

6 September 2005

Report of the Chief Executive
to the Police Authority

POLICE AUTHORITY CONSULTATION IN 'D' DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

1. This report seeks to inform Members of proposals to improve the level of public consultation on policing issues in 'D' Division.

BACKGROUND

2. Police Authority minutes for the Police Authority meeting on 27 July 1999 state that as a result of changes made to the decision-making processes of Hull City Council and the creation of seven Area Committees a proposal was put to the Authority, that, as these forums were similar to Police Community Liaison Committees (PCLCs) so far as liaison with the police was concerned consideration should be given to the role of PCLCs and being subsumed by Area Committees.
3. At the Police Authority meeting on 23 November 1999 the Clerk and the Chief Constable submitted a joint report considering the relationship between PCLCs and the City Council. The minutes record that it had become apparent that community safety and crime and disorder matters featured highly for local communities and that this had been recognised by the City's community safety strategy. It was considered that the merging of PCLC functions with the Area Committee structure would provide one local community forum and one set of meetings at which police issues were discussed.
4. These recommendations were approved in full.
5. Subsequent to that the Authority appears to have been provided with minutes of Area Committees and to a lesser extent Ward Forum meetings which identified policing issues raised by the public and thus were intended to inform the Authority on policing matters within 'D' Division. The submission of these documents and the information contained with them relating to policing was patchy. Nonetheless the information contained with them is regularly distilled from the minutes, analysed and presented to the Consultation and Partnership Committee.
6. At the request of the Authority some Area Committees complete a questionnaire on behalf of the Authority in relation to issues raised at Area Committees. This information is also used to inform the Consultation & Partnership Committee.
7. It is now recognised that this process is not a substitute for an accurate representation of public views on policing, crime, disorder and community safety issues within the City. This view is shared by Humberside Police Authority, Hull City Council and Humberside Police for a variety of reasons which will not be reproduced in this report.

CURRENT SITUATION

8. The Area Committee and the Ward Forum structure makes 'D' Division unique compared to the other three Divisions within Humberside Police where the Police Authority has established and improved structures for community consultation. It may be accepted by the Authority that removing the consultative process on policing away from the Ward Forum/Area Committee structure would not be supported by Hull City Council causing difficulty for Humberside Police in servicing two forums and perhaps would introduce an element of duplication.
9. The recent change in relation to the Divisional structure in 'D' Division to make Local Policing Teams totally coterminous with the Area Committees provides a fresh opportunity for the Police Authority to become a player in the consultative arrangements as opposed to being somewhat disenfranchised as was the case until the present.
10. Humberside Police at 'D' Division now recognise that there has been an inconsistency in their approach in relation to the reporting of information to Area Committees and Ward Forums across the City. There is a developing view that Area Committees should become involved with strategic crime, disorder and community safety issues, that is those longstanding issues which are in essence policing issues but that other partners within the Council contribute to e.g. housing and the anti-social behaviour team.
11. There are currently discussions between Humberside Police and the City Council for a revised model for the consultative process within 'D' Division along the following lines:
 - Elected Members and the public at Ward level should identify those issues which are perceived to be policing matters and which are impacting on that community. They will be raised with the Beat Manager or representative of the Local Policing Team Commander.
 - Those matters which are agreed by the Elected Members and Beat Manager are significant should then be investigated or analysed and a report on the problem or its resolution presented to the Area Committee by the Local Policing Team Commander, together with similar reports for other Ward Forums in that area.
 - Area Co-ordination Teams will ensure that there is some form of minuting taking at Ward level. This has been absent in the past.
 - Currently at Area Committee meetings there is an adjournment in those meetings for policing issues. These have been to be for legal reasons although the exact reason for this is not fully understood and needs to be revisited. If policing were discussed in the main body of the meeting as it should be it would enable all decisions to be properly recorded and for not only the police to be accountable but also some of the partner agencies would be involved in that accountability. There is a general view held by Local Policing Team Commanders that they would be more included in the process and decision-making at Area Committee level than they currently are.

- In order to ensure the new approach works Humberside Police would have to give a commitment to attend at Ward level to assist in addressing and then identifying those issues which can and should be addressed at Area level. Also by including issues fully at Area level Local Police Team Commanders commit to remaining throughout the Area meetings and fully participate in all the business discussed.
- In reporting to Area Committees on those issues raised at Ward level each Local Policing Team Commander can through working with the Elected Members identify such issues as they wish to be informed on, for example information. Local Policing Team Commanders can if they choose report on any significant events or trends occurring in that area.
- There are a number of matters relating to the process that are yet to be determined. For example it is yet to be established if the public would be invited to raise questions with the Local Policing Team Commanders at Area Committee level or if that should be restricted to Ward Forums. Additionally soundings have to be taken to ascertain the view of Elected Members.

HUMBERSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY

12. The proposal outlined above is in an embryonic stage with further discussions to be held between representatives of Humberside Police and Hull City Council. Humberside Police Authority is now involved in those discussions.
13. Strategically insofar as the Police Authority's role is concerned what is being planned is entirely consistent with the Police Reform Agenda and the proposals contained in the White Paper "Building Communities, Beating Crime" which defines the Government's commitment to involve neighbourhoods in decisions relating to how they are policed. Police Authorities have roles within the White Paper and its responsibilities are to be extended to "Secure the implementation of a strategy to engage the community at all levels in police areas."
14. On an administrative level it would mean that the Police Authority would benefit from the product of this improved consultation but at the expenditure of minimal resources as there would be no administration process unlike other forums within Humberside Police area which are directly managed by the Authority.
15. However it will be recognised that there may be no direct Police Authority representation on the Area Committees as they are structured at present although this may be negotiated. At Ward Forum level it is proposed that locally-elected Members will raise policing matters which are impacting on their communities. This does not therefore completely remove the "political element" to the consultation process however it is considered that Authority may accept that it is no longer a feasible option to superimpose completely separate public consultation forums within the City and expect it to be supported by both the police and the Council.

CONCLUSIONS

16. Further discussion relating to the development of these proposals is to take place between the Authority, Hull City Council and Humberside Police and it is expected that a scheme will be finalised and introduced before the year end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. It is recommended that:

- i) Members discuss the contents of this report;
- ii) Members support in principle to the consultation mechanisms that are currently under consideration; and
- iii) Members receive further reports on progress of the consultative arrangements within 'D' Division.

SHAHIN ISMAIL

Chief Executive to the Police Authority

Contact Officer: John Mabbett Telephone: (01482) 307235

Background Documents: None