

**Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Chair's Report of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel meeting, 11th**  
**April 2012.**

The Panel received apologies from Cllr Anita Clayton, Cllr Sheila Blagg from the West Mercia Police Authority, and Phil Griffiths from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire Service.

The main agenda item was the **Annual Report of the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership**, delivered by Sue Hanley. This was essentially a response to three questions the Panel had submitted to her in advance of the meeting.

**The first question** concerned the valuable work of Victim Support and asked what the Partnership has done and is doing to raise the awareness of the scheme in Redditch.

The meeting was advised that Victim Support is a national independent charity run by paid staff and volunteers which provides support to victims and witnesses of crime. The Victim Support office in Redditch is now structured locally as part of North Worcestershire Victim Support. We were advised that all victims of personal crime are referred to this service. Victims of the most serious cases are contacted within 48 hours.

Victim Support also operates a witness support service in every criminal court. They support the witnesses by explaining what they can expect during the trial and can arrange pre trial visits to the court, if appropriate, to help put them at greater ease. They also provide support after the trial if this is required.

The Community Safety Partnership works closely with Victim Support on a number of projects, including the Home Security Project which offers support to victims of domestic burglary and attempted burglary. Victim Support is also a key partner in the Joint Hate Incident Partnership, making and receiving referrals from victims of hate crime or incidents.

The Panel was very impressed by this valuable service that Victim Support offers and were reassured that the Community Safety Partnership also value their work.

**The second question** regarded the Community Payback Scheme (formally known as Community Service). The Panel wanted to know how the Partnership was helping to expand, improve and further publicise this scheme.

It was explained that the scheme is managed by the Probation Trust who are now working towards a cost neutral model which prioritises projects that cover the costs of the supervisor's salary and fuel costs. The average cost is approximately £150 per project but can be met through in-kind contributions and match funding.

A Panel Member explained that a neighbouring local authority makes a contribution towards the £150 costs per placement. The Panel felt that this was a good idea and requested that the Community Safety Partnership consider taking similar action. The Chair of the Partnership agreed to feed this back.

The Panel was advised that between Apr 11 and Feb 12, last financial year 8,716 hours of community payback was carried out in Redditch of which some 923 hours

were carried out on behalf of the Borough Council. 3,724 hours of work was undertaken in a variety of places, including: local charity shops; local schools; sports clubs; and local churches. 57 hours of work were also undertaken at local housing associations.

**The third and final question** asked the Chair of the Partnership to explain what benefits she expects the Partnership and Redditch in general will accrue after two members of the Community Safety Team were recently trained to become specialist advisors on crime prevention. It was reported that specialist crime prevention advice was now being offered to organisation such as our own depot, Sure Start centres and other community buildings.

The Panel heard that this has resulted in improved expertise within the Borough Council and greater links with development control and planning services, embedding crime reduction and community safety principals from the outset at pre application stage and greater liaison and guidance available to developers. However, it was explained that the Officers cannot be called on as a statutory consultee in planning applications as this remains the function of the Police Architectural Liaison Officer.

The Chair of the Partnership was asked to report back the Panel's view that consideration should be given to opening discussions with West Mercia Police with a view to allowing these two officers to become statutory consultees - even if only on a trial basis - as they are trained, have received the required certification and are clearly very capable. The Chair agreed to take this back to the Partnership.

### **Other Matters**

The Panel considered the Partnership's third quarter performance tables. Generally crime figures were stable or had reduced. However, there had been increases in incidents of domestic burglary, criminal damage, and serious acquisitive crime compared to the third quarter last year. However, the Panel would remind Members that West Mercia is still a low crime area.

For its end of year review, the Panel discussed the work which it had carried out over the past year. It was agreed that we had met our main objective of scrutinising the Partnership. The Panel had also acted as a vehicle for passing information to and from the Partnership and had brought items to the attention of the wider Redditch population through its coverage in the local press. The Panel did not wish to change its method of operation and felt it should continue.

Finally, the Chair of the Partnership commented that the Partnership was very appreciative of the Panel's work.

W. Hartnett  
Chair, Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel  
11th April 2012