

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE**

### **CRIME REDUCTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

#### **Purpose**

1. At the meeting on the 21 November the Committee requested regular reports on crime reduction initiatives and their links to the wider social inclusion agenda.

#### **Summary**

2. This paper provides an outline of current crime reduction interventions in Wales and highlights links to social inclusion.

#### **Timing**

3. This is the first in a series of papers which, it is proposed, will be presented to the Committee at six monthly intervals.

#### **Background**

##### Crime Reduction

4. The currently recognised term 'community safety' did not exist fifteen years ago. Before then there was 'crime prevention' which focused on reducing opportunities to commit crime through fortifying property. Even 'crime prevention' as a concept only became established through research in the 1980s. Previously it had been assumed that the full force of the criminal justice system would deter potential criminals but it became apparent that during the 1960s and 1970s law enforcement agencies were having a negligible impact on rising crime levels.

5. Only more recently has there been a significant shift towards strategies which recognised crime as the product of social conditions. The post war growth in recorded crime and successive British Crime Surveys have highlighted the extent of unrecorded crime, the fear of crime and multiple victimisation. This prompted national crime reduction campaigns such as the Safer Cities programme and localised crime prevention activities.

6. Over time then a more community based, multi-agency, preventative approach has evolved which recognises the need for a far wider range of participants than just criminal justice professionals; and community safety has become established as a major, cross cutting social theme. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 formalised local authority engagement in this field and also called upon health authorities, the Probation Service and others to create active partnerships with the police.

### Crime and Social Exclusion

7. The consideration of crime and disorder and community safety must be central to any discussion of social exclusion. Social exclusion can be a key driver for higher crime and fear of crime. People living in areas where unemployment is high, where accommodation is of poor quality and without access to adequate health care, education and training prospects may be more likely to resort to criminality. Children who regularly truant from school or are excluded are at risk of developing offending behaviour, whilst the links between substance misuse and crime and disorder are self-evident. Individuals' chances of reaching their full potential, developing into fully rounded citizens and staying on the right side of the law are greatly enhanced if they live in communities where opportunities for education, training and employment are present and where they have access to good quality housing, local facilities and health care.

### Crime Reduction Programme

8. The Crime Reduction Programme (1999 – 2002) funded by the Home Office represented the most substantial investment ever in crime reduction. It saw almost £19 million in funding coming to Wales for a range of initiatives, several of which were complementary to the social inclusion agenda. Annex 1 provides background information on each of the initiatives funded in Wales and gives examples of projects which aim to tackle social exclusion.

9. The Safer Communities Initiative has now replaced the Crime Reduction Programme from 1 April 2002. For the current financial year Welsh Partnerships will receive £1.114 million to begin to implement local strategies aimed at tackling a range of crimes. Amongst other things, the initiative will tackle repeat victimisation, persistent offending, anti-social behaviour and youth inclusion. In subsequent years funding is expected to rise.

10. In addition to the Safer Communities funding, partnerships are receiving resources for Communities Against Drugs schemes £2.7 million was made available for Wales in 2000 – 02 for schemes which tackle drug related crime or disrupt drug markets; The scheme will continue for the next two years and it is expected that at least £2.7 million will be available for Wales in 2002-03.

## Communities First

11. Communities First is a community driven approach to community regeneration. It covers the 100 most deprived communities in Wales as identified (at electoral division level) in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. A further 32 smaller communities (pockets of deprivation at sub electoral division level) and 10 communities of interest or otherwise imaginative proposals are eligible for support under the programme.

The Community Purposes budget was allocated for the period £64.92m from 2001-02 to 2003-04. In line with the principles of the programme, Communities First funding should be used as a catalyst for drawing in other funding sources. The Community Action Plan should therefore bring together other sources of funding to support the community vision.

12. It is anticipated that 132 Partnerships will be established. So far, 36 have either been formed, or are nearly formed with only one having submitted its Community Action Plan. Partnerships are to be constituted on the "three-thirds" principle i.e. one third statutory sector, one third community and one third voluntary and business.

13. Reducing the levels of crime and and fear of crime are central to the success of the Communities First programme. In recognition of this the Community Vision Framework, as detailed in the Communities First Guidance (issued in September 2001), sets out the 6 key themes that should be addressed when a Communities First Partnership is developing its Community Action Plan to regenerate the community. One of the key themes that Partnerships should address is "Community Safety".

14. There are a number issues that need to be tackled to improve the levels of Community Safety and we would expect Partnerships to concentrate on these issues when developing their Community Action Plans. For example, we would expect to see that Partnerships ensure that the Police and other criminal justice agencies, such as Crime Reduction Partnerships, are fully involved in Community Action Planning. Also, we want Partnerships to focus on how they can get their area free of fear of crime and disorder and on how effective Policing can be put in place. Another issue that may feature in a community's Action Plan could be the prevention of substance misuse and offending which will have implications for Community Safety. Partnerships are also encouraged to ensure that "Safety by Design" issues are addressed and that road safety and traffic control strategies are developed and implemented in partnership with the community.

15. Central to the success of the programme is the empowerment of local people and effective working between the community, statutory and business/voluntary sectors. The input, and experience, of the Police, Crime Reduction Partnerships and other agencies is of utmost importance. The Assembly Government's Communities Directorate has a Police Officer currently working with them on secondment who will act as a liaison point for the Police and

Communities First.

16. Communities Directorate are meeting with police representatives to stimulate their engagement in the programme and in order to facilitate this process a senior police secondee has been allocated to the Directorate.

### **Action for the Committee**

17. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this paper and to use it as a focus for discussion. Contact Point

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