

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2)- 04- 07(p.4)

Date: Wednesday 7 March 2007

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: The Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Neighbourhood Policing - Policing the Future

Background

The 2004 to 2008 Home Office Strategic Plan and the White Paper – Building Communities, Beating Crime set out a vision for policing which was both accessible and responsive to citizens' needs. This vision was based upon the concept of Citizen Focused Policing. Citizen Focus was developed as an outward looking philosophy, which involved the defining and keeping of promises made to the public, and then measuring responsiveness through a new Quality of Service Commitment.

The broad outcomes of Citizen Focus Policing were identified as being the need to:

Improve the experience of policing for those who come into contact with the police, including victims and witnesses

Engage effectively with the public

Giving the public a say on how they are policed and establishing a statutory minimum requirement for what information each household can expect to receive

Creating organisational and cultural change to bring about increasingly responsive services where feedback from frontline staff and the public is used continuously to improve them

Neighbourhood Policing was developed as a key component of a Police Reform Programme which focused firmly upon the needs of the citizen. In essence, neighbourhood policing was developed as a delivery mechanism to achieve the broad aspirations of citizen focused policing. At the same time that this new policing vision was being developed the Public Service Agreements for the Home Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Department of Constitutional Affairs and Crown Prosecution Service all reflected a new commitment to neighbourhoods.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) give a widespread commitment to fully embrace citizen focused policing and to develop neighbourhood policing nationally. A common intent existed to produce national guidance to underpin an approach to neighbourhood policing across the Police Service. A national Neighbourhood Policing Programme led by ACPO was set up to oversee it's

development and implementation, with all police forces in England and Wales being actively involved in the programme.

The Government set clear targets for the police, that:

by 2008, every area in England and Wales will have a dedicated neighbourhood policing team;

and before then, by April 2007, every community in England and Wales will see increased patrolling, better local information and a greater focus on confidence and reassurance.

an additional focus of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme is to bring together the police, local service providers and the public to provide an effective problem solving approach in response to neighbourhood concerns.

All four of the forces in Wales have invested heavily in the development of Neighbourhood Policing and all are set to achieve these targets ahead of schedule. Indeed, the forces have collaborated in the development of the programme ensuring that best practice has been shared for the benefit of all communities throughout Wales.

Trends in policing over the last 10 years

Underpinning the need to develop a new citizen focused approach to service delivery are the trends in policing that have developed over the last 10 years:

Crime has fallen consistently.....but many members of the public actually believe that crime is increasing

The police service has detected more crime and helped to bring more offenders to justice.....but public feelings of safety and security in some areas have declined

Call handling and response capability has improved.....but people sometimes seemed less satisfied with the policing service they receive

The police service has improved it`s efficiency and effectiveness, and all forces in England and Wales have worked in partnership to improve people`s quality of life.....but until recently those people who had contact with the service were less likely to have confidence in the police than those who had not had contact.

In simple terms, despite significant progress there was still a "service gap". There were a number of possible reasons for this service gap:

As a consequence of the policies of successive governments, police forces had often been too focused on quantitative performance at the expense of the quality of the service that was provided

They had often focused upon targets set in respect of response at the expense of being visible, familiar and accessible in communities

Together with partners they had not always paid enough attention to quality of life issues like anti-social behaviour, low level disorder and environmental matters

They had not always provided people with the reassurance they needed to live their lives free from the fear of crime

The public's service expectations have been shaped by their expectations in other sectors

The Service had not always been responsive enough to public expectation which sometimes created the impression that the police didn't care

The acknowledgement of this "service gap" led to further research which clearly identified the areas in which the police had to improve its service delivery in order to meet rising public expectations. The public demanded improved performance from the police in the following key areas:- safety and security; reassurance; accessibility; responsiveness; visibility; familiarity; fairness and equality, and quality of service.

A New Policing Agenda

So it was to meet increasing public expectation that this new policing agenda was developed. The aim of the police service in developing this new agenda is to:

Deliver a citizen focused service based on quality and value for money

Introduce neighbourhood policing in every community by 2008

Create a more modern, more diverse and more professional workforce

To improve protective services

Citizen Focused Policing is not a new area of work or a project – it is the policing philosophy which underpins the type of policing that is now being developed and delivered. It has to be a golden thread that runs through everything that the police do and the way that they do it. It applies equally to internal service delivery as it does to external public service. It is an approach to policing which reflects the needs and expectations of individuals and communities in decision making, service delivery and practice. It's aim is to improve public confidence, feelings of security, satisfaction of service users and importantly, to increase public involvement in policing.

So What is Neighbourhood Policing?

Neighbourhood Policing is one of the methods by which the Citizen Focused Policing philosophy

will be delivered. It is a "new" way of doing business – it is traditional policing, but with a modern edge. It is about putting the police back into the heart of communities. It is:

1. An organisational strategy that allows the police, its partners and the public to work closely together to solve the problems of crime and disorder, improve neighbourhood conditions and feelings of security.
2. Managed within mainstream policing activity, integrated with other policing services.
3. Requires evidence based deployment of neighbourhood teams against identified need. The right people in the right place at the right time to create neighbourhoods which are and feel safe.
4. Establishes dedicated identifiable, accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing teams which provide all citizens with a named point of access.
5. Reflects local conditions and is flexible and adaptive.
6. Allows the Police Service to work directly with local people to identify problems that are most important to them, thereby giving people direct influence over local policing priorities.
7. Establishes a regime for engaging other agencies and the public in problem solving mechanisms.
8. Uses the National Intelligence Model (NIM) as the basis for deployment.
9. Requires an effective engagement, communication and feedback strategy, and a clear explanation of where accountability lies.
10. Is subjected to rigorous performance management including clear performance monitoring against a local plan and commitments made to neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood teams aim to provide communities with:

Access – to policing or community safety services through a named point of contact

Influence – over community safety priorities in their neighbourhood

Interventions – joint action with communities and partners to solve problems

Answers – sustainable solutions to problems and feedback on results

This model is at the heart of neighbourhood policing and has been designed to ensure that members of Neighbourhood Teams remain in them long enough to develop an in-depth understanding of local issues, and establish relationships of mutual trust and respect with communities. Such positive working relationships will provide the basis for effective engagement with communities, to identify

and agree with local people the most important concerns and priorities for action; and importantly, to engage them in tackling neighbourhood priorities and feeding back the results of joint problem-solving.

Effective community engagement is crucial to the successful delivery of Neighbourhood Policing. This begins at an early stage of the decision-making process, is tailored to local circumstances, and continues throughout the delivery process. Whilst appropriately tailored engagement with communities is central to Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Teams will also want to tailor their engagement strategies to complement and support those of their local community safety and criminal justice partners.

In general, police and partners engaging successfully with communities will:

Have a detailed, neighbourhood level understanding of the demographics of the area they serve

Have a detailed and regularly updated picture of the interests, needs, priorities and preferences of communities in their area

Adopt an approach to engagement that reflects an understanding of how different communities feel most comfortable in interacting with the police and community safety partners

Have an ongoing and consistent dialogue with all sections of communities (including the hard-to-reach/hard-to-hear), listening, acting and reporting back on actions taken

Allow priorities and service delivery strategies to be driven by concerns and priorities determined by local communities

Deliver services in partnership with the community, both groups and individuals

To achieve such effective community engagement the development of successful working partnerships at the neighbourhood level are crucial. Neighbourhood Management provided by local authorities can help residents and service providers (including the police) to work together to improve and join up services, ensuring residents' concerns about what should be done are placed at the centre of delivering better outcomes. Key features of successful neighbourhood management include a clearly defined neighbourhood; community involvement so improvements are customer-led; a local partnership to provide strategic direction and focus, ideally bringing together residents, councilors and service providers; support and commitment from the local authority; commitment of service providers to, and mechanisms for, engagement between services and residents.

Who is in a Neighbourhood Policing Team ?

Neighbourhood policing is being delivered by mixed policing teams. Each team is dedicated to a locally-agreed geographic area, with the aim of being visible, accessible, familiar, engaged and accountable. Ideally, the teams will be made up of police and partner resources. A neighbourhood team will typically be made up of:

- Uniformed police officers - who will lead the teams, acting as community leaders and tackling crimes which require the full range of police officer powers. A team will usually be made up of Police Constables led by a Police Sergeant and a Police Inspector.
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) - uniformed members of the police team who provide a high-visibility, reassuring presence in communities and provide follow-up to victims of crime. By focusing on low-level crime and anti-social behaviour, they are improving people's quality of life. They can be designated with a range of powers by their Chief Constable (like issuing Fixed Penalty Notices or confiscating alcohol) which can have an immediate impact on dealing with problems of nuisance behaviour and disorder. The Government is currently legislating for a set of standard powers for all PCSOs, though a small number of powers will remain at the discretion of the Chief Officer.
- Special Constables – these officers are volunteers with full police powers. They play an important role in tackling crime and providing a visible, reassuring presence in communities.
- Partner Organisations – partners on the team will typically include local ward councillors, wardens, neighbourhood managers, housing managers, youth workers, private security companies, Neighbourhood Watch groups and other community and voluntary organisations. They may also include those who are accredited under Community Safety Accreditation Schemes which allow individuals involved in a community safety role to be given a limited number of enforcement powers.

What is a Neighbourhood?

Clearly, a 'neighbourhood' to an inner-city resident is very different from someone living in a rural area. For the former, their neighbourhood could be a few streets or the estate where they live; for the person in the country, it could be their village, or group of villages or parish. Local communities, police forces, police authorities and partners decide what neighbourhoods mean - typically, they cover cover one or two local authority wards.

Similarly the size of teams will vary according to local decision – in effect, deploying the right people in the right places, to have the capacity to really make a difference. Whatever the locally decided composition of the teams, their members will be clearly identified with phone and e-mail contacts widely publicised, including through the force website.

Each force will use their own methods, in consultation with partners to decide the manner in which their neighbourhood structures are identified. By way of example, the Gwent Police area covers 5 Unitary Authorities, which in turn are policed by 3 Basic Command Units. Within these Command units are 22 Sections, each led by a Police Inspector. The force has a total of 134 wards which have been grouped into 96 Neighbourhoods for the purposes of delivering Neighbourhood Policing.

A significant number of resources have been dedicated to Neighbourhood Policing in all four Welsh Police Forces. Again, by way of example, in Gwent, they comprise:

Ward Based Neighbourhood constables

Team Based Neighbourhood Sergeants

Community Support Officers

Special Constables

Partnerships Resources

Volunteers

511 Total Neighbourhood Resources

Early Signs of Success

All of the Police Forces in Wales are fully committed to this new approach to delivering policing services, and each are well on the way to embedding Neighbourhood Policing Teams within all of their communities. This is well in advance of the Government's target date of April 2008. Early signs of success to date right across Wales include positive media publicity, significant buy in from partners, early signs of increasing public satisfaction and confidence, growing buy in from staff – particularly neighbourhood officers, enthusiastic response from MP's, AM's and local politicians, and improving performance across all areas of activity.

Future Steps

Whilst considerable progress has been made right across the Police Forces in Wales over the past 2 years, the journey is only just beginning. The challenge now, against a backdrop of inadequate financial settlements, increasing service pressures, the need for continual efficiencies is to ensure that we all develop the Neighbourhood Policing Model further and ensure that it is fully implemented for the benefit of all communities. Specific steps include the need to:

Implement a public engagement model in every ward

Continue to develop supporting systems and processes (especially call handling, resource management, performance measures)

Introduce technology to support Neighbourhood Policing

Increase the level of resources (focusing on growth in PCSO's, Special Constables and volunteers)

Ensure that they remainder of the organization is behind the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing

Neighbourhood Policing and the Making the Connections Agenda

Through the "Making the Connections" Action Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government has set out a distinctive approach to public service reform. Placing the citizen centre stage is the main driver for public service reform in Wales. The intention is that this driver will work by giving people a greater voice in the design, management and delivery of public services; and a platform from which they can challenge service delivery when it is not good enough. This commitment to improve the quality of public services delivered to the people of Wales is right at the heart of the police service vision to improve its` service delivery through citizen focus. Whilst policing is not a devolved public service all four forces are committed to working effectively in collaboration with the Assembly and partners throughout the public sector in Wales. Neighbourhood Policing has a major contribution to make in improving the quality of public service delivery throughout the country.

For further information please contact:

Superintendent Carl Close

Police Liaison Officer

Welsh Assembly Government

Tel: 02920 801016

E-mail: carl.close@wales.gsi.gov.uk