

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership Policing Committee meeting held on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 6 pm via MS Teams.

Present: Councillors

John McClaughry (Chairperson), Paul Blake, Josephine Deehan, Keith Elliott, Deborah Erskine, Tommy Maguire, Barry McElduff, Thomas O'Reilly and Allan Rainey.

Independent Members

Monica Coyle (Vice-Chairperson), Noeleen Hayes, Norman Kirkpatrick, Vida Lake, Bernie McCrory, Margaret McCrory, Sarah McQuaid, Maria Thompson and Pauline Treacy.

Designated Members

Ryan McGee (EANI).

Apologies: Superintendent Alywin Barton (PSNI).

In attendance: Chief Inspector Robert McGowan, Chief Inspector Rory Hoy, Inspector Joni Beatty, Carol Follis (PCSP Manager) and Maggie McManus (PCSP Clerk).

PC 28/20

Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting and apologies were accepted.

PC 29/20

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

PC 30/20

Notification of AOB

Cllr Erskine – Violence against women
PCSP Manager – request for letter of support and NIFRS staffing update.
Vida Lake – Ethnic group update
Chair – Spam/Spoof emails

PC 31/20

Minutes

The minutes of the Policing Committee meeting held on Tuesday 15 December 2020 were considered and approved. Proposed by Cllr Deehan and seconded by Monica Coyle.

PC 32/20

Matters Arising

PC 23/20 PCSP Action Plan 2021-2022

The PCSP Manager informed the meeting that the PCSP Action Plan 2021-2022 had been submitted to the Joint Committee and that the Letter of Offer had not yet been received.

PC 24/20

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Alan Crooks, PCSP Community Safety Officer has spoken with Sarah McQuaid regarding extending the Silverhill NHW Scheme to cover Loughshore Manor. Due to the number of houses involved it was decided more appropriate to establish a new NHW scheme for Loughshore Manor. Canvassing to commence when restrictions allow.

Work is ongoing with Alan Crooks, Cllr Maguire and Steven Ormsby (Community Support Officer, FODC) to identify community representatives for the Cleenish/Drumawill area which may lead to the establishment of a NHW Scheme in the area.

The PCSP Manager informed the meeting that due to lack of funding Louise Cullen Good Relations Officer Coolcullen Meadows, is no longer in post.

The PCSP Manager has circulated the relevant information on European funded programme to all members.

PC 25/20

PSNI Uniform Pilot

No comments were received by the PCSP Manager.

PC 33/20

Members' Questions

Two questions were received, and answers were circulated to members prior to meeting.

Question 1

Councillor Deehan: To ask the District Commander for an update on anti-social behaviour at the Grange carpark, Lisanelly Ave, Omagh. In particular, can he report on alleged drug dealing in the area and comment more widely on drug dealing/ seizures in Omagh.

Response

Police are aware of a limited number of reports of anti-social behaviour in the Grange area and have been proactively patrolling the area to deter such activity.

As a result of positive engagement in the area one drugs detection has been made over the last few weeks.

Police call frequently with staff at the testing centre to provide reassurance to staff and members of the public who are in attendance.

The local neighbourhood are heavily involved in this work and are supported by local policing teams. Staff at the centre have been provided with the contact numbers for the local neighbourhood policing team.

Every house in Lisanelly Avenue has been called at by the team.

There are tentative plans to set up a neighbourhood watch scheme in the area. The neighbourhood policing team are progressing this.

Thirty drug related seizures have been made in the Omagh area since the start of the year. The majority of these seizures, 23, relate to cannabis, other seizures include 4 seizures of class A drugs with the rest of the seizures being for prescription drugs.

Police continue to take a proactive approach to drug dealing and supply in the Omagh area with local officers supported by the District Support Team.

Discussion

Cllr Deehan thanked the PSNI for the response. She expressed concerns regarding ASB around The Grange area and allegations of drug dealing in this area. She welcomes ideas for what the PCSP can do to alleviate this issue.

Ryan Magee said the EANI have a keen interest in young people and although they do not have a statutory responsibility to deal with ASB, the EA can deal with issues around vulnerability that may engage in ASB, within its centres and through outreach work. He added that the EA would welcome information from members where they feel EA could engage with young people to deliver programmes and activities.

Question 2

Cllr McElduff: To ask the PSNI to make a statement regarding recent incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime in the Culmore Park / O'Kane Park area of Omagh, including the hoax bomb alert in Culmore Park on Friday 19 March 2021.

Response

PSNI have received reports of ASB in the Culmore Park area. They mainly relate to a block of flats. PSNI, NIHE, NIFRS, PCSP and local Councillor Barry McElduff held a multi-agency meeting followed by an onsite visit to establish where each agency could assist in addressing the problem. A number of actions have been taken and we continue to work collaboratively to address the issue.

On Friday 19th March 2021 Police commenced a search operation in Culmore Park following a report that a suspicious object had been left in the area. To protect the safety of all residents a number of houses had to be evacuated. The CKS Centre was opened to allow those residents a place of safety. A number of local representatives attended the scene and were instrumental in reassuring the community. We would like to formally pass on thanks to the Community and elected representatives. Their co-operation allowed us to carry out the operation thoroughly and ensure the safety of all residents in the area.

Discussion

Chief Inspector McGowan and Inspector Beatty informed that the PSNI under the direction of Neighbour Sergeant Hamill is very proactive in the Culmore and O'Kane areas taking opportunities to engage and build relationships with residents for which he has received a lot of support from residents. The PSNI confirmed that a number of Covid-19 breaches had been reported and where required fines issued. The PSNI added

that the incident on Friday night was dealt with successfully, apart from the disruption caused.

PC 34/20

PSNI Vulnerability Team

Inspector Beatty gave a presentation on the G District Vulnerability Support Team: how the team is structured, roles and responsibilities, the Support Hub, and adult safeguarding. She informed the Members that the Department of Justice had commissioned a review of Support Hubs which was due for release the next morning.

Following the presentation, the Members were invited to put forward questions.

Question 1

Cllr O'Reilly: when a call is received by the PSNI, how does the call handler triage/screen the call, as this didn't seem to work in Newtownabbey at the weekend? Are there any issues regarding contacting GPs as generally the public can't get through to them? Is it fair to put all of this on the doorstep of the PSNI?

Response

PSNI could not comment on the Newtownabbey incident, but informed members that all calls are screened using the National Standard: THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability of Victim and Engagement). Each call is reviewed on its one merit as every scenario is different. Before a call is closed it has been through three or four layers of a checking process with senior staff.

The PSNI has not encountered issues contacting/engaging with GPs and have found the new initiative of social workers attached to GP surgeries to be very efficient.

Responding to the final part of the question Inspector Beatty commented that the role of the Vulnerability Team is part of a wider collaborative effort to assist those who are the most vulnerable in society and in need to supports.

Question 2

Noleen Hayes: are PSNI Officers trained to spot the unspoken threat when attending a potential incident of domestic violence?

Response

Inspector Beatty said that Officers will always go into a house and separate all parties when called to an incident. Officers carry out a DASH form risk assessment to determine power/control element in the situation, which even when the person refuses to answer questions, allows the Officer to judge the situation.

Question 3

Noleen Hayes: if no report is made by the victim, and they (the PSNI) believe there is a threat, is the person flagged for other calls?

Response

Inspector Beatty said that as part of the response officers check for repeat incidents and flag people of interest. If a victim has taken out a NMO (Non-Molestation Order) against a person, and this person is found to be in the property, the PSNI will remove them.

Question 4

Cllr Deehan: what is the current formal chain of communication between the statutory agencies on the Support Hub?

Response

Inspector Beatty responded that meetings are minuted and disseminated to all relevant agencies, through secure email addresses.

Question 5

Sarah McQuaid: is the Domestic Violence & Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS, also known as Clare's Law) well known in the district?

Response

Inspector Beatty said it probably depends on what circles you move in but that if Members were not aware of it, it may not be widely known. The PCSP Manager said the PCSP had received on DVADS about two years ago and if needed this can be delivered again.

Question 6

Sarah McQuaid: if the PSNI Missing Child Officer is absent is there someone covering the role?

Response

Insp Beatty said that the information system is kept up-to-date for officers attending/investigating any incident to access the most up to date information.

Recommended

1. That the PCSP Manager email members a copy of presentation.
2. That the PCSP Manager email the Support Hub Evaluation when released.
3. That the PCSP Manager and Insp Beatty discuss the promotion of DVADS with Women's Aid.

PC 35/20

AOB

1 Ethnic Groups

Vida Lake informed the Members that Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group is continuing its work with the Syrian community offering information and advice where required.

2 Domestic & Sexual Violence Awareness

Cllr Erskine informed that MLAs announced this evening support for a Strategy for Protecting Women and Girls from Violence.

Question 1

Cllr Erskine: what can the PCSP do to protect people in our community and educate women/girls/young men and make them aware of what is being done.

Response

The PCSP Manager responded that the 2021-2022 Action Plan had provision for awareness raising and programmes. She added that herself and Inspector Beatty are to attend a meeting with Women's Aid the next

day and would discuss how to support organisations charged with this work.

Question 2

Cllr O'Reilly: is it possible to do a Road Safe Road Show like event for DSV on alternate years from the road safety event?

Response

Ryan Magee informed that the EANI has plans to work with Man's Action Network (MAN) to host productions of a play covering domestic violence.

Recommended

1. That the Members forward any ideas for DSV engagement/awareness on to the PCSP Manager.
2. That the PCSP Manager keep Members updated on DSV initiatives.

3 Letter of Support

The PCSP Manager informed the Members that the PCSP had been asked for a letter of support from Ederney Community Development Trust (ECDT) for its application to the Irelands Fund for two speed indicator devices to be installed at St Joseph's Primary School.

Question

Cllr O'Reilly: would ECDT be happy to share this information with other areas, so they could possibly avail of the funding also?

Issue of Letter of Support proposed by Cllr Erskine and seconded by Cllr Deehan.

Recommended

1. That the PCSP Manager issue Letter of Support.
2. That the PCSP Manager contact ECDT to share the information on the funding opportunity.

4 NIFRS Staffing Update

The PCSP Manager informed Members that Brian Hetherington from NIFRS will retire at the end of the month, after 30 years-service. She asked if Members were agreeable to the PCSP sending a thank you letter to Brian for his time serving on the PCSP.

Proposed by Cllr Erskine and seconded by Sarah McQuaid.

5 Spam/Spoof Emails

The Chair informed the Members of the receipt of a spoof email from another Councillor, asking for money and urged Members to consider carefully before opening emails if they have any doubts about authenticity.

Rising

The Committee rose at 7.50 pm

Date/time of next meeting

Policing Committee Meeting Tuesday 27 April 2021 at 7.30pm.