

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 10 May 2010 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 3.35 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik (Saj)
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Alan Thompson
Councillor Carol Viney (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor A.M. Lovatt
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat
Councillor Kieron Mallon

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor (for Agenda Item)

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting

Part of meeting

Agenda Item Officer Attending

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

51/10 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE CURRENT COUNCIL YEAR
(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Lawrie Stratford was elected to Chairman for the current Council year.

52/10 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN FOR THE CURRENT COUNCIL YEAR
(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Carol Viney was elected to Deputy Chairman for the current Council year.

53/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 3)

Councillor Sandy Lovatt attended in place of Councillor Stewart Lilly.

54/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE
(Agenda No. 4)

Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat declared two personal interests at Agenda Item 4:

- in relation to Agenda Item 11 on the grounds that she sits on the Committee for Banbury Library and the Mill Arts Centre;
- in relation to Agenda Item 7 on the grounds that she is a Thames Valley Police Authority Member until 27 May 2010.

Councillor Patrick Greene declared a personal interest at Agenda Item 4 in relation to Agenda Item 7 on the grounds that he sits on the Local Area Policing Board.

Councillor Susanna Pressel declared a personal interest at Agenda Item 4 in relation to Agenda Item 7 on the grounds that she sits on the Local Area Policing Board.

55/10 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 5)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2010 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising

Minute 44/10 – Cogges Manor Farm Museum – Review of Progress Towards Trust Status – the Committee noted that the Trust had now been set up and that it would receive an update at its July meeting.

56/10 THAMES VALLEY POLICE DELIVERY PLAN 2010/11: PRESENTATION AND Q&A
(Agenda No. 7)

Published by Thames Valley Police Authority (TVPA) and Thames Valley Police (TVP), the Delivery Plan 2010 - 2011 (SSC7) outlines the vision for the Force in the current year. This would be supported by the third year of the Strategic Plan 2008-2011 which was due to be published in June. The Delivery Plan outlines the seven strategic objectives, as well as the actions to be undertaken in the coming year to

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achieve these objectives, and the targets against which performance will be measured.

Chief Constable Sara Thornton QPM, Chief Superintendent Brendan O'Dowda and Inspector Andy Talbot (Development and Change Manager) attended for this item in order to answer the Committee's questions.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation on the Strategy for Policing in the Thames Valley 2010 – 11, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes.

All areas within the strategic plan were covered, including performance in priority crime and other measures such as confidence and satisfaction. The presentation also highlighted key processes that were underway to improve performance and productivity.

Key points from the presentation are listed below:

- the first four priorities were about operational policing and priorities 5 – 7 were about operational support work;
- key themes in the Plan were public confidence in neighbourhood policing, reducing crime and disorder, protective services and use of resources.

Public Confidence

In terms of public confidence, the last government had set this objective (NI 21 - The police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area). This relied on joint work between the police and the local authority, both county and district.

- *Home Office Public Confidence Target: 59.2% by 2012*

Thames Valley Police had been above the trajectory set by the government until it had received the data from the government for the last quarter which had caused it to dip down. However, the British Crime Survey (BCS) sample had only used a random sample of 250 people.

- *TVPA public confidence target: 68% by 2011*

The Police Authority had also asked this question by telephone survey and had used a much larger sample size, which had given a more positive result and had enabled officers to drill down to county and district level. Their results had not shown a dip in the last quarter and therefore it was possible that the BCS data had been rogue data.

- *Place Survey*

The Place Survey (how the Council measures NI21) had given a different set of results.

- *Public Perceptions of the Police*

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TVP was doing a lot of good work on public confidence, for example, through the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and through county wide work.

However, there was still a massive communication challenge as the public still did not appear to know what the police were doing. In response to the question 'How informed, if at all, do you feel about the service provided by your local area?' the local police has received the lowest score in terms of 'informed' and the highest score in terms of 'not informed'.

However, the Policing Pledge would help with this and pledged:

- a stronger voice for the public in how the Thames Valley is policed;
- a minimum standard of service to the public;
- information on how the public can help the police keep communities safe.

Pledge commitments for 'A stronger voice for the public' are given below:

- better information about neighbourhood officers and how to contact them;
- responding to messages directed to neighbourhood teams within 24 hours;
- higher visibility patrols and neighbourhood teams;
- minimising staff turnover in neighbourhood teams;
- monthly updates on police and partner activity including crime maps and offenders brought to justice;
- public meetings held at last once a month ("Have Your Say"). These provided a large amount of information on what neighbourhood officers do and how to get hold of them.

A considerable amount of work had been undertaken to improve the Thames Valley Police Website. For example, any member of the public could enter their postcode to bring up the relevant neighbourhood pages which showed local crime maps and statistics, as well as details of the local Neighbourhood Officers and what issues the police were prioritising in that area.

There were a range of pledge commitments in relation to 'A minimum standard of service to the public' largely around response times to 999 calls and in person (Refer presentation). Performance in relation to the % of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds and non 999 calls answered within 40 seconds was very high and 84.3% of people had been satisfied with overall performance.

Crime

The two main targets set by TVPA last year were:

- **Crime Reduction: Serious Acquisitive Crime**

(To reduce the level of Serious Acquisitive Crime (domestic burglary, theft of a vehicle, theft from a vehicle and robbery (personal and business) in the Thames Valley).

Both types of vehicle crime had fallen significantly but burglary had only decreased by 2.2%.

- **Crime Reduction: Assault with Less Serious Injury (non-domestic)**

(Assault resulting in actual bodily harm, excluding domestic abuse cases).

There had been reductions across the board and large reductions in the Vale of White Horse.

Police Authority Targets

13/16 had been exceeded. 3 had not been met, but only by a small margin.

Recruitment

It was very important to change the ethnic profile of Thames Valley Police. It needed to recruit more police from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. TVP now had over 10% BME officers but was slightly under target for police staff and PCSOs.

Finances

- TVP's budget was £378m for this financial year.
- The current 3 year forecast assumed a 0.7% increase in government grant in 2011/12 and 2012/13.
- A considerable amount of work had been undertaken to generate efficiency savings and £35m savings had been generated over the past three years. Officers had looked at all of their contracts and had ensured that they had brought down management and support costs.
- No one knew what the police's future financial position was going to be.
- The Police Authority had agreed to fund 37 additional police officers and this money had been obtained by cutting back office costs.

Staffing

TVP had 4,227 police officers and 502 PCSOs as at the end of March 2010 and was probably the largest that it was ever going to be.

Following the presentation, the Committee conducted a question and answer session.

A selection of the Committee's questions, together with the responses, is given below:

- **There were three different surveys for public confidence with three different results. Why didn't the police combine these surveys so that one pot of money was used to fund the surveys?**

This would make sense if it was possible to do so but the three surveys were undertaken by three different organisations: the BCS by the Home Office (which the Force was not happy with due to the five month time lag in receiving the data and the fact that the sample size was at Force not district or county level) and the Place Survey was generated by Communities and Local Government (CLG). Including TVP's survey, they were three different constituents with different requirements.

- **With regard to increasing the number of staff recruited from black and minority ethnic communities, how was the Force doing this and what worked best?**

Three or four things had been done. There had been a thoughtful advertising campaign to target recruits from the BME community. The advice had been to target areas where potential BME recruits were working, living and studying, and to say "We are looking for new recruits", rather than saying "we want BME officers". When applicants from BME communities expressed an interest in joining and TVP was not currently recruiting, it noted their interest and passed their details to a recruitment network who would then liaise with them and let them know when TVP would be recruiting. The Chief Constable also chaired a BME board meeting which looked at vetting procedures and unequal attrition. For example, the board had looked at the standards for presentation and spelling which were too stringent and were not letting through good applicants and had therefore relaxed the rules. The board had looked very hard at every stage of the recruitment and promotion process to ensure that it was leading to fair outcomes.

- **How many applicants overall (not just from the BME community) did TVP actually recruit after their initial approach?**

In terms of police officer recruitment TVP does not recruit continuously throughout the year. It opens up recruitment for a brief period of time to gather in all of the applications in and process them. Last year all of the application packs were given out at events, which tested applicants' commitment. TVP was currently processing the applications, which was a time consuming

process. They were planning on recruiting just under 300 people and had no problem recruiting people. There was the fear that good people might go off and do something else but it was also notable that many officers were not retiring due to the recession.

- **What about retention? Did police officers “go South”?**

Retention had improved. Two of the reasons for losing police officers were retirement and officers moving back North or West due to the cost of housing. Loss of officers to the Metropolitan Police Force (Met) had reduced considerably. Thames Valley Police had lost 18 officers to the Met last March whereas it had lost 78 officers two years ago. When times were tough people tended to stay put.

- **How many police officers did TVP recruit from PCSOs?**

The Chief Superintendent undertook to circulate information on the number of PCSOs who had become police officers from 2006/07 - 2009/10 to all members of the Committee.

The Chief Constable stated that although movement from PCSOs to police officers did mean loss of PCSOs, overall it was a positive trend as they were already familiar with the Force and made very good recruits. However, not everyone that joined as a PCSO wanted to become a police officer and this was also good.

- **In terms of antisocial behaviour such as graffiti or dog fouling, was it possible to have more overlap between police officers, PCSOs and local councils?**

PCSOs had a role to play in terms of graffiti and dog fouling as did local authority Street Wardens. It was a partnership activity.

- **What could be done about parking in cycle lanes and motorists using their mobile phones?**

In terms of traffic issues the Safer Roads Partnership was very successful. There had been a huge decrease in the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads in the Thames Valley (under 90 last year). Some of the reduction was down to excellent medical care and some was due to targeted intelligence work by the police and the local authority. In terms of mobile phone usage 8, 270 cautions had been given. Education was very important.

- **What could be done about people who broke the 20 and 30 mph speed limits?**

In terms of concerns about transgressing the 20mph speed limit it was best to speak to the Neighbourhood Team about any concerns, who could then refer it to the Roads Policing Team (RPT). The RPT would then carry out a survey to see if there was a problem or if it was a perception issue. If the survey showed

that there was not a problem then options included using the Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) or conducting other partnership work.

In terms of the 30 mph speed limit the solution was “engineering, education and enforcement”. The message nationally was that the focus in the first instance should be making it very clear to people what the speed limit was. Engineering solutions were not cheap and neither was enforcement.

Members of the Committee were asked to forward any concerns to their local police commander or to the Chief Superintendent.

- **What should the public do if they wanted to bring speeding to the attention of the police?**

The public could raise their concerns at “Have Your Say” meetings, at a NAG or through a local Councillor. TVP would then arrange for a survey to be undertaken by a specialist. There were 22 Neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire, 13 of which had speeding as one of their top priorities. Ad hoc reporting was not ignored but proper problem solving was important in order to ascertain whether it was a matter of perception or a real problem. Raising the issue through a local Councillor would help to reduce pressure on the police switchboard.

- **Were officers aware of traffic noise generated by motorcycles on the A4704 and what could be done about this? The view of the local community was that the police did not stop them even if they were speeding.**

The Chief Superintendent stated that he was aware of this particular problem and that the police did have the authority to stop noisy motorcyclists. A number of them congregated on the roundabout by Berinsfield. It was a NAG priority and they had been working with the motorcyclists. It was not solely an enforcement issue although they had done some enforcement.

- **What could be done about the low rate of prosecutions by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which angered many members of the public as in their view criminals were not being brought to justice?**

TVP worked very closely in partnership with the CPS and its relationship with them was better than it had ever been. There were inherent tensions, as the police wanted as many perpetrators to be charged as possible whereas the CPS’s target was to reduce the number of cases that started and didn’t get through. Five or six years ago the rules had changed and the CPS now charged people, not the police. Some charging decisions were now dealt with over the phone by the CPS. The Conservative Party Manifesto talked about returning charging to the police. A pilot had started in Oxfordshire in mid April for less serious offences (eg low level criminal damage) and the charging decision would be given to the Sergeant. The pilot seemed to be going very well. The Chief Superintendent stated that he chaired a meeting which problem solved these types of issues such as charging decisions and involved

partners such as the CPS, the youth service and the probation service. It was also notable that the courts in Oxfordshire were the best in terms of performance in comparison with the rest of the Thames Valley.

- **Why couldn't automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) be used to track down illegal drivers?**

There were mobile ANPR devices and most of the roads policing vehicles had ANPR fitted in them. Mobile devices could be used for prosecutions. TVP had invested significantly in fixed sites in conjunction with its partners over the years. These sites gave TVP a rich source of information but the number of vehicles captured meant that the police had to prioritise. TVP now had a small unit who were prioritising hits on the cameras 24 hours a day and some of those markers were for very serious offences such as hit and runs where culprits had been identified. There would never be the resources to check all of the data as the volume of data was too great. There were hundreds of thousands of reads on the cameras per week.

- **There were problems with funding from central government for all councils at all tiers, who would be looking to focus on their statutory duties and make efficiencies elsewhere. If part funding for PCSOs stopped as a result (eg from District Councils) how would this affect recruitment and retention of PCSOs across the piece?**

TVP had 508 PCSOs at present whereas it could have 530. The money that came for PCSOs from the government had been ring fenced and could not be spent elsewhere. However, the future funding situation was very uncertain. Whatever happened to the ring fenced funding, if the police was to make Neighbourhood Policing work then it must have a mix of PCSOs and other officers. In the Chief Constable's view Neighbourhood Policing would not work without PCSOs.

- **What measures would TVP be taking to address the deficit it would be facing?**

In terms of the productivity strategy for the next three years, TVP was looking at five areas where efficiencies could be made. One example of this was further collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary on joining up more operational functions, such as all of the specialist staff who were expensive to train and used expensive equipment (eg firearms officers, roads policing officers, dog handlers). This was not without difficulty, but increased collaboration was the way to protect front line services.

In terms of the local policing model TVP had a 2 tier structure and needed to look at its structure in order to de-layer and focus on service delivery. Although it was important to have proper partnerships at county level it was not essential to have a command layer at county level and this was being consulted on at present.

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The Force used Zero based budgeting on the principle of “look at what you need and take off 10%”.

TVP had rationalised some of its call handling. A lot of the tertiary call handling was done at a local level and would be amalgamated in order to reduce the number of posts required.

TVP was also in a consortium for its transport costs but this was still a large cost as police officers did need to be mobile.

TVP had also clamped down on mileage claims, which was better than cutting posts.

The Audit Commission had given TVP a very good rating in terms of value for money in comparison with other forces.

- **Could efficiency savings be put to front line services?**

There was still uncertainty regarding future funding. The productivity strategy was about trying to think of every way that costs could be taken out of the organisation without affecting frontline services.

Frontline services covered those people directly offering services to the public, for example, Neighbourhood Teams, response officers and detectives.

Neighbourhood Policing was not a luxury and the public really valued that responsiveness. PCSOs had been given crime prevention training, had been trained in problem solving and could deal with criminal damage and certain thefts. The key message for the Neighbourhood Teams was for them to really understand their communities and to go into venues such as youth clubs and old people's homes. The public were saying that PCSOs had been very effective and were Oxfordshire's success story. However, protecting what the public really valued was going to be tough.

- **In terms of efficiencies it was of concern that local accountability might be lost and that the police might lose “the common touch” and “one man's efficiencies was another man's cuts”. Once everything had been cut when would it be “the bobbies on the beat”?**

There was no suggestion that Neighbourhood Policing would be dismantled as it was valued most by the public. Neither was there any suggestion of amalgamating with other forces. However “better wasn't always equal to more” and the Force could not afford “more”.

- **Should there be locally and not nationally set targets for the police?**

The Chief Constable stated that she had been reporting success on local targets in her presentation, which had been set by Thames Valley Police Authority with regard to national targets. NI 21 was the only target which had been set centrally. She added that although targets were set locally there were

also national performance indicators from London and therefore targets were set by the back door. Strategic partners also worked to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets (eg the number of drug users in effective treatment programmes and reducing the number of first time entrants into the criminal justice system).

- **Why did PCSOs go round in pairs? The public view was that if they patrolled alone they could cover twice the area.**

PCSOs should be patrolling alone and the majority did. However, they did double up late in the evening and some PCSOs had worked a bit later in some of the problematic areas as there were safety issues, for example, when dealing with instances of antisocial behaviour at midnight.

- **Surely educating the public was an important way of reducing acquisitive crime?**

Education was important. A surprising number of cars and houses were still left unlocked. TVP tried to spread the message through the NAGs and local papers. PCSOs were heavily involved in crime reduction.

- **Would PREVENT agenda money be abolished? If so would this be catastrophic? Had anything been achieved with the PREVENT funding?**

Whoever formed the new government needed to have some kind of approach in terms of preventing terrorism. PREVENT might need rebranding. There were two types of funding for this: PREVENT Pathfinder money (local authority) and TVP funding. Interesting projects had been supported in Oxford City in terms of Pathfinder and it looked as if good work had been done. Some of these projects were being evaluated but the “success” of these types of projects was hard to evaluate as it was difficult to measure their long term impact. Elsewhere in the Thames Valley PREVENT had not been perfect, for example, in terms of communication with the communities.

TVP had increased the number of briefings to Neighbourhood Officers and had encouraged them to log information into TVP systems. TVP had also recruited PREVENT Engagement Officers who worked alongside the above projects.

Following the question and answer session the Committee thanked the Chief Constable and her colleagues for attending the meeting.

The Chief Superintendent undertook to:

- make it clearer to Councillor Viney how to contact the new PACT group which was effectively what used to be the Henley Rural NAG;
- put Councillor Lindsay-Gale in touch with the NAG in her division.

Ms Coldwell undertook to send the Chief Superintendent the contact details for County Councillors in each division so that they could be easily contacted regarding their local NAGs.

57/10 FEAR OF CRIME IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda No. 8)

A number of officers attended for this agenda item as detailed in this Minute and were accompanied by Mr Richard Webb, Acting Head of Community Safety and Trading Standards (Oxfordshire County Council) and Ms Ruth Whyte, Manager of the Safer Communities Unit (Oxfordshire County Council).

A briefing on public confidence was before the Committee (SSC8) which covered the work of the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP) during the past year. The paper also outlined the Safe & Confident Communities Project that would be implemented during the next six months.

The Committee also had before it the Oxfordshire Voice 2009 Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Summary Report and report of the In depth exercise 2009 which had been circulated separately prior to the meeting.

Ms Jo Cookes, Deputy Head of Community Safety (Government Office for the South East) informed the Committee that she was responsible for delivering on the reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour and implementing government policy in the South East region. Ms Cookes then presented on the public perception survey results broken down across the South East Region by District.

The key points from her presentation were that:

- the South East was a safe place to live, with low levels of violence. It was however, a diverse region, with pockets of affluence and pockets of high rates of crime;
- Oxfordshire compared fairly well to the rest of the region in terms of perceptions of antisocial behaviour, with an above average positive rating. However, it could look to improve further in this respect;
- the Home Office had analysed NI21 data (public confidence that the Police and Local Authorities are dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime issues that matter to the public) and there were slightly higher levels of confidence in the county (27%) than the country average (26.4%). Oxfordshire had the second highest county score in this respect, with Surrey having the highest score. Surrey had implemented a number of initiatives in this respect, which were worthy of investigation;
- Factors such as whether the public believed that the police were treating people fairly and with respect impacted on public confidence levels;
- The age of respondents appeared to have an impact on their confidence levels, as did contact with the police (eg seeing PCSOs patrolling the streets);
- The highest scores in relation to public confidence were in the low 30s (%), which was not a high level of confidence, but it was important to look at the methodology for measuring public confidence. The British Crime Survey (BCS)

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had shown much higher levels of public confidence (in the 50s and 60%s). However, the NI21 measure was consistent and was therefore still valid in terms of comparisons with the rest of the country and over time;

- Research had been undertaken nationally into what drives public perceptions;
- overall and in each district, Oxfordshire was performing mid range across all of the perception and confidence indicators in relation to its family group; and
- officers could look at outliers in the family group that were doing particularly well if they wished to increase performance.

Mr Bill Oddy, Head of Community Services (West Oxfordshire District Council) and Oxfordshire Lead on Public Confidence spoke about the targets set for Oxfordshire in relation to National Indicator 21, the police “Confidence” indicator and the plans to deliver the targets. Mr Oddy then took the Committee through the briefing on public confidence in Oxfordshire (SSC8), which covered the work of the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP) during the past year and outlined the Safe & Confident Communities Project that would be implemented during the next six months.

Key points are listed below:

- the results of the Place Survey had been disappointing in terms of the relatively low levels of public confidence, as only 25% of respondents had thought that the police and the local authority were doing a good job to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour. However, it was more significant that 50% of respondents had ticked “don’t know”;
- these results were not unique to Oxfordshire and a number of authorities had adopted NI21 as part of their Local Area Agreement (LAA). Oxfordshire was sharing information with colleagues in the Thames Valley and elsewhere regarding what worked to increase levels of public confidence (Surrey and Lancashire had very high levels of public confidence);
- nationally the Police Improvement Agency had issued guidance on this;
- 28/29 activities on the delivery plan had now been completed;
- the last activity was implementation which would commence shortly;
- communication was key to increasing public confidence.

Mr Bowden, the Oxfordshire Safe & Confident Communities Project Manager, then gave a short presentation on the Project, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes.

Key points are listed below:

- the point of the project was to look at the relationship between actual levels of crime and antisocial behaviour and public perception;
- the project was at neighbourhood and street level;
- only a few neighbourhoods actually had high levels of antisocial behaviour (asb) (most were low);
- in areas of high asb visible policing was the best way to improve public confidence;
- some asb could be prevalent in just one street in a particular area;

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- it was important to communicate in the most effective way to each neighbourhood. Communication would be tailored to each neighbourhood in terms of what would be their preferred method of communication, based largely on Experian mosaic data and officers had also mapped what people's likely concerns would be. This would provide a personalised, intelligence led targeted communication strategy;
- a number of people do not believe the glossy leaflets that come through their letterbox or look at the Thames Valley Police Website or care about the crime statistics. They just want to know about crime and antisocial behaviour on their street;
- a lot of analysis had been done on preferred methods of communication. The focus now needed to be on delivery and it was anticipated that this would take place in June, July and August.

Mr Dan Bowden, Senior Performance Manager (Thames Valley Police) also gave a presentation on Fear of Crime versus Actual Crime, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes. This presentation covered the detailed results for Oxfordshire (broken down by Districts) in terms of fear of crime and actual crime and showed how Oxfordshire compared with the rest of the Thames Valley.

Key points are given below:

- the slides showed that there had been a reduction in recorded offences (all crime) in 09/10 in comparison with 08/09;
- there had been a reduction in recorded offences for serious acquisitive crime across the county and by district, and a reduction in recorded offences of criminal damage, which had a severely detrimental effect on people's lives and on their perception of crime;
- Oxfordshire was below the family average and numbers were predicted to fall further;
- There had been an improvement in all districts in terms of perception (NI21)

Ms Katie Pritchett, Corporate Consultation Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) then spoke to the committee about the outcomes of the in-depth research exploring residents' views of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Key points are listed below:

- Issues such as traffic congestion and affordable housing were seen as more in need of improvement than fear of crime;
- It was difficult to prioritise which crimes and antisocial behaviour needed tackling most. For example dog fouling affected many people to a small extent whereas rare but serious crimes had a much greater impact on a small number of people;
- The police were seen as the emergency response service and primary leaders on investigations. The Council was seen as the agency responding to office hour only issues (eg graffiti and dog fouling);
- There were four main reasons people said they didn't know whether the police and councils were successfully dealing with the issues; lack of knowledge of what was being done; lack of experience of crime and anti-social behaviour;

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lack of experience of the local response (for example not having reported an issue) and mixed experiences of Police and council responses;

- Some of those who had mixed experiences felt anti-social behaviour was not regarded as important and so had fallen through the net;
- Most people did not want more information unless there had been a problem in their area;
- For many the preferred method of communication was personal contact, such as being able to speak to a street warden and people wanted geographically specific information often just relating to 2 or 3 streets in their area;
- If circulating written material the preference was for cheaply printed leaflets distributed by Neighbourhood Watches and containing a balanced and honest account of the issues;
- Panellists had welcomed the idea of posters to communicate performance information such as how many crimes had been dealt with in their area.

Mr James Clark, Head of Communications, Marketing and Public Affairs (Oxfordshire County Council), then spoke to the Committee about what his team could do and was planning to do to help to tackle fear of crime in Oxfordshire.

Key points are listed below:

- partnership working was crucial to reducing crime and fear of crime and he met with his opposite number in the PCT once a week;
- there was no point in telling people not to be afraid of crime because this did not work;
- research had shown that the nearer you could get to someone's home the more effective the communication;
- people tended to think that communication at county and Force level was "all spin";
- if the public was exposed to the worst stories in the whole country on a regular basis it would have an effect although there were some areas of high crime in London.

The Committee then thanked all present for their presentations and updates.

A selection of the Committee's questions, together with the responses, is given below:

- **What was the point of measuring public perception? Surely public perception was often quite inaccurate, for example, in thinking that drivers were speeding?**

Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour could be severely detrimental to a person's quality of life. For example, many elderly people were too afraid to walk down the street to get to the shops if they felt threatened by a number of young people hanging around street corners. GOSE had identified areas that they could give extra support to. ASB was the responsibility of all of the partners and GOSE used the measures as outlined in the survey to identify where extra support was needed.

- **What guidelines were being issued in terms of tackling fear of crime in low crime areas?**

Under the past government there had been a focus on tackling antisocial behaviour and low levels of confidence. The focus had been on communication with the local community, for example, through “Have Your Say” meetings, NAGs and Neighbourhood Policing.

- **Was it a statutory requirement to reduce fear of crime? Was this value for money? What was the cost of all of the research that was being undertaken?**

The Place Survey was mandatory and had cost the county council £6,000 to conduct this time round. The Oxfordshire Voice Survey had been carried out at low cost. Many of the participants had willingly forgone their expenses because they knew that times were hard. Reducing fear of crime was about community cohesion, having safe and confident neighbourhoods, giving back to communities the voice they thought they had lost so that they felt that they could talk to the police and the council. The police and local authorities were moving from a position where they thought that they knew what their communities wanted, to enabling communities to tell them what they wanted. Localism was important because it would deal with issues that related to people’s individual lives and local areas.

- **In the context of funding issues and cuts to the police, were those officers who were engaged in confidence work likely to be regarded as frontline staff when the police made their cuts?**

This work was being delivered through existing resources in order to give frontline staff the focus to engage with people more effectively.

- **Could the county put more money into youth clubs and other school holiday activities as crime in the city used to increase in the school holidays, especially in the estates?**

The Director for Community Safety undertook to take back to CCMT Councillor Pressel’s suggestion that the county should put more money into youth clubs and other school holiday activities on the grounds that crime in the city used to increase in the school holidays especially in the estates, given that CCMT would be discussing the county’s £6m of grants in relation to its corporate priorities including tackling deprivation later that week, and undertook to report back to the Committee in due course.

- **Did the police record all instances of crime and antisocial behaviour? Were crime and antisocial behaviour actually falling or were some instances not being recorded?**

Councillor Mallon undertook to refer the above questions to Thames Valley Police Authority.

58/10 FIRE SERVICE COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM - THE FIRECONTROL AND FIRELINK PROJECTS
(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee had before it a written update on progress of the Fire Service Command and Control Room (FiReControl and FireLink Projects) (SSC9).

Mr Colin Thomas, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Head of Service Support updated the Committee in addition to report SSC9 as follows:

- OFRS had responded to the select committee and a particular paragraph provided by OFRS had been mentioned in the review;
- the select committee had felt that it was important to continue with the FireControl Project, as to abandon it would have financial consequences and there were no credible alternative plans in place;
- in terms of data migration, as part of the planning review CLG had tasked all FRAs with reviewing their migration planning and developing the supporting business processes. The task had been issued in April and CLG had given a target date of 2 June 2010 to complete the actions, which was unachievable with OFRS's current workload. OFRS took data migration very seriously and was not willing to rush this. OFRS hoped to put a revised timeline in place in June or July for individual bits of data;
- in terms of mobile data terminals (MDTs), OFRS was intentionally rolling them out in a progressive, staged manner. More data would be added to the MDTs later in the year and officers would then decide what should be done should the data not be available at any point. However, more than one engine was usually despatched to a property fire.

Mr Thomas also showed a number of slides to the Committee which supplemented the written update.

59/10 DEBT ADVICE SCRUTINY REVIEW - PROGRESS UPDATE
(Agenda No. 10)

[Lead Member Review Group comprises Councillors Lawrie Stratford, Bill Service, John Goddard and John Sanders]

Councillor Stratford reported as follows:

- the Lead Member Review Group wished to gain an understanding of any gaps in the provision of Debt Advice across the County, the quality of debt advice provided, who was providing it and how the quality of that advice was being maintained;
- the Group had requested some information from the District Councils;
- the Group was going to hold a series of interviews with people;

- the Group aims to complete its review by September, subject to obtaining information from partner bodies.

60/10 PLANS FOR BANBURY LIBRARY/MILL ARTS CENTRE

(Agenda No. 11)

Mr Richard Munro (Head of Community Services), together with Mr Martyn Brown (County Heritage and Arts Officer) and the Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities attended for this item in order to update the Committee on plans for Banbury Library and the Mill Arts Centre.

Mr Munro reported as follows:

- although Banbury Library was very popular and heavily used, the building was a difficult design and no longer in the right location;
- the Mill Arts Centre was also a very popular and heavily used facility. However, the building was very cramped and parts of it were difficult to access and manage;
- the Council's preferred option was to have a development on the site next to where the Mill Arts Centre was situated;
- £51/2m had been identified from the County Council's capital programme for this project as it was a critical capital project for the county;
- the District Council had just replaced the leisure centre on the site;
- Spiceball Park was prone to flooding from time to time and officers would ensure that those parts of the Mill that were to remain would be made more resilient to flooding;
- the project to develop the cultural quarter as a whole was a three way partnership. There were economies in being able to provide an integrated management approach;
- the Council had made very good progress in the last year in developing the vision for the site as a whole and the development would be unique and unique to Banbury;
- the expectation was that by 2012 construction would be taking place on site and that it would be completed by 2014.

The Committee thanked Mr Munro for his oral update, noted the method of governance and **AGREED** to request that a detailed written report be brought to Committee in future, including information on governance, the facilities to be provided and a serious assessment of the flooding risk and mitigation for this.

The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities undertook to ensure that a report was provided to scrutiny at the appropriate time. It was suggested that it might be appropriate to consider this report when consultation was taking place with Banbury residents.

All members of the Committee were asked to liaise with Councillor Stratford regarding what information they wished to be provided in the report, who would then provide this information to the Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities.

61/10 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
(Agenda No. 12)

The Committee noted the following information:

- that the select committee into community pride would be the substantive item at its July meeting;
- that members would also be asked to discuss what areas they would like to address in scrutinising crime and disorder at their July meeting;
- that a report on progress in relation to the operation of Birmingham City Council's Illegal Money Lending Team in Oxfordshire would be provided to its September meeting;
- that suggestions for future work items should be sent to Councillor Stratford and Dr Alvi.

Members of the Committee were reminded that any suggestions should be related to the Council's priorities and the remit of this Committee, although suggestions which cut across more than one scrutiny committee could also be put forward for consideration.

Ms Coldwell undertook to circulate a record of the scrutiny activities (including reviews) undertaken by this Committee over the past 2 – 3 years and scrutiny activities undertaken by other Committees during that time period which now fell under the remit of this Committee, to all members of the Committee.

Dr Alvi undertook to provide:

- a note to the Committee to let Members know when performance information is submitted to the Cabinet (eg the balanced scorecard);
- tracking information on past scrutiny reviews undertaken by this Committee to all members of the Committee.

Any members of the Committee that wished to visit the County's Emergency Planning Unit at Woodeaton Manor and/or Trading Standards at Osney Mead were asked to contact the Director for Community Safety.

62/10 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 13)

No items had been identified for consideration.

63/10 TRACKING SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda No. 14)

- **Service and Resource Planning 2010/11 – 2014/15**

The Committee noted Councillor Mitchell's response to its budget advice as listed on the face of the agenda.

- **Integrated Risk Management Action Plan**

The Committee noted the Cabinet's response to the Draft Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2010/11 as listed on the face of the agenda.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that several themes had arisen from the consultation on proposal (a) Day Crewing Review at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations including:

- Absolute acceptance that it was a very positive project.
- Real public concern over the potential reduction in attendance times.
- Concerns regarding the total reliance on Retained fire fighters at the two stations.
- Concerns about the training needs of the Retained fire firefighters.
- Concerns about the removal of the fire engine from Rewley Road at weekends to cover Abingdon and Didcot.

The Committee noted that the Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities would report back to Scrutiny once the new shift pattern had been implemented as it appeared that all of the issues raised through the public consultation process could be mitigated by introducing a new shift pattern.

- **Information Share**

The Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer gave a verbal update on key issues as listed below:

- OFRS had carried out a very detailed action plan following the high rise incident in Hertfordshire. However, properties in Oxfordshire were not of a similar construction;
- OFRS had been reaccredited for the Customer Excellence Award and was the only Brigade in the country (out of 46 Brigades) to have received it;
- The Gypsy & Traveller Service was the only one in the country to have received the award.

The Committee noted the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer's imminent retirement, thanked him for his sterling work over the years - including his fantastic communication and people skills - commenting that he had been a valued and helpful officer who would be greatly missed, wished him a

happy retirement and noted that he would stay in post until the new post holder had been appointed (June or September depending on whether an internal or external candidate was appointed).

- **Update on actions arising from the HSE Inspection of Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service**

The Committee had before it an update on actions arising from the Health and Safety Executive Inspection of Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (SSC14).

The Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer reported as follows:

- OFRS had received 18 recommendations for improvement as set out in report SSC14. The Inspectors had felt that OFRS had not paid enough attention to developing an overall strategic Health & Safety Plan for the Service. An overall Health & Safety Strategy for the County Council was in place, but this needed to be refocused, which would take a couple of months. However, no issues had been raised that OFRS were not already aware of;
- OFRS was the only Brigade that received health and safety support from Shared Services and no negative comments had been made about this;
- Three of the recommendations did have a readily identifiable financial impact (R5, R7 and R8). Some of the work associated with those recommendations was not yet fully known, but the financial impact was being considered during the planning process.

The Committee noted that a question and answer session on the Executive report and action plans would be held at this Committee’s July meeting and **AGREED** to request the action plan be an implementation plan, and that a GAANT chart showing the likely timeframe for implementation of the recommendations should also be provided.

64/10 4.20 APPROX CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 15)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing