

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policing Committee held in Public, Ivanhoe Inn, Carryduff, on Tuesday, 18th June 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor S Lowry (Chairperson)
Councillor P Burke
Councillor J Gallen
Councillor A Givan
Councillor B Higginson
Councillor J Lavery
Councillor A Martin
Councillor M McKeever
Mr B Corr
Mr D Cairns
Mrs Y Craig
Mr G McClory
Ms G McDonald
Ms A Playford
Mr G Walker

IN ATTENDANCE: Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Acting Member Services/PCSP Manager
PCSP Support Officer (JB)
Member Services Officers (BF)

Designated Organisations
Inspector M Rocks, PSNI

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor S Lowry, welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the format for the proceedings.

1. Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors C Kemp and T Mitchell; Mr D Drysdale, Mr N Anderson and Ms Fiona McKibben (PBNI); together with District Commander K Moore (PSNI) and Chief Inspector K McMullan (PSNI).

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. 12-Month Report on Policing in the Lisburn and Castlereagh District

In the absence of the District Commander and the Chief Inspector for the district, Commander M Rocks presented the 12-month report.

During the reporting period, incidents of burglary (including robberies) had increased by 24.7%, which equated to 41 additional cases when compared to the same period in 2022/23. The Commander reported that the prevention of burglary and so-called 'cold calling' remained a priority for the PSNI and there were 18 'No Cold Calling' zones across the district, together with 118 neighbourhood watch schemes, encompassing 12,500 homes.

Regarding incidents of domestic abuse, there had been a reduction in reported incidents by 156. However, the PSNI remained mindful that there was a level of under-reporting and steps were being taken to build further trust and confidence within the community to encourage individuals to report incidents to the police.

The Commander advised that there had been an additional 13 hate crimes reported relating specifically to race. Whilst the overall figure for hate crime had remained static, there had been a reduction in the number of sectarian attacks recorded.

In respect of antisocial behaviour, there had been 3018 reports made in this regard to the PSNI. This figure represented a 3.0% in comparison to the previous reporting year, or 87 additional reports of ASB. The Commander indicated that both local policing teams and neighbourhood policing teams continued to actively patrol hotspot areas, which included vehicle patrols, high-visibility foot and bicycle patrols. The PSNI, she added, continued to address antisocial behaviour through partnership working and engagement with young people.

Across the district, there had been an decrease in 21 in the number of arrests made for drug possession, whilst drug seizures had fallen by 132 to 635, when compared to the previous year. Drug disposal bins were located across the district and any drugs recovered were documented and destroyed. The PSNI sought also to increase engagement and awareness of the dangers of drugs with young people and officers had partaken in several outreach events throughout the year.

The Chairperson thanked the Commander for her presentation and invited members of the public and the Partnership to pose questions regarding the report.

Questions from the Floor

Concerning the increase in burglaries, she emphasised that many of such cases were opportunistic in nature and vigilance and home safety was key in the PSNI's crime prevention message. Regarding a query on the rise in theft and burglary, the Commander indicated that there was no discernible trend had been identified.

The PCSP Support Officer outlined the work which was undertaken on behalf of the Partnership through the Home Security Scheme, in respect of which, 28 outreach events had been delivered in partnership with the PSNI throughout the previous year.

In response to a further query regarding shoplifting, the Commander indicated that rising cost-of-living was a contributory factor. She added that the level of detections at self-scanning tills had increased and this had contributed to the overall reported figure.

The Commander outlined the work which the PSNI undertook with Royal Mail and other couriers in identifying the movement of drugs. She indicated that the positive working relationship with Royal Mail had resulted in several drug seizures, whilst work with other couriers was ongoing to enhance detections rates.

In response to further questions, the Partnership was provided with an overview of the work undertaken in partnership to address vandalism and engage with young people across the district, particularly at Hilden Mill where a number of incidents had occurred.

Discussion ensued in respect of the levels of hate crime across the district, particularly with regard to the LGBTQ+ community. It was noted that Feile Lisburn would be hosting an event on 31 July at Lagan Valley Island, at which it was anticipated that the PSNI and the PCSP would be attending.

In response to a further question, the Commander undertook to provide, within future reports, outcomes-based statistics in relation to reported hate crimes. It was emphasised that under-reporting remained an issue and it was important that links between marginalised groups and the PSNI needed to be strengthened to enhance confidence.

It was noted that the Partnership would host a hate crime themed meeting in public on 15 October in St Patrick's Parish Centre in Lisburn.

Further queries were answered in relation to the under-reporting of incidents of domestic abuse and the processes followed in addressing complaints received and the procedures for referring victims onwards to other agencies.

Conclusion of the Meeting

Several Members of the Partnership paid tribute to the work of individual officers within the district and to the commander for the detail outlined within the report.

It was noted that the PCSP and the PSNI would be overseeing an agricultural vehicle marking event within the grounds of the Free Presbyterian Church on the Killynure Road in the coming weeks.

Members paid tribute to the PCSP Support Officer for overseeing the Text Alert System and gave examples of how it had been used across communities as an effective tool to raise awareness.

The Chairperson thanked those present for attending and commended the PSNI on the report for the 2023/24 reporting year.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8:00pm.

Chairperson