

**Report to Community Safety Forum: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014****Subject: Review of Community Safety Forum****Contact Officer:** Name: *Linda Beanlands* Tel: **29-1115**

E-mail: Linda.beanlands@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

**Wards Affected:** All**1.0 Introduction:**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make recommendations which improve the effectiveness of the Community Safety Forum in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.

**2.0 Recommendations:**

2.1 That the Forum continues to be the place which fulfils the statutory role required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as set in this report and attached appendix) making recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee for decisions on priorities and full council as necessary

2.2 That there is an increased focus on the role of the Forum being to receive and consider strategic assessments of crime and disorder, to consult with communities and on the basis of that consultation, to agree crime reduction and safety priorities for inclusion within the three yearly Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategies.

2.3 That the Terms of Reference are amended to reflect:

- the abolition of the Police Authority
- the mutual duty on the local authority and Police and Crime Commissioner to have regard to each others priorities, to co-operate to reduce crime and disorder and reduce offending and to do that in consultation with local communities
- that minutes of the meetings of the Police and Crime Panel will be considered by the Community Safety Forum together with report backs from elected representatives to the Panel
- the Community Safety Forum as one of a number of arrangements that are in place to resolve outstanding concerns in relation to crime and disorder, referencing the role of Local Action Teams and community led Forums

- 2.4 That support continues to the network of Local Action Teams and community led Forums to ensure that they are most effectively integrated in the day to day work of the community safety partnership
- 2.5 That the timetable of Community Safety Forum meetings is reflective of the increased focus on its core statutory duties and role in relation to the Police and Crime Panels. This consideration may result in a reduced number of meetings.

### **3.0 Information: statutory basis of the Forum: consultation and partnership:**

- 3.1 The statutory basis of the Community Safety Forum was initially (and remains) the Police Act 1996. Its provisions required that in setting its proposed arrangements and priorities for policing, the Police Authority 'shall have regard to the views of people in the police area in question'. The Forum was therefore established to be a place where Brighton & Hove's elected member representative to the Police Authority could consult with our councillors and the wider public on its annual policing plan and on wider policing issues, including those that were of immediate concern to the public. The Forum was required to consider the minutes and reports of each meeting of the Police Authority (as well as the annual Plan) and the practice was established of attendance by the Divisional Police Commander and other senior officers. The business of meetings also therefore, considered functions of the local authority which increased effectiveness through closer working with the police. The Forum, facilitated by the council and its constitution, essentially was a key place which delivered public accountability for policing, providing the opportunity for open questioning of senior police officers and elected members.
- 3.2 The Fire Authority reports on each of its meetings to the Community Safety Forum for the purpose of information and to enable discussion and feedback on those items which affects the community safety partnership.
- 3.3 The statutory basis of the Forum was extended by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act sets out the requirements which are placed on identified Responsible Authorities (the Police Authority being one of those) to prepare and implement Crime and Disorder and Drugs strategies and to establish partnership arrangements in order to do so. Local Authorities have the lead role in undertaking the range of tasks that are set out in the legislation, including 'analysing the levels and patterns of crime and disorder and misuse of drugs in the area' and after preparing a report which sets out that information, '**obtaining the views on that report of persons or bodies in the area – whether by holding public meetings or otherwise**'.
- 3.4 The combined views of the police, council and partners at that time, were that the Forum offered the best opportunity to comply with the requirements for public consultation and partnership arrangements and that the structure of the community safety partnership incorporate a clear link with elected members and democratic processes.

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- 3.5 The Forum was therefore, developed in accordance with these and related requirements with a wider focus on community safety (as well as policing). The co-opted membership was extended to achieve wider representation and to create a place where third sector and community organisations were able to fulfil their partnership role alongside the statutory Responsible Authorities (set out in legislation and Home Office guidance). Co-opted membership now includes the network of Local Action Teams, community led forums such as the Racial Harassment and Violence Against Women and Girls Forums and expert agencies such as Victim Support.
- 3.6 As a consultative and advisory body, the Forum refers any matters on which a decision of the council in relation to community safety is required, to Policy and Resources Committee. The Forum is accountable to the Safe In The City Partnership Board, the strategic group of Responsible Authorities.
- 3.7. The Overview and Scrutiny committee fulfils the scrutiny role for community safety and references the appropriate legislative requirements in its constitution.

### **4.0 Police and Crime Commissioner and Panels:**

- 4.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced directly elected Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC) for each police force area in the country. At the point of election, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012, Police Authorities ceased to exist. The elected Commissioner replaced the previously elected, police authority membership in its entirety. Specific responsibilities of the PCC include appointing Chief Constables and holding to account, determining local policing priorities, publishing a five year Police & Crime Plan, setting the annual Force budget and council tax precept , controlling police funding and community safety government grants (previously passed directly to local authorities).
- 4.2 Unlike the Police Authorities, the PCC is not one of the ‘Responsible Authorities’ under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, so is not required to be a member of local Community Safety Partnerships. However there is a mutual duty on PCC’s and Partnerships to co-operate to reduce crime and disorder and reduce offending. Both are required to have regard to each others priorities when drawing up the five year Police and Crime Plan (PCC) and the three year Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategies of local authorities and community safety partnerships. There is an expectation of being active participants in each others priority setting and of that being done in consultation with communities and neighbourhoods.
- 4.3 A representative of the Office of the PCC attends Community Safety Forum meetings. The community safety partnership is currently refreshing its strategic assessment of crime and disorder and establishing its priorities for inclusion in a new city wide Strategy for 2014 – 2017. Following the development of a pan-Sussex protocol for partnership working, the findings of our strategic assessment and the proposed crime reduction priorities for inclusion within our Strategy have been shared with the PCC and East and West Sussex. Through a series of successful joint meetings, we are working towards an alignment of priorities and

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subject to agreement, identifying the activities which are to be funded from a 'pooled budget' of council, PCC funding and police funding.

4.4 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 also introduced Police and Crime Panels which act as a 'check and balance' to the work of the PCC. The Panel is made of 20 elected councillors from each district, borough, unitary and county councils in Sussex. Brighton & Hove have two representative places; currently Councillors Liz Wakefield and Warren Morgan. They are also members of the Community Safety Forum. The Forum receives the minutes of each meeting of the Panel and has the opportunity to question and comment on the business and decisions of Panel meetings.

## **5.0 Role of Forum in relation to Local Action Teams:**

5.1 As described above, the Community Safety Forum is the designated advisory and consultative body for the community safety partnership, within the committee structure and as set out by the council's constitution. This is a specific role for the community safety partnership which is not replicated by other groups or meetings. However, while elected members clearly prioritise the meeting and make best use of the opportunity, attendance from the public and co-opted and community led organisations (including the Local Action Teams) is routinely low, which calls into question how useful they find the meetings.

5.2 There are some 35 Local Action Teams in the city. Most have been the outcome of an initiative by groupings of people who wish to deal with particular community safety matters of concern in their neighbourhoods. Some also deal with a wider range of issues such as local planning matters and can be a resource for consultation on wider issues. Respecting the individual nature of each LAT and the increasing expertise of this volunteer effort, the Community Safety Team provides guidance about how the network fits into the wider partnership arrangements, good practice in managing meetings and related matters. Neighbourhood police officers, PCSO's and Community Safety Team officers attend most meetings of each LAT, helping to develop priorities and to achieve solutions to problems.

5.3 There is a high level of commitment to sustaining this network of LAT's and regular Chairs meeting are an opportunity to share their significant achievements and provide information from a wider range of services such as licensing policy and practice. London Road LAT for example has made a significant contribution to achieving reduced strength of alcohol being sold in local off licences.

Linda Beanlands