

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2012 at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor G S Dowding..... Chairman (for this meeting)

Councillor J Freeman
Councillor B Heywood

Councillor P N Grierson
Councillor D D Ross

Members in Attendance:

Councillor D J Sanders
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor T Taylor
Councillor D J Westcott

Officers in Attendance:

Corporate Director (B Lang)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Community Safety Officer (P Hughes)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

Also in Attendance:

Inspector Lisa Simpson, Avon and Somerset Constabulary

SC34 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Chilcott, M O A Dewdney, R Lillis and K J Ross.

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed both Inspector Lisa Simpson of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Peter Hughes, Community Safety Officer to the meeting.

SC35 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 20 August 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 20 August 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

SC36 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr P N Grierson	All Items	Alcombe	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

SC37 Public Participation

No member of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

SC38 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

(Copy of Notes of Cabinet Decisions/Action Point, circulated with the agenda).

Members noted an amendment to the second resolution relating to Agenda Item 9 – Our Town First Town Team Partners (Minehead) to read, ‘**Agreed** that Members agree to a virement of £20,000’.

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 3 October 2012, be noted.

SC39 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of the Cabinet Forward published 9 October 2012, circulated with the agenda also, copy of the latest Cabinet Forward Plan 22 October 2012, circulated at the meeting).

The Corporate Director reported that the format of the Forward Plan had altered due to recent changes to the access to information regulations, in that any key decisions to be considered at Cabinet should be listed publicly at least 28 calendar days before the meeting including being published on the Council’s website.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward published 22 October 2012, be noted.

SC40 Community Safety – Annual Report

(Copy of Minehead Town Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Partnership Performance Headlines 2012-13, circulated at the meeting).

The Community Safety Officer explained the current situation regarding a countywide community partnership. A report had been presented to Cabinet regarding the merger of the existing partnership into a single body and was agreed for recommendation to Council. The merger will give the county a single voice when discussing issues with the soon to be voted Police and Crime Commissioner.

He confirmed that the statutory responsible bodies of the partnership were the Police, Police Authority (however, post 22nd November 2012 when the new Police and Crime Commissioner takes up office, the Police Authority will cease to exist) , Fire and Rescue Service, Primary Care Trust, Probation Service and Local Authorities. Within the new partnership structure there would be

representatives from voluntary bodies who would be non-voting members. Further, the new elected Police and Crime Commissioner would not be a responsible body but would have a duty to co-operate and attend meetings. A lot of work had been undertaken to draw up a partnership plan and a terms of reference; also a strategic assessment of crime and community safety issues had been developed, and from that a public facing summary would be produced. He understood the need for clear communication and would pass on Members' concerns in this respect.

The Inspector reported on the crime figures and patterns for the year advising that crime was down 10.3%, probably due to the poor summer weather. However, she was concerned that the crime detection rate was down by 3%. There was a spike of burglaries from March to June, much higher than was usual; an arrest had been made and that person had admitted to many of the crimes during that period which should increase the detection rate.

The Inspector responded to concerns, which included:

- She confirmed that due to the population demographic of the area the community and holiday-makers tended to be more trusting and it had been a problem trying to get the message across to be more careful and vigilant. However, the police continued to use newsletters etc to help.
- With regard to the badger cull the police had been able to obtain more resources (three Sergeants and 18 Constables) to ensure a peaceful process for the period of the cull and this additional resource would be funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- She confirmed that there was no increase in problematic behaviour as a result of the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- Butlins held between 11 and 20 high volume "adult" weekends per year. The police had not seen an increase in crime but had seen an increase in anti-social behaviour during those times. As a result, they had been working with Butlins to secure funding to police the area more pro-actively and would now be able to provide two extra Constables to be visible in the town, specifically on a Saturday between 10 am and 6 pm, when Butlins' guests were known to visit the town. Butlins have invested heavily in their security staff who were very well trained and who had been vital in assisting the police.

The Community Safety Officer reported on the Minehead CCTV partnership. The cameras were monitored by a group of volunteers whose dedication had been recognised and had been awarded a commendation by the District Police Commander. They worked closely with the 'street pastors' who are well trained, worked in pairs and tried to diffuse situations. They knew how to remove themselves from situations that become volatile and would call the police for assistance, if needed.

During the course of the discussion Members noted:

- The CCTV cameras also helped the police to identify evidence that pointed away from a suspect or that an alleged offence had not, in fact, taken place. All the cameras provided good images and were able to switch to infra-red in low light conditions, and one camera was equipped with automatic

number plate recognition. The police had access to specialists who could scrutinise and enhance footage, should it be required.

- There were concerns regarding cyber bullying and that problems were exacerbated by the rurality of the area. The police would be delivering a nationally accredited scheme focused at years 9, 10 and perhaps 11, at the West Somerset Community College, on ways to avoid and report incidents of bullying, and a parents evening to bring the issues to their attention. Further, Police Community Support Officers have received training regarding on-line protection and have links with the community college.
- An annual audit was undertaken, usually in the early hours of the morning, to assess the level of 'rough sleepers' in Minehead. Generally, the homeless/rough sleepers did not want to be accommodated out of the area. The Hope Centre, Minehead, was a valuable resource that worked with the homeless giving them time, education, help and provided hot meals, bath, clean clothing, etc.
- The website: www.police.uk gave information regarding the record of crime in various categories, in a given postcode.

The Inspector noted several points of concern raised by members and advised that she would make enquiries/pass concerns on and report back if necessary. She advised that West Somerset was still one of the safest places to live and if anyone should have any ideas on how the police could improve their service they would be genuinely interested to know.

The Chairman believed that the vast majority of the public were appreciative of the work carried out by the police, and thanked both the Inspector and the Community Safety Officer very much for taking the time to attend the meeting.

RESOLVED (1) that the Community Safety Officer pass on the thanks of the Scrutiny Committee to the volunteers for their time and effort taken to monitor the CCTV cameras in Minehead.

RESOLVED (2) that the report be noted.

SC41 Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Workplan be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.01 pm.