

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny **Date:** Thursday, 7 October 2010
Standing Panel

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, **Time:** 7.30 - 9.01 pm
High Street, Epping

Members Present: Ms C Edwards (Chairman), Ms J Hedges (Vice-Chairman), W Breare-Hall, A Boyce, K Chana, Mrs T Cochrane, D Jacobs, Mrs S Jones, B Judd, Mrs C Pond and J M Whitehouse

Other Councillors: Mrs P Smith and Mrs M Sartin

Apologies: - G Mohindra and P Spencer

Officers Present: J Nolan (Assistant Director (Environment & Neighbourhoods)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: J Gilbert, Chief Inspector A Ray, C Wiggins, D Eyles, P Gardener and A Petty

23. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was reported that Councillor Jon Whitehouse was substituting for Councillor P Spencer and Councillor K Chana was substituting for G Mohindra.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

25. NOTES FROM LAST MEETING

The notes from 26 August 2010 meeting were agreed as a correct record.

26. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - CROSS BORDER WORK

The Chairman of the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel welcomed the members of the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to the meeting who were there to talk about the cross border initiative.

John Gilbert the lead officer for the CSP introduced the officers attending the meeting on behalf of the CSP and Councillor Mrs Smith who was the Chairman of the Partnership.

He introduced David Eyles, the Cross Border Officer. This post came about after a recently commissioned five year study into offenders responsible for serious acquisitive crime. The research identified that 48% of the offenders resided outside Epping Forest District, with the majority living almost exclusively within the London area. Intelligence suggested that with shared borders with the Metropolitan Police areas and the easy access into the District had a specific impact on acquisitive crime in the District. In view of this the Safer Communities Team approached Essex County Council to consider funding a West Essex Cross Border Officer, working on

behalf of Epping Forest, Harlow and Brentwood CSPs. A six month temporary post was agreed and in May 2010 David Eyles was recruited into the post. He had thirty years of policing experience working at a senior level in the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Eyles commented that it was difficult to target individuals who 'commuted' into the district because of the easy transport links. It was very unfortunate that the various police computer systems could not talk to each other and share intelligence across borders. However, there was now a London wide database in operation, which we had recently signed up to. This database was turning up interesting facts such as showing 'hot-spots' of criminal activity and that a small number of individuals were carrying out the majority of crime. Targeted cross border squads could now be put together to target cross border offending.

There was also some academic research into why offenders go to a particular area to offend. They found that in such areas as Loughton there are high numbers desirable cars, some of which were being stolen and shipped abroad. There were also a number being driven around the area on false number plates or broken up for spares and sold on (this was easy now with the internet).

A cross border prolific offender scheme was being run with the help of the London Boroughs. A strategic assessment was done yearly and this was used to prioritise the work undertaken.

The relationship between Local Authorities and the Police has been excellent in this area and had been welcomed the local police commanders. A lot of positives were coming out of the cross border work being done and the London Boroughs are now coming on board.

The Safer Communities Manager, Caroline Wiggins, explained that that Mr Eyles' was engaged for a six month appointment, which had now been extended for a further five months and officers were looking to extend it further as they were keen to build on the work done.

Councillor Boyce was worried that the London Boroughs might be negative as their criminals were coming out to our area where the big houses and big cars are. David Eyles noted that more houses were being burglarised for their car keys as new cars were hard to steal off the road. The London Boroughs tend to have 'Fiestas' stolen. They are usually taken, broken-up and sold on.

Councillor Judd asked if we also had criminals coming in from over the Kent border. Mr Eyles said they certainly came in from Hertfordshire. They come into Essex because they are not known to our police and there is a perception that there is less policing in Essex and our courts are more lenient than the metropolitan courts. Also, because this is an affluent area with desirable items.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked if there were any other issues that were focused on, such as drugs or other acquisitive crimes. Mr Eyles said they were also looking Anti Social Behaviour and were looking to map this behaviour and to see if any names cropped up again and again and to cross reference this with locations. This would enable us to come up with holistic plans to deal with these problems. Caroline Wiggins added that they were looking at having another "Day of Action" and spreading this across areas going to various neighbourhood areas on various days where they could bring a whole raft of services into action.

Councillor Breare-Hall said that a 'drive for the future' was mentioned. Are you working to a time line to see results? Mr Eyles replied that they were already seeing

results by working cohesively as partnerships, with intelligence being shared with the London Boroughs and focusing our resources through this. The reality of crime was different to the perception of crime; violent crimes were not an everyday occurrence but a rarity in this area.

Councillor Chana commented that the report given was interesting but he had heard similar things before about cars stolen to order and databases being set up to help the police. What was being done to tackle this type of crime? Chief Inspector Alan Ray said they had introduced teams to stop burglars during the day. Last year they achieved a 7% reduction on dwelling burglaries while neighbouring boroughs have had an increase in their levels. They also have a team to stop vehicles on the road, a lot of this was pre-emptive. Caroline Wiggins added that a lot of this was about education and prevention, reminding residents to keep their home safe etc. and was not just about policing.

Councillor Jacobs commented that this type of crime would never disappear; we needed to match the criminal's efforts. He was concerned that the police kept up this level of surveillance, but it would not be easy with the upcoming cut backs. Mr Eyles replied that a lot of other forces were looking at how we did it and if successful there would always be funding made available by the Home Office, probably to the Local authorities to manage such partnerships. Paul Gardener, the Anti Social Behaviour Officer said that a strong partnership should overcome funding problems and enable the work to continue in some form. There was a good operational working relationship between our team and the police.

Councillor Mrs Edwards said that there were concerns about the proposed radical cut backs by the government. Chief Inspector Alan Ray replied that Essex Police was already a lean force and were looking at a force restructure. They know that cuts were coming and would have to see how they could manage them. Already, the Epping Forest PC's do more spot checks than anywhere else in the country and does a really good job here. John Gilbert, the lead officer for the Epping Forest CSP added that they had good partnership work demonstrated here and this would become more important as resources became tighter.

Councillor Judd said that people tend to talk mostly in terms of percentages nowadays, but Mr Eyles had given a figure that 57 people would not become a victim this year because of the work done. Percentages can distort how the public view crimes. Was there anything that could be done to help us communicate this to the public? Mr Eyles said that was a good point, the local press were quick to criticise and blow things out of all proportion. They would not publish good news. Councillor Judd said there were other forms of communication available such as the newsletters of Town and Parish Councils. Mr Gardener said it was still work in progress as they were looking at putting such items out to local newsletters via an email.

Councillor Sartin agreed about the bad press coverage. She asked if there was a two way movement; did our criminals go into London. Mr Eyles said they thought that was what was happening. The same thing was happening in the London Boroughs, with the met police picking up criminals from our area for much the same type of crime. There was a lot of work going on to research this.

Councillor Sartin then asked if this was the same for our east / west boundaries. Mr Eyles said that they suspected that East Herts. were exporting some of their criminals here.

Councillor Jacobs asked if the partnership liaised with prison officers, the probation service or other such like organisations. Caroline Wiggins said they had contact with

the probation service, looking at the offenders out of jail, where they lived and if we needed to add conditions onto their licences. The partnership recognised that they needed to reduce offending. They would update this Panel next year when they know more.

Councillor Breare-Hall asked if anything had been identified to allow the partnership to be more effective. Mr Eyles replied that the challenge was for the London Boroughs to talk to each other and get the computer and intelligence systems to talk to each other across borders. At present they cannot speak to each other. It would make the lives of Police Officers on the street less difficult.

He added that the culture of the met police was to keep their bit of land free of crime, but this just displaced the criminals. But this was changing, criminals do not recognise borders, why should we.

Councillor Boyce expressed concern that the Human Rights legislation had handicapped the Police. He then went on to say that some people had set up a 'Farm Watch' in his area where-by they could warn each other of any crimes committed locally. When they have tracked potential criminals going around their area and have informed the police that they knew their whereabouts or had them on their property, the police would not respond until days later when it was too late. Chief Inspector Alan Ray said he could not comment on specific incidents. As for human rights, the police had been working with them under the PACE regulations for some time. The Police have all the powers that they need.

Councillor Judd asked if there was anything that could be added to the Authority's current CCTV system to help the partnership. Also what kind of co-operation did we have with the British Transport police? Adrian Petty EFDC's CCTV operations officer said that they assisted the Police with technology, using the two 'Automatic Number Plate Recognition' cameras around the district. They were also trying to make their CCTV cameras work a little harder by placing them in specific areas. They were always looking at how to improve their service. If they had a central control room they could instigate a system whereby the public could text them when a crime was taking place and the operator could train a camera onto the crime as it was happening. Chief Inspector Alan Ray added that they had a very good relationship with the Transport Police and had often worked together to keep 'undesirables' out of the district.

Councillor Chana was concerned that homeowners were at a disadvantage when they had to defend their homes and were at risk of being charged themselves if they used violence. Chief Inspector Alan Ray said he saw a lot cases where the homeowners were not taken to court for defending their homes.

Councillor Mrs Smith, the Chairman of the CSP was glad to say that this area was one of the safest places to live in. The cross border work was all about good practice, the using of intelligence and data plotting. They are leading by example and the Home Office was showing great interest in this work.

Councillor Mrs Edwards agreed that the officers were doing a great job on the cross border work and it was very much appreciated.

27. FUTURE MEETINGS

Mr Gilbert reminded the Panel of the Community Engagement event happening on 25 November this year at Epping Forest College – details would be put in the Member's Bulletin.

He also noted that the next Crime and Disorder meeting was to be held in February 2011 and asked that members provide him with any ideas that they would wish to discuss at that next meeting. They would also get an update on the progress against the Community Safety Partnership's strategic assessment.

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