

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Chair's Report of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel meeting, 17th
January 2012.

Present at the meeting were Councillors Rebecca Blake and Roger Hill. Michael Collins was also present as an independent member. Apologies were received from Councillors Anita Clayton and Wanda King; County Councillor Sheila Blagg; and Ken Hazeldene from the Redditch Anti-Harassment Partnership.

We were slightly late starting due to staff awards where two Officers from the Community Safety Team won awards for their good work. We also noted that the same two Officers were currently being trained to become specialist advisors on architectural crime prevention - a course which traditionally and historically only police attend. The Panel saw this as a major breakthrough and thought this could be a real asset to the Borough. It was agreed that a question would be submitted to the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership around what benefits she expects to be accrued through this ahead of her appearance at the next meeting in April.

Bev Houghton and Angie Heighway were in attendance to present the second quarter figures for the Partnership's Performance Framework and to answer any questions regarding the minutes of the Community Safety Partnership Board meeting in August. A journalist from the local newspaper was also again in attendance for which we were grateful.

The Framework includes crime statistics for the four priority areas of the Partnership: Protecting Communities; Reducing Reoffending and Restorative Justice; Safer Streets and Places; and Secure Homes.

Under the *Protecting Communities* priority area we noted that there had been 37 additional harassment offences and 31 additional racially or religiously aggravated offences when compared with the same period last year. However, these increases were largely attributed to more residents being confident about reporting crime.

The Panel then discussed the issue of witness protection and victim support. We agreed that appearing before a court as a witness can be particularly daunting for a member of the public. Therefore we felt it would be worthwhile if an awareness campaign was launched to advise the public of what support is available and what they could expect in case they find themselves called to be a witness or appear as a victim in a court case. The Panel agreed we would ask the Chair of the Partnership about this.

We were also advised of the good work Officers and Police were carrying out in local high schools running workshops on the topic of "hate crime prevention".

Under the *Reducing Re-offending and Restorative Justice* priority area, the Panel was pleasing to read all trends in the various categories of crime were down. The Panel discussed the work of the *Community Payback Scheme*. Under the scheme, offenders under supervision do work in the community as was the recent case in Lodge Park. The Panel were of the opinion that more publicity should be given to this scheme as we felt more good work could be carried out in the community. Another question was to be submitted to the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, based on this issue, ahead of her appearance at the next meeting.

Under the *Safer Streets and Places* priority area, the Panel are pleased to report that most of the indicators also showed a downward trend – including for criminal damage and night-time related violence. The only exception was for an increase in deliberate fires offences over the previous twelve months. However, this increase was very much attributed to the actions of one or two offenders.

Finally, under the *Secure Homes* priority area, crime figures had generally slightly increased compared to the same point twelve months before. The Panel heard that the Partnership and the Police were continuing to remind residents of how they can reduce the possibility of being burgled or having their vehicles stolen.

The Panel thanked Officers for their attendance and looked forward to welcoming the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership to the next meeting in April to receive her response to the three questions submitted.

W. Hartnett.
Chair, Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel
19th January 2012.