Ribble).

10.03 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

10.04 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public requested to ask a question.

10.05 CHORLEY AND SOUTH RIBBLE MERGED COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received a presentation from the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Manager, Paul Lowe, outlining the performance of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Members considered the report enclosed with the

agenda which had been presented to the Responsible Authorities Group previously which outlined the progress of the pilot merger between Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership over the last two years and the way forward.

Comparing figures for the period 1 April 2009 to 4 March 2010 against the same period the year before the Partnership had reduced crime considerably against already record lows for crime last year. Only two areas were showing increases: Burglary Dwelling and Serious Violent Crime, but these needed to be viewed against record low rates of crime experienced last year.

Serious Violent Crime would have been affected by the method of recording as Domestic Violence would be included with these figures. The Partnership were proactively encouraging the reporting of Domestic Violence, but this did have an impact on the figures. Also, when dealing with percentages a prolific offender could have a massive impact.

Over the last two years the Partnership had reduced Crime by 13% and Criminal Damage by 17%. In relation to the Most Similar Group Chorley performed well and South Ribble was first.

The Partnership were focussing on National Indicators that had been agreed with Government following in depth analysis of the issues in the area and consultation with members of the public. The main set of these were the Local Area Agreement (LAA). For NI 16 (Serious Acquisitive Crime) the target was 833 with performance ahead by 11%, for NI 20 (Assault with Less Serious Injury) the target was 610 with performance ahead by 8% and for NI 49 (Primary Fires) the target was 168 with performance ahead by 8%.

South Ribble had impressive figures against the LAA targets with significant reductions over and above those set out in the LAA. Further information on these figures could be provided on request from Paul.

The Partnership was performing well against the alcohol-related crime targets, however there was work to do in terms of alcohol-related harm within Chorley. Alcohol-related hospital admissions were up according to the most recently available data.

For Chorley the main issue of concern was Burglary Dwelling and for South Ribble, Serious Violent Crime.

Members discussed the target related to alcohol related admissions and noted that the admissions could be related to illness, not necessarily crime. The figure for those not admitted to hospital was not included in this statistic.

Councillor Lowe expressed difficulties in querying statistics from the Primary Care Trust relating to the alcohol related admissions. Officers would feed this back to the Primary Care Trust.

Members queried progress on the fear of crime and heard that there was a 3 year target of reducing this by 1%. The Partnership were progressing well with this, but perception and fear of crime was a challenge for the Partnership going forward.

Chief Inspector Richard Robertshaw advised it had been difficult year for Chorley, with a spike in the figures in several areas. The Partnership had provided funding for various schemes to combat this. Serious Acquisitive Crime was made up of three categories, burglary, robbery and vehicle crime. The performance was encouraging, not just in relation to levels of crime, but also detection rates for burglary and car crime. The figures were good in comparison with other similar authorities.

In response to a query Councillor Bell advised that, in his opinion, the Partnership was very successful and took the opportunity to thank Paul and his team for all their work. Despite dealing with sometimes confusing percentages the figures were really low against the targets and the Partnership was performing well.

Councillor Nelson queried how fires were recorded. It was clarified that although information was gathered on primary and secondary fires, the Partnership only had a target that related to primary fires. Fires were not necessarily a crime; it depended on the motive.

Drug related crime was not the subject of a specific performance target, but this was measured in other ways. The focus on tackling drugs was reflected in the figures. Drugs enforcement was led by community concerns and intelligence, the Police would execute a warrant and it was likely that crime would be detected as a result.

Councillor Cullens raised this issue of Anti Social Behaviour and although the target was reducing this was a challenge. The Partnership was currently publishing a pledge relating to Anti Social Behaviour standards. Many things could be categorised as Anti Social Behaviour, resulting in this being a catch all category. Serious Anti Social Behaviour was low in Chorley and South Ribble.

Members noted that the Strategic Assessment was a three year document, refreshed annually. Information came from a wide variety of sources, including the Police, Fire and Rescue Service, the Citizens Panel and Members. The document would be presented to the Responsible Authorities Group with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Plan then developed to address this. The Plan would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Cabinet at Chorley and South Ribble. The Partnership was a thematic group of the Local Strategic Partnership, meaning that Members were involved.

Jean Hunter advised the Partnership would ensure that any information requested by the Councils' was received.

Councillor Lowe queried the lead organisation on communication and the availability of plans. The Strategic Assessment was a restricted document and could not be shared, although the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Plan and the minutes of the Responsible Authorities Group were published on the internet. Information was presented to the Local Strategic Partnership theme groups and the minutes of these were available on the internet. In Chorley information on days of action etc was publicised to Members through intheknow and Neighbourhood Working. For South Ribble information was disseminated through Area Committees and a Member bulletin. The Responsible Authorities Group would be forming a communication group this year to progress this issue. Jean Hunter advised that any suggestions on how to improve communication would be welcomed.

In response to a query Paul advised that the Strategic Assessment was a joint document and the area based grant was spent within each Borough separately and where possible jointly to tackle threats contained within the Strategic Assessment.

Paul clarified that sensitive information was considered at MATAC meetings and that only Executive Members were invited to attend as a result. The information did need to be provided to a wider audience but at a strategic level. Mark Gaffney advised that MATAC would be reporting to South Ribble Area Committee in May. It was suggested that high level information be presented to PACT meetings and for Chorley to include crime and disorder issues within the Neighbourhood Working agenda.

Councillor Lowe requested that communication of the outcomes of PACT meetings be reviewed and extended by the Police.

In response to a query officers clarified that decisions relating to alley gates were decided at MATAC meetings and specific queries could be directed to Paul Lowe for further information.

The Committee discussed the achievements made by the joint Partnership in terms of efficiencies and funding. Jean Hunter explained that certain staffing positions were directly attributable to the Partnership, this included the Community Safety Manager and the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator. The shared staff really had a positive impact on how the way services were delivered across both areas. The Partnership had also broken down some invisible barriers, by sharing good practice and information.

Paul outlined that the Partnership did receive external grants, for example, for the "consequences campaign" the Partnership received £60,000, whereas other neighbouring authorities received significantly less.

The potential future efficiency savings would be quantified going forward, in particular bids on external funding and staffing costs. Paul advised that efficiencies had been recorded to date. Economies of scale meant that there was less duplication of strategic meetings, which was reflected in attendance at meetings and also when purchasing services. On consideration of the financial position going forward it was queried whether the Authorities could afford to go back to the original arrangement. Jean Hunter advised there were proposals county wide to consider partnerships and the results of this should be available within 3 months, although changes could not be imposed by Lancashire County Council.

Jean Hunter advised that the Partnership had been requested to do a presentation to Lancashire County Council as they were interested in the approach and successes of the Partnership.

In response to a query Paul clarified there were no timescales on making the decision to merge officially. At the moment the Responsible Authorities Group was "living together, not married" as a flexible collaboration. The recommendation at this time was to formalise the current arrangements and focus on providing the service. If there was an official merger all funding would go into one pot and the ability to spend money in one Authority would be lost i.e. currently Chorley money was only spent in Chorley etc.

As there were a lot of unknowns going forward there was not a wish to consider joining with West Lancashire Council at this stage.

Simon Clark noted that other Partners appreciated the benefits of the current approach, both in terms of resources operationally and a single point of contact. This was confirmed by Chief Inspector Richard Robertshaw who advised that the policing areas had been realigned with the Partnership areas.

In response to a query officers confirmed that there was funding for current year for Independent Domestic Violence Advocates and there was hope for a three year funding plan. Lancashire County Council had agreed to provide half of the funding for this year, the remaining had come from area based grant. A more robust funding mechanism would be needed for the future.

Councillor Lowe raised a query in relation to refuge provision. There was statutory guidance on refuge provision; Preston had been given additional refuge provision with some places being available to Chorley and South Ribble. Refuges had to be full all the time due to the way the funding was allocated and this was a very costly service.

The Chair invited Councillor Clark to make any observations. He commented his agreement that the meeting had identified communication as an area for improvements, both for Members and the public and that raw rather than processed data needed to be available for consideration. Paul advised that information was

available at postcode level and awareness of this needed to be publicised with Members.

RESOLVED

- 1. The good progress made by the Chorley and South Ribble Responsible Authorities Group.**
- 2. To recommend to the Chorley and South Ribble Executive Cabinets' to Option 3 to Continue the Collaborative approach for the two Partnerships for an indefinite period.**
- 3. To request the Partnership**
 - a. demonstrate measurable and unmeasurable efficiency gains,**
 - b. develop a communications plan, including to keep Members informed,**
 - c. better signposting of information available to Members.**

On closing the meeting the Chair and the Committee thanked the Members and officers of the Responsible Authorities Group for their attendance and input and noted that joint Committee would look forward to future efficiency savings and improved services for the people of Chorley and South Ribble.

Chair