
Shadow Executive

30th April 2008

Joint report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Chief Superintendent North Yorkshire Police (Area Commander) York Area

Safer Neighbourhoods

Summary

1. At their meeting on 2 April 2008, the Shadow Executive requested a report from the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Area Commander for North Yorkshire Police that *"...audits the implementation of the Safer Neighbourhoods agenda by North Yorkshire Police and CYC"*.
2. It was requested that *"...the report should address attendance by Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team, and relevant CYC staff at Ward Planning meetings. The report should also set out the level of support for Ward Planning meetings by the Neighbourhood Management Unit (NMU) and/or Safer York Partnership."*

Background

3. In September 2005, the Safer York Partnership (SYP) and North Yorkshire Police (NYP) piloted neighbourhood policing in five wards of the city: Micklegate, Clifton, Heworth, Woodthorpe & Dringhouses and Westfield.
4. This pilot was evaluated by the SYP and the following problems were identified with the model used:-
 - The questionnaire signposted residents to select key crime types that are being addressed through SYP task groups as priorities
 - Lack of detail on locations/victims/offenders from the consultation data that could be used for problem solving
 - Resourcing issues, ie sustaining support from within the CYC Neighbourhood Management Unit, the CYC Street Environment Service (SES), and SYP
5. In April 2006 NYP implemented neighbourhood policing across the force. Resourcing and deployment issues resulted in the conclusion that it would not be possible to develop the pilot in York beyond the original five wards.
6. In December 2006, NYP reviewed its neighbourhood policing structure in the Central Area, and fully staffed neighbourhood policing teams have been in place throughout the City of York area since January 2007.

Development of consultation and problem solving models

7. The model adopted for the pilot of neighbourhood policing was based on the 'National Reassurance Policing model' and involved a seven step process : from data analysis, through consultation and problem solving, to feedback. In order to utilise existing structures where possible, the problem solving stage of the model was conducted through the ward planning meetings, and chaired by elected members and comprised of officers from the NMU, NYP, SES, Housing estate managers and other partners where appropriate. (Ward planning team meetings, which are cross cutting department/organisational problem solving groups aimed at tackling issues in the community which cannot be solved by individuals alone, have been in place since 2003.) Discussion of neighbourhood policing issues were distinguished from the broader Ward planning agenda by calling these meetings a "Joint Action Group" (JAG). These JAG meetings were additional to the ward planning meetings, and were either scheduled as a separate meeting on a separate date, or back to back on the same date. SYP also attended early meetings in the 5 pilot wards in order to carry out an evaluation of the neighbourhood policing process.
8. As mentioned above, this JAG model proved to impact significantly on the workload and resources of those services involved in ward planning meetings. For example, there was an expectation that NMU officers would organise, attend and provide secretariat support to the JAG meetings.
9. Whilst this model did have some success in the five pilot wards, it was clear that it could not be sustained across eighteen ward areas, particularly where it could mean attendance at many more additional meetings by the officers.
10. In addition to the resourcing issue, neighbourhood policing team (NPT) inspectors raised concerns about the community consultation process and the suitability of JAGs as the mechanism to carry out intelligence led problem solving. The questionnaire based consultation was based on questions used in the British Crime survey and asked respondents to pick from a list of crime and disorder problems, to identify the issues of greatest concern in their neighbourhood. Because this list included burglary and vehicle crime, it was clear that respondents were choosing these because they assumed that they are serious and therefore issues that they would wish the police to be addressing. However, analysis of local data showed that in some of these areas, numbers of actual incidents of these crime types were low.
11. Major crime types such as vehicle crime and burglary are tackled through SYP's tactical task groups, creating potential for duplication of effort where these crimes were raised at Ward level. In addition, the use of JAG groups as problem solving groups did not address the need for flexibility of membership to include those who could best contribute.

12. Following the identification of these problems, SYP developed a revised consultation model involving specially convened Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings where an open question of “what are the problems in your neighbourhood?” could be asked of local residents from those listed, they could then vote for the three policing priorities they would like to see addressed. This model was piloted in Clifton, Haxby and Wiggington and Westfield/Woodthorpe & Dringhouses.
13. Following the PACT meetings, SYP convened a problem solving meeting to tackle the priorities identified. These meetings involved representatives of a variety of services and agencies who could assist in addressing each of the priorities.
14. Whilst this model enabled a more accurate diagnosis of neighbourhood problems, it was clear that SYP did not have the resources within its small staffing structure to support this process as a stand-alone model in each of the 18 ward areas. Neither did SYP have the capacity to co-ordinate, develop and support multi-agency problem solving meetings in each ward area.

Striking the balance between demand and resource

15. Neighbourhood policing had to be implemented in all wards of the city by April 2008. This included a model to identify policing priorities and a means of working in partnership with other agencies to resolve them. Under the National Minimum Standards, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) need to be able to demonstrate greater accountability to the community and to hold “Face the Public” sessions to provide feedback on actions taken to address crime and disorder.
16. Local Authorities are also required to demonstrate greater accountability to the community and in York we have neighbourhood action plans (NAPs) in place as a vehicle by which to engage and develop the community’s priorities. This work, undertaken by the NMU has produced NAPs for all 18 ward areas of the city. Following consultation with the community, community safety has been identified as a top priority for all but one ward.

A new model for Safer Neighbourhoods

17. The SYP, formerly situated within the Chief Executives Directorate, is now managed within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate and The Director of the SYP reports directly to the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods and Community Safety.
18. The PACT meeting model worked well as a means of understanding the true nature of neighbourhood problems. It also provided a better and welcome interface between the police and local residents and enabled SNT officers to gain better quality intelligence and detail about the community safety problems that affect quality of life for residents. However, the meetings were chaired by SYP to ensure that they were not

dominated by complaints about police performance/response and the cost of venue hire was met by SYP. This was not sustainable in the long term due to the availability/workload of staff in the SYP team.

19. Ward Committee meetings are held quarterly in each of the wards. Attendance at the meetings are affected by the type of agenda and any ward committee events/issues/speakers of interest to the community. Given that consultation for the NAPs identified community safety as a priority and attendance at PACTs was good, it is logical to assume that discussion of policing priorities could increase attendance at ward committees if they were to be used as the vehicle for identifying public priorities. As an agreed agenda item policing priorities are able to be identified and feedback given through the cycle of ward committee meetings during the year.
20. Ward committees are chaired by elected members, therefore use of these meetings for identifying policing priorities would continue to offer independency in the chairing plus this process ensures that elected members are fully engaged and informed in the prioritisation process.
21. SYP's role is to facilitate multi-agency long term problem solving to tackle crime and disorder. It has accountability at all levels from community through to the Local Strategic Partnership. SYP's strength is its ability to use intelligence led processes to target resources to areas/problems of greatest need. However, it is a small team and unable to take on the role of managing individual problem solving groups for each ward. Furthermore, CDRP partners engaged in problem solving do not have the resources to attend individual problem solving meetings in each of the 18 ward areas.
22. The initial pilot of neighbourhood policing identified flaws in the use of additional ward planning meetings convened as JAGs fulfilling the function of multi-agency problem solving meetings. The meetings already had a full agenda, always beyond the concept of the JAGs. The introduction of NAPs, and their ongoing development, provides an enhanced framework under which ward wide issues, can be covered in the ward planning meetings as they assume a performance management function in respect of the entire content of the NAPs.
23. The pilot PACTs identified some commonality within the problems identified in each of the three areas e.g. Under age alcohol consumption and graffiti. There is also commonality between the priorities identified and some work already being addressed through SYP's multi-agency task groups e.g. speeding traffic was identified in two PACTs and is being addressed through the Road Safety Task Group. Therefore, the following assumptions can be made:
 - a) There are some common themes identified across clusters of wards within the 18;

- b) Some problems identified through consultation are already being addressed through SYP task groups;
 - c) Some problems will be unique to a ward and require a specially convened meeting.
24. Policing priorities for each ward, as identified through the ward committee, are passed to SYP. SYP is then best placed to determine which of these problems are common across a number of wards; which need to be addressed through existing task groups; and which require an 'individual' approach. SYP is then in the best position to ensure that these problems are routed through one of these processes and, where necessary, a specially convened meeting is set up comprised of those partners who can actively contribute to resolving the problem. This model is represented in the flowchart at Annex One.
25. SNTs are core members of ward planning meetings and attend Ward Committees. Therefore, they are best placed to take ownership of the community safety priorities, ensuring that feedback is given as part of the NAPs monitoring process at the ward planning meetings, to the public at the ward committees and through the ward newsletters 'Your Ward'. SYP's role is to ensure problems are routed to the most appropriate problem solving group, to provide data and information to assist problem solving and to provide the accountability structure whereby partners are held to account for their contributions to problem solving. Individual roles and responsibilities are outlined in Annex Two.

Conclusions

26. Neighbourhood Action Plans are now in place for all wards of the city and provide the means by which community priorities are identified and addressed. Elected members have ownership of this process and a performance management structure is in place through the ward planning meetings. Community safety has been identified in all but one ward as a priority and the policing priorities sit within this section of the NAPs.
27. The resource levels of SYP are finite and neighbourhood policing is just one area of work that they support.
28. Using ward committees to identify community safety priorities under the overall neighbourhood management process will strengthen the role of ward committees and over time, may well help to increase attendance as the community sees these meetings as the forum in which to raise their problems.
29. SYP's role as a facilitator of partnership problem solving, places it in the best position to ensure that community safety problems are referred to the most appropriate problem solving group and its accountability structure provides the means by which partners are held to account for their part in contributing to actions to address them

30. Ward planning meetings provide the mechanism by which elected members, local authority and the police can ensure that actions are being taken to address the priorities identified in the NAPs. In order to do this their function is extended beyond the JAG concept to encompass the full range of priorities in NAPs and as such the term JAG is no longer used.

Member Approval

31. This new neighbourhood policing and community engagement model was approved by the CDRP board on 30th July 2007, and at a meeting of the Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Advisory Panel on 17th October 2007. It also formed part of an Annex, and was agreed by the Executive in a report on Safe City, on 26th February 2008.

Attendance and Support

32. Members requested that this report should set out (a) level of attendance by Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team, and relevant CYC staff at Ward Planning meetings. They also requested that report should also set out (b) the level of support for Ward Planning meetings by NMU and SYP.

(a) Level of attendance by SNT and relevant CYC staff at Ward Planning meetings

Ward Committee Meetings

33. Officers from NMU organise, attend, arrange for others to attend and facilitate all ward committee meetings. Officers from SNT also attend all ward committee meetings. Officers from SYP only attend ward committee meetings if there is a particular reason for them to do so. At the Ward Committees, the officers from the SNT update those present on current policing activity and crime levels. During these meetings the public are encouraged to discuss the current issues facing them and their communities. At the end of the meeting a set of policing priorities is arrived at, which can be tackled in a variety of ways. If it is an issue of widespread concern it may well be tackled through one of the SYP task groups. If it is a localised issue the police will seek to tackle it in the most appropriate way, and in partnership with the most appropriate agencies. Other CYC staff – Planners, Highway officers etc, will attend ward committees if they are asked to do so, or if they themselves wish to bring items/issues/information to the local community, for example, if there was a particular local concern that required their attendance to address/explore, or if they wished to seek the community's views on some local development.

Ward Planning Meetings

34. Ward Planning meetings are different from ward committee meetings. Officers from SYP would not normally attend these meetings unless there was a particular reason for them to do so. The facilitation, organisation,

and attendance at these meetings are part of the core functions of NMU officers. They are responsible for inviting other partners/officers to attend so that a multi-agency approach can be taken to any ward based issues. The NMU officers co-ordinate actions and if necessary signpost issues that may arise relating to any service/agency outside those present at the ward planning team meetings. As part of the agreed neighbourhood policing and community engagement model the local Safer Neighbourhoods Teams are required to attend. This would normally be the relevant sergeant, and their role is to provide feedback on policing activity in the ward and give progress reports on partnership problem solving that is addressing the community safety problems highlighted through community consultation. Attendance by SNT is mandatory and if the sergeant is not available, a PC, or on rare occasions, a PCSO may attend.

35. It has not been possible to obtain a record of the level of attendance by NPT at ward planning meetings. It is recognised that attendance at ward planning meetings by police staff across the City has not been consistent; some ward planning team meetings are held regularly and are well attended, others less so. Feedback suggests that this may be due to unforeseen operational circumstances as detailed in Para 36 below, and that in some cases, there may have been insufficient communication or notice provided to the NPT at short notice. If the system is to work better, then it is recommended that ward planning team meetings have a more rigid forward plan timetable, than at present, to enable partners to diary the attendance at meetings with more certainty.
36. There are occasional operational or resource demands that mean that the local NPT cannot attend ward planning meetings. Such circumstances would be a requirement to respond to an incident, high levels of absence within a particular SNT or an operational requirement that made attendance impossible by a particular SNT

(b) Level of Support for ward Planning meetings by NMU and SYP

37. Two of the core functions of the NMU are to attend, facilitate, arrange, and support ward committees, whether a traditional public meeting or an event led ward committee meeting, and similarly, they do this for ward planning meetings. As described above they are responsible for inviting other partners/officers so that a multi-agency approach can be taken to any ward based issues. NMU officers co-ordinate actions and if necessary signpost issues that may arise relating to any service/agency outside those present at the ward planning team meetings. As the attendance of the SNTs are mandatory at the ward planning meetings the NMU officers do not take the police issues away to resolve with the police. However the NMU officers do play a pivotal role in co-ordinating actions to resolve other ward issues raised. Safer York Partnership's attendance at ward planning meetings during the piloting of neighbourhood policing was in an evaluation capacity. The Director of SYP meets monthly with the SNT Inspectors to ensure the community engagement and problem solving

model is working and to feed any problems issues through the SYP accountability structure.

Crime Figures

38. The current model of neighbourhood policing and engagement, whilst not solely responsible for reductions in crime across all crime types, has supported and helped target activity. This has resulted in 1833 less victims of crime in the city over the last twelve months.

Consultation

39. This report is a joint report between the officers of the City of York Council, and the North Yorkshire Police. Consultation has taken place in order to produce this report.

Options

40. Not applicable, the report is for information only.

Analysis

41. Not applicable, the report is for information only.

Corporate Priorities

42. The actions described meet the council priority to:

Reduce the perceived impact of violent, aggressive, and nuisance behaviour on people in York.

Implications

43. None – the report is for information only.

Risk Management

44. Not applicable, the report is for information only.

Recommendations

45. Members are asked to note the report.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:
All

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Safe City Executive Report – 25/3/08

Annexes

Annex One - Community Engagement and Feedback model schematic
Annex Two – Roles and Responsibilities