
Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

11 December 2006

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

PETITION SEEKING TO RE-OPEN ACOMB POLICE STATION

Summary

1. Members are asked to consider a petition presented to a meeting of full Council on 5 October 2006. The petition was presented by Cllr Bartlett on behalf of local residents seeking the re-opening of Acomb Police Station. The petition is attached at Annex One.

Background

2. The petition contains the names of 165 local residents and there is a strong feeling within the local community that people want to be able to drop into a locally accessible building where a member of the police force is available to be able to give advice, receive reports of crime and disorder, and discuss local community safety issues. Residents see Acomb police station as the traditional place to do this, it being close to amenities and easily accessible. Comment on the petition has been sought from the Safer York Partnership, and the North Yorkshire Police.

Consultation

3. The Safer York Partnership, and the North Yorkshire Police, have been consulted and asked to comment

Comments from the Director of Safer York Partnership

4. In 2003 Central Area BCU undertook a major review of policing in York and Selby. The major focus of this review was around working practices in York where policing had been based on geographical Local Area Policing (LAP) teams covering the City, North, East and Western areas of York. Teams were based as follows:

North:	Clifton Moor
City	Clifford Street
East:	Fulford Road
West	Acomb

5. These teams fulfilled a geographically based response function with some officers nominated as “Community Officers” within those teams. Whilst there were some strengths in the LAP model, the community officers were called upon regularly to fulfil general response duties. The feedback from the community through Public Attitude and other consultation processes was a frequently voiced perception that the community had lost its locally recognised “bobby”.
6. The Audit Commission Report “Open All Hours”, referred to police forces demonstrating more visibility, accessibility and familiarity within communities. North Yorkshire Police responded to this document by reviewing their structure in York and developing a model whereby a response team focused on every day reactive response to incidents, and a dedicated community team was established to provide the personal contact within communities. Because of a recognition that the police cannot resolve all community issues alone, it was decided that they should be co-located with Safer York Partnership at Clifford Street to provide them with the access to partner agencies who could assist them in their community roles. Because this effectively abstracted some 30 officers to ring-fenced community roles, the resourcing shortfall of the LAP structure was met by combining all response officers into one reactive team based at Fulford Road.
7. In addition to the above location changes, specialist support roles were placed in Clifton Moor Police Station eg. Family Protection Unit, Licensing etc. and Acomb Police Station became the Training Centre for Central Area BCU as it provided an enhanced training facility where officers could attend courses away from their base without the problem of being disrupted in courses to carry out tasks.

The Impact of Location Changes on the Community

8. With the exception of Fulford Road, the other stations (Clifton, Acomb and Clifford St) were only open to the public to visit during the day ie. 9am – 5pm. Access for the public outside those hours was dependent on an officer being in the building. So accessibility of the police stations were not consistent.
9. Although Clifton Moor, Acomb and Clifford St all changed their use from publicly accessible (albeit limited) police stations, they are all still used for police purposes with police officers both based and visiting all locations and in the case of Acomb and Clifton Moor, a regular presence of marked vehicles. The only feature that changed was that Clifton Moor and Acomb were no longer occupied by locally based reactive officers. Clifford St was slightly different as the presence of SYP enable a limited front counter service to be maintained and the community team provided police officer presence to give advice and to be seen en route from the city to their wards.

The benefits of the change in policing style

10. Whilst it was true that reactive officers would have further to travel to attend incidents in some parts of York, it was the case that there would be officers mobile in the locality who may be available to attend incidents and that there

was a dedicated Community Officer (or Ward Manager) working in their neighbourhood to engage with residents and work with partners to tackle problems. The busy wards such as Westfield, Clifton, Guildhall and Micklegate had more than one dedicated community officer and in most cases the mode of transport for these officers was cycle – thus increasing their visibility and making them more accessible to the community. In addition to the community and reactive teams, proactive strike teams were set up to run specific operations aimed at increasing performance and really targeting key offenders.

11. During the period 2003 – 2005, this model of policing was viewed by the Home Office as a positive step forward. It attracted some high profile visits from the Head of Police Standards Unit, the Home Secretary and the Permanent Secretary. The police became better engaged in partnership working and problems were resolved through multi-agency problem solving groups led by the Community officers eg. Walmgate, The Groves, Southbank, Tang Hall and Clifton. Those areas of the city saw 60% reductions in crime. These reductions were achieved through the combined efforts of proactivity from Ward Managers, supported by SYP and the strike teams.
12. In 2005 the increase in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) (meant that Clifford St could no longer house the community team and the team moved back to Fulford Road.

Neighbourhood Policing

13. Since 3rd April 2006 North Yorkshire Police has implemented Neighbourhood Policing. This has resulted in more officers being allocated geographical ownership of areas of the city.
14. Neighbourhood Policing has been easier to implement in York than elsewhere in the force because of the existing public service structure centred on wards and an opportunity to pilot the process in five wards of the city prior to it becoming a requirement for all forces to adopt.
15. Since 3rd April there have been some problems in relation to the call handling process combined with a high number of abstractions of officers and large numbers of probationer constables being allocated to York. This has resorted in some difficult resourcing issues which have affected the quality of service that the police have been able to provide to communities.
16. These problems have been recognised and steps put in place to resolve them. In addition, the police are undergoing a further review to enhance the quality of neighbourhood policing services and to ensure that community focus remains at the heart of local policing. They are currently consulting with partners on the proposed changes.

Conclusion

17. The initial change in policing style adopted in 2003 provoked some criticism from residents about the perceived closure of local police stations. This was largely resolved through the benefits demonstrated by having dedicated, ring-

fenced community officers and PCSOs supported by a 24/7 response team. Complaints and comments relating to the lack of local presence were few.

18. The recent resurgence in interest on the issue of Acomb Police station is likely to be due to the issues with neighbourhood policing outlined above.
19. The decision to close/open/relocate a police station lies with North Yorkshire Police. Safer York Partnership was involved in the review carried out in 2003 and maintained a view that the development of a dedicated co-located community team supported by a 24/7 response team and strike teams was a positive step toward improving quality of service and providing the visibility, accessibility and familiarity that the community requested through consultation.
20. The development of Neighbourhood Policing has taken the process even further forward and combined the benefits from the geographical LAP based structure with those of the dedicated community team supported by 24/7 response. The work that NYP have undertaken to address initial problems with neighbourhood policing and the proposed way forward being recommended in the current review should increase quality of service even more.
21. The ideal model in developing fully integrated neighbourhood services would be to have dedicated multi-agency teams based within neighbourhoods. These might include police officers, PCSOs, Housing and Neighbourhood officers. This is a long term aspiration. In the meantime, the changes that are taking place within neighbourhood policing should once more allay the concerns of the community regarding Acomb police station. The police are still available 24/7 and contact remains via 0845 6060247 irrespective of whether there is a police station based in the locality.

Comments from North Yorkshire Police Central Area Commander

22. Officers and PCSO's who report for duty at Fulford Road police station are briefed at the commencement of their shift, and are allocated tasked patrol activity to undertake. They then go out on patrol either in a vehicle, on a bicycle or on foot patrol. They only return to the Fulford police station when it is absolutely necessary. This ensures that available resource is spread out across the city thereby shortening response times to incidents.
23. In the future with the advent of mobile data systems the necessity to return to the police station will be further reduced and time on visible patrol will be increased.
24. In relation to Acomb police station, officers do use the station when they are working in the Acomb area. It is also used through office hours as a centrally equipped training environment enabling quality training to be delivered to Central Area staff without abstracting them to headquarters at Newby Wiske.
25. Over the coming months the residents of Acomb will begin to feel reassured by an increased visible policing presence, the expansion in the numbers of

PCSOs will further enhance our visibility across all the communities of the City of York.

26. There is a wider area of development needed across all three of the City of York Neighbourhood Policing Teams. That is to agree with partners and our customers how we will expand their ability to access our and partners services without the need to travel to either Fulford Road or Clifford Street.
27. The future of `Public Access` is one that will need careful attention and discussion in the coming months as there are a number of opportunities both through technology and through partnerships to increase the ease of access across all the communities in York.
28. The NPT Inspectors will be tasked to progress this work in partnership with our communities and partners over the coming months.
29. At this time there are no plans to re open Acomb police station as a public access point. However we will listen to our customers, work with our partners and agree the most appropriate method of meeting all needs.

Options

30. Not applicable.

Analysis

31. Not applicable.

Corporate Priorities

32. The report relates to the Corporate priority to “Reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive, and nuisance behaviour on people in York”.

Implications

33. **Financial** There are no financial implications
34. **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications
35. **Equalities** There are no equalities implications
36. **Legal** There are no legal implications
37. **Crime and Disorder** Any crime and disorder implications are contained in the consultees comments
38. **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications
39. **Property** There are no property implications
40. **Other** There are no other implications

Risk Management

41. There are no known risks.

Recommendations

42. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the petition and the comments from the Safer York Partnership and North Yorkshire Police, and advise officers of any further action they deem necessary.

Reason: To respond to the issue raised in the petition presented to Full Council.

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Report Approved Date 22/11/06

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected: *All*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: *None*

Annexes: *One – The petition*