

CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON POLICING IN SHEFFIELD 10

ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH, CROSSPOOL,

15/01/19

Present:

Representing Sheffield Council: Cnclr Mohammed Mahroof; Cnclr Anne Murphy [Chair]

Representing the Central and North-West Neighbourhoods Police Group: Insp. John Mallows; PCSO Pam Thompson; PCSO Phil Whittaker

Representing the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme: Leslie Day (Dore, Totley and Woodseats)

Representing Crosspool Forum: Ian Hague

Over 40 members of the public from Crookes, Crosspool and Fulwood.

Introduction

Cnclr Murphy explained that the aim of the meeting was to encourage community communication and co-operation as a means of tackling the current increase in crime in Sheffield 10.

It followed a smaller gathering, concentrating on the prevention of crime in local shops, held in Crosspool in September 2018.

This initiative has already led to the arrest and imprisonment of one offender. She invited the meeting to express its appreciation for the work of PCSO's Thompson and Whittaker in this respect.

She then invited questions and observations from the floor.

Contributions from the floor

A large number of speakers made plain that many local residents had recently been affected by crime, and raised the following points:

- 1) The frequency of cycle theft, particularly that targeted on expensive machines.
- 2) The frequency of car theft, often associated with the cloning of transponders in keyless fobs, and the rise of the theft of parts of cars.

- 3) The level of expertise and inclination to violence on the part of local thieves, for example in using drones to target victims, and in jemmying doors and windows to gain entry into private premises.
- 4) Alongside this criminal 'professionalism', a rise in opportunist theft.
- 5) The personal distress and ongoing sense of insecurity caused by increasing crime, especially break-ins, now occurring at any time of the day, and/or when families were at home.
- 6) The fear and insecurity caused by cold calling by door-to-door salespeople, sometimes very late in the day.
- 7) The more general concern that awareness of an area as a crime hotspot might damage its reputation and so in, for example, reduce house values.
- 8) The likelihood that a significant student population attracted thieves to easy targets.
- 8) Concern at the slowness of police response times; lack of application in identifying and pursuing perpetrators, in particular by not making full use of CCTV footage; and failure to inform residents as to how to prevent crime.
- 9) The need for advice on the deterrent value of domestic CCTV systems.
- 10) The extent to which domestic CCTV coverage of areas beyond the home could be used by the police.
- 11) That official statistics, on which government police-funding depends, might present a lower level of local crime than is actually the case.
- 11) Whether the police had a specific target for the reduction of burglaries etc.

Responses

- 1) Inspector Mallows expressed sympathy with and understanding of these issues.

He said that although there were continuing difficulties as a result of budget cuts, the local force was currently committed to an initiative against theft, both city-wide and in Sheffield 10.

This initiative included improvement of response times, and was related to the establishment of the new neighbourhood police groups, backed by the Chief Constable.

He stated that poor use by the police of CCTV footage was unacceptable. Acceptance of footage beyond the home is possible.

But he also stressed the huge need for community cooperation, for example in letting the police know about novel criminal techniques such as the use of drones. Neighbourhood Watch schemes are particularly valuable in this respect.

The emphasis must be on prevention of crime.

Currently there was no specific target for crime reduction. In his view the basic question for members of each community was whether they felt safe in their home area.

In this respect he emphasised that in Crosspool and even city-wide the burglary rate is still relatively low.

- 2) PCSO Thompson warned cycle owners of the danger of using the 'Strava' app.

PCSO Whittaker said that the police make a point of checking student houses to see if they are sufficiently secure.

- 3) Cnclr Murphy agreed that there is the danger of a decline in the feeling of personal well-being. She reiterated the need to co-operate to make Crookes and Crosspool the safest ward in the city, and so for Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

She mentioned the value of input into the Crosspool Forum and the use of Facebook as means of local communication and for informing the police, but agreed that Facebook had its dangers and so needed care in use.

She also advised cycle owners to mark their machines with ultra-violet pens.

She agreed that students are careless with their property, despite advice given to them by the University and herself.

- 3) Leslie Day agreed with Inspector Mallows on the importance of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, now expanding in Sheffield.

He explained its operation in the North West area of the city, including the best ways of using social media and of communicating with the police.

He gave advice on the best ways of securing the person and home, advised on the use of a range of shed and personal alarms, and explained how to block the cloning of car-fob transponders.

He also advised people to check their locks and replace any Eurolocks with more secure versions.

He urged people not to defend their property by force, real or potential, as this will only provoke violence.

He explained how to set up local anti-cold calling areas, which make any subsequent calling a legal misdemeanour.

He said that domestic CCTV was really only of use to keep a watch on empty property. The main deterrent was to make entry as difficult as possible.

- 4) Ian Hague drew attention to the next Open Meeting of the Crosspool Forum, at which representatives of the police would again be present, on 31 January 2019.

He also reported on progress to erect a public CCTV camera in the Crosspool shopping precinct.

Emails

The meeting concluded with the drawing up of a list of the names and e-addresses of those who wished to be kept informed of developments.

END

[Author: John Drinkwater, Crosspool Forum]