

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on 6 July 2009 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.30 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford - in the chair

Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Steve Hayward
Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities:
Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat

By Invitation: Councillor Charles Mathew (Agenda Item 10)

Officers:

Whole of meeting: K. Coldwell (Corporate Core); Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer.

Part of meeting:

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

- | | |
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| 6. | Chief Constable Sara Thornton QPM, Chief Superintendent Brendan O'Dowda & Inspector Andy Talbot (Development and Change Manager) (Thames Valley Police); Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer |
| 7. | Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer, D. Etheridge & M. Crapper |
| 8. | C. Thomas (Community Safety) |
| 10. | N. Strick (Community Safety) |

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with the following additional document:

- *A supplementary report on the Working Time Directive in relation to agenda item 7*

and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and additional document are attached to the signed Minutes.

4/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Apology from	Temporary Appointments
Councillor Alyas Ahmed	-

5/09 INTRODUCTIONS

Given the recent changes in membership on this Committee, each Member gave a brief outline of their interest and experience in relation to this Committee's remit.

6/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik declared a personal interest at Agenda Item 3 in relation to Agenda Item 6 by virtue of being a board member on the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership.

Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat declared a personal interest at Agenda Item 3 in relation to Agenda Item 6 by virtue of being an elected member representative for Oxfordshire County Council on Thames Valley Police Authority.

Councillor Lawrie Stratford declared a personal interest at Agenda Item 10 in relation to Agenda Item 10 by virtue of being a Chairman of Trustees at Bicester Citizens Advice Bureau.

7/09 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 June 2009 were approved and signed and the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2009 were noted (due to the remit of this Committee having now changed).

Matters arising on the 2 February 2009 Minutes

Minute 4/09 – Interim Evaluation of the Recruitment and Retention of Retained Firefighters Scrutiny Review – 1(b) To explore the implications and costs of a mobile Wholetime model as recommended in the model/option in the Fire Cover Review – The Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer reported that retaining the current location of the county's fire stations was dependent upon the continued viability of the retained fire fighter system.

Minute 6/09 – Progress of Flu Pandemic Planning: Q&A – the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer reported that

officers were now trying to ascertain staff ability to come into work during a pandemic. Although they had originally been asked to redo the survey to increase the response rate, this would not take place as the cost/benefit did not equate and the issue had moved on now that a pandemic was underway. A further update would be provided to this Committee in future.

The Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities reported that she had ensured that the Cabinet had been informed of the Committee's concern.

8/09 THAMES VALLEY POLICE AUTHORITY THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2008 – 2011: PRESENTATION AND Q&A

(Agenda Item 6)

Published by Thames Valley Police Authority (TVPA) and Thames Valley Police (TVP), the Strategic Plan outlines the long term vision for the Force. The second year Strategic Plan 2008 – 11 (SSC6) incorporating the Delivery Plan 2009 – 10 has been updated to reflect the Home Secretary's Key Strategic Policing Priorities for policing in 2009-10. Thames Valley Police have also taken note of the Home Secretary's Community Safety Plan 2008-11 and have sought to balance national requirements with local concerns.

The Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, Sara Thornton QPM attended before the Committee, accompanied by Chief Superintendent Brendan O'Dowda and Inspector Andy Talbot (Development and Change Manager).

The presentation covered the strategic plan, with a focus on delivery in 2009-10, including some key processes that were underway to improve performance and productivity. A copy of the full presentation is attached to the signed Minutes. The detail of the presentation is listed below:

The Strategy for Policing in the Thames Valley: 2008-11

Objectives of the Strategy:

- strengthen neighbourhood policing to respond to local need and increase public confidence (the Home Office view is that neighbourhood policing is very effective and the public are largely concerned with quality of life issues rather than major crime)
- develop its partnerships to reduce crime and disorder (how TVP works with other local authorities and partners is crucial)
- improve the service provided to victims, witnesses and the public
- protect communities from the threat of terrorism and organised crime
- use information and intelligence to be more effective
- develop its people to give the best service
- improve the use of its resources

Neighbourhood Policing

- continue with the transition from neighbourhood policing to neighbourhood management
- improve communication between neighbourhood policing teams and local communities
- the public could now look at local crime information for their area on the TVP website. It was about giving the public information to enable them to make better judgements about the quality of service provided
- extend the Learning and Development Programme for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – there were issues around their continuing professional development as there is no rank structure
- improve the recruitment and retention of the Special Constabulary so as to increase the numbers to 10 per cent of regular strength by 2010
- there were 263 Neighbourhoods across the Thames Valley with 782 priorities and 26 priority themes
- Oxfordshire Basic Command Unit comprised Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire
- in terms of neighbourhood policing in Oxfordshire there were 78 Neighbourhoods with 36 Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs). Neighbourhood priorities for police and partner action were as follows:
 - anti-social behaviour (68)
 - speeding (58)
 - parking (23)
 - criminal damage (17)
 - drugs (14)
 - environmental issues (13)
 - under-age drinking (8)
 - alcohol related antisocial behaviour (ASB) (6)

Strategies for crime reduction included:

- develop its partnerships to reduce crime and disorder
- develop integrated Offender Management Schemes with its partners (including supporting offenders' families)
- reduce domestic abuse repeat victimisation for high risk victims through the effective operation of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)
- improve partnership work with schools
- continue to focus on the enforcement and prevention of knife crime
- work with its partners to reduce the number of casualties and deaths on its roads, particularly amongst the most vulnerable groups

Crime reduction: Serious Acquisitive Crime (year to date (01.04.09 – 23.06.09) compared to last year (01.04.08 – 23.06.08))

(PSA 23 – Priority Action Two and National Indicator 16 (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 by 2% compared to 208/09)

- this had fallen by nearly 24% in the Vale of White Horse but had increased in South and West Oxfordshire
- there was a significant concentration of crime in the city

Crime reduction: Assault with less serious injury (non-domestic)

(Year to date 01.04.09 – 23.06.09) compared to last year (01.04.08 – 23.06.08)

- the TVP performance target was to reduce the level of Assault with Less Serious Injury (assault resulting in actual bodily harm, excluding domestic abuse cases) by 3% compared to 2008/09
- there was a similar target in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) (NI 20 – Assault with Injury) but the LAA target included domestic violence
- four Local Policing Areas (LPAs) in Oxfordshire showed reductions, although it had increased by 7.4% in Oxford City
- the night time economy and stranger violence had a large part to play on this measure, rather than domestic violence

Knife crime (excluding possession)

(The Home Office definition for a knife crime is where the victim is convinced of the presence of a knife, even if it is concealed, and there is evidence of the suspect's intention to create this impression)

- offences covered murder, attempted murder, threats to kill, manslaughter, wounding, inflicting grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, sexual assault, rape and robbery)
- this was a new recording category and showed performance in relation to the previous year against the government's Tackling Knives Action Programme

Improve the service provided to victims, witnesses and the public

Victims & Witnesses

Thames Valley Police Confidence and Satisfaction levels

- satisfaction with the overall experience in the Thames Valley had risen from 77% to 82%
- satisfaction with the overall experience in the Thames Valley was higher than confidence in the Police in the Thames Valley
- the general confidence level in TVP was of concern as it had plateaued out. It was debatable to what extent this was influenced by the Media

Victims & Witnesses – confidence

The new public confidence target measures the extent to which the public (percentage of British Crime Survey respondents) agree with the following statement:

“The police and local council are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area”.

This target was measured in three very different ways and the different survey methods and sample sizes accounted for the difference in the baselines.

- the Home Office confidence target for TVP (monitored through the British Crime Survey) was a baseline of 46.1% with a target of 59.2% by 2012. This was difficult because there was a 6 month time lag. The data was collected by using a face to face survey;
- the TVPA annual target (measured by TVP Neighbourhood Surveys) was a baseline of 61.4% with a target of 64% by 2010. TVPA had agreed an annual Force target against the same indicator so that it could collect local data on a monthly basis. This was collected by using neighbourhood telephone surveys across the Force;
- the LAA target (NI 21) (measured by the place survey of local authorities) was a baseline of 27.5%, with a target of 33.1% by 201. This data was collected by a postal survey

Victims & Witnesses – Satisfaction

All crime attendance

- introduced in 2008 for vehicle crime and criminal damage and in 2009 for non-residential burglary
- TVP will visit all victims of these crimes if they wish to be visited
- victim surveys in pilot areas showed increased victim satisfaction
- there was an 8% increase in satisfaction with the police (from 66% to 74%) among vehicle crime victims in pilot areas, compared to a drop of 1% in non-pilot areas

Protect Communities from Terrorism and Organised Crime

- refine the mapping and disruption of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) – 43 had been disrupted in the first year
- continue to make extended use of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) (trying to seize people’s assets once they had been convicted)
- develop the Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU) to provide support to the South East region (CTU had been established in April)
- develop the capability within TVP to assist partners to deliver the Preventing Violent Extremism Action Plan

Terrorism and Organised Crime

Under the government’s CONTEST strategy to prevent and counter the threat of terrorism, 10 Prevention and Engagement Officers had been employed by TVP to:

- tackle the underlying causes of terrorism and violent extremism

- promote trust and confidence in communities
- work closely with communities and partner agencies to stop people supporting terrorism and violent extremism
- address the community's grievances through engagement and interaction

Information and Intelligence

Blackberrys

- £729K had been received from the Home Office Mobile Information Project
- 1100 Neighbourhood Policing Officers had Blackberrys, providing access to the internet and the intranet
- these could be used to store photographs of missing people and escaped prisoners and maps
- as a result there had been a 28% increase in officers spending over 6 hours out of the station on shift
- users had commented that they had made more arrests and car seizures than they would have made without the Blackberry

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

- this was a system designed to read number plates and compare them instantly to several databases, including the Police National Computer (PNC) and DVLA. It could tell the police whether a vehicle had insurance, a valid MOT and road tax, and if the vehicle was of interest to the police, stolen or involved in crime
- national analysis of 150 users of in-car ANPR demonstrated increased arrests and detections by 90% of users
- national research concluded that police officers dedicated to ANPR achieved 3 times as many offenders brought to justice than the national target per police officer

TVP staffing levels as at 31/05/09 were:

- 4,219 police officers
- 2,703 support staff
- 317 special constables
- 512 PCSOs

- the Police Authority had agreed that they could have 93 more officers this year, which would be hard to maintain
- there was also a turnover issue with PCSOs

People

There was a new approach to customer service, emphasising:

- leadership
- professional values

- greater use of discretion (in relation to how something was done rather than what action was taken)

The Chief Constable wanted the Force to be driven by values, not targets:

- treat everyone fairly and with respect
- act with courage and integrity
- take pride in delivering a high quality service and keeping our promises
- engage, listen and respond
- learn from experience and always seek to improve

Revenue Expenditure 2009-10

- over half went on police pay, allowances and pension (£219,238) then police staff
- overall 80% went on pay and pensions
- when there was pressure on the budget it was hard to maintain police officer numbers – this was being carefully worked on at present

TVP Productivity Plan

£7.78 million saved during 2008:

- £1m through the introduction of a new duty management system
- £2m through Zero Based Budgeting reviews of key departments (“do we need to do this – can we do it more cheaply?”)
- £100,000 saved in reduced postage with no detriment to the service

Many non-cashable benefits also delivered:

- improved sickness management
- mobile data terminals (Blackberrys) enabling neighbourhood teams to spend more time patrolling and in communities

The Committee was then invited to question the Chief Constable, Chief Superintendent O’Dowda and Inspector Talbot regarding the Plan. A selection of the Committee’s questions, together with the responses, is listed below:

• Did the Force’s sums add up and was the strategy deliverable?

The Force was currently planning for 2010/11. It would be receiving a 2.7% increase in central grant. There were a number of other small bits of grant where there were question marks over their continuation but the main grant was ok. Interest on the Force’s reserves was down considerably due to the current financial climate. The Authority had discussed where to set the precept and everything from 0% upwards had been discussed. Staff were working hard on efficiency savings. Efficiency savings could be made for 2010/11 with hard work and discipline.

There was currently an £8m gap in funding for 2011/12. There was concern that there might be considerable cuts in central grants for 2011/12. A new three year strategy would be produced. It was hoped that the Force could retain operational numbers. Non operational posts looked less secure and therefore TVP would have to reign in recruitment. The Chief Constable was working with regional colleagues on the collaboration agenda. Several key units were working together to save overheads and increase efficiency. Within two years TVP would have completely joined up its IT department with Hampshire's. There was a need for constant questioning of how processes were undertaken, for example, call handling.

- **What was the ongoing prognosis in relation to PCSOs?**

Four hundred and seventeen PCSOs were part funded by government grant and one hundred and thirteen part funded by a variety of partners. There was a tranche of funding specifically for PCSOs which was up until the end of 2011. The situation after that was unknown and there were tough issues to be addressed a year or so down the line.

- **Could money from the Proceeds of Crime Act be used to top up the Force's budget?**

The Force was able to claim back some of the money obtained through the Proceeds of Crime Act. The proportion of money that could be claimed back was dependent upon whether it was a confiscation or a seizure. A percentage of the money went to the Treasury. Any money that was confiscated had to be invested in further financial investigation.

- **Would the Force abandon property crime (insurance covered crime) policing in order to fund life saving harm prevention policing?**

This would never be within the remit of a Chief Constable at a local level. It would take a very bold Home Secretary to do so. This question was based on the view that there were two types of offenders and victims. Many offenders were engaged in both types of crime and there was not a neat division between the two. Getting the balance right was difficult. Some critics could say that the police had focused too heavily on property crime and there were a number of targets around acquisitive crime in the British Crime Survey. The theft of a car wing mirror counted as one offence, as did a homicide. Sexual offences, for example, were not recorded in the British Crime Survey. However, the impact of acquisitive crime on people's lives should not be understated as burglary had changed people's lives and caused the death of some people. Reinvesting resources into front line policing was vital for this reason and it was crucial to reduce child abuse, domestic abuse and sexual offences.

- **Would the merging of IT systems really be cost effective? It was usually more expensive to do this. Merging the call handling function could result in a loss of local knowledge.**

The Force had been on the path towards merging IT systems for eighteen months. Seeing as TVP and Hampshire Constabulary were both performing the same function it did not make sense for them to have different IT systems.

In terms of call handling the Force would never base this offshore. The two main call centres were located in Kidlington and Windsor and the public had already made complaints regarding local knowledge. However, technology had moved on and mapping technology was now available. It was no longer viable for the public to speak to someone who lived down the road. There were currently 580 staff in the central call handling team, with approximately 200 on the local command units. This was a large number of staff and the Force was looking at whether the process was overcomplicated. However, the Force could not afford to lose its performance figures in relation to call handling and had two performance targets in relation to this.

- **Was TVP looking at the current pension scheme and employee contributions as the current arrangements were surely not sustainable. Could costs be reduced?**

This was a national issue. One Force alone could not alter police pensions as they were under national regulations. The system had changed for new joiners a couple of years ago who now had to do thirty five years service.

- **How did the Force manage sickness absence?**

Police sickness absence was not higher than civilian staff sickness absence. Diseases such as influenza could spread quickly in a call handling environment. Every unit had a sickness monitoring group. It was important to be proactive and supportive when people were off sick. They were given a Bradford Score depending on the level of sickness absence. Staff with a number of sickness absences per year were more proactively managed. The Chief Constable held a meeting every month looking at people who were on long term sick leave. She would then write letters to them and visit them in an attempt to see if any support was needed, such as a flexible return to work.

- **A lot of people thought that PCSOs were “policing on the cheap”. Was this the case? How effective were they and did the Force have any data to substantiate their cost effectiveness and success?**

PCSOs were not “policing on the cheap”. The police and PCSOs had different roles to play. PCSOs provided visibility, which is what the public wanted. They also worked with young people. It was important to keep

their roles separate - although some extra powers for PCSOs would be useful - for example, traffic orders.

Chief Superintendent O'Dowda stated that he received many letters every week from members of the public across the county praising the work of the PCSOs. He added that PCSOs had an important role to play in terms of reassuring victims of low level crime.

2011/12 could be very tough. The Force would be asking if it could maintain its current level of support for neighbourhood policing, but if this was maintained, something else would probably have to give. The Chief Constable hoped that the current level of support for PCSOs could be maintained through efficiency savings.

- **Could PCSOs be used for intelligence gathering?**

PCSOs had a key role to play in terms of building relationships and talking to people openly but their role was not to spy on people secretly.

- **What could be done about the turnover of PCSOs, the subsequent costs of recruitment and training and the lack of rank structure?**

TVP was used to a very low police officer turnover (7%) even taking into account recruitment to the Metropolitan Police Service. Some PCSO turnover was due to PCSOs training to become Police Officers (10 in year 1, 25 in year 2 and 40 in year 3). This was to be commended. Whereas 16% of PCSOs recruits were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, the figure for police officers was only 4% and therefore any transition that could increase diversity amongst police officers was welcomed. The Chief Constable stated that she was not sure whether a rank structure was appropriate for PCSOs but that it was being looked at nationally. There was definitely a need for continuing professional development.

- **Why was the new public confidence target asking what the public thought of both the police and their local council?**

The public did not appear to differentiate between the police and the local authority in terms of satisfaction, therefore grouping both together in one measure was not a cause of concern to the police.

- **How could the public perception that the police were targeting easy wins (minor crimes that were quick and easy to deal with and therefore resulted in better performance data) be dealt with?**

There had been a substantial policing debate on the potential of performance targets to skew the data and the unintended consequences of having a number of performance targets. Neighbourhood Policing was a move away from this and there were a lot less targets now than there

had been five years ago. It was not unlikely that performance could be improved against the targets without improving the service.

The fact that the public were now asked whether they thought that the police and their council were dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime issues that mattered in their area showed that the public wanted the police to deal with the lower level issues.

- **Were there any strategies for dealing with fear of crime amongst older people? Fear of crime prevented many older people from participating in voluntary work because they were scared to venture outside when it was dark. Was TVP engaging with older people's groups to conduct reassurance exercises?**

Many older people were the equivalent of the “worried well” as young men were more likely to be victims. Neighbourhood policing had a role to play in providing reassurance as people felt more confident when local policing arrangements were in place. Local relationship building was important – for example – PCSOs sometimes visited old people's homes in order to educate them in relation to distraction burglaries in order to raise awareness without increasing their fear. Visibility, reassurance and communication were key. Each Neighbourhood and NAG had detailed plans in place including profiling of elderly and other vulnerable communities and patrols were then targeted at those areas. Age Concern Oxfordshire would shortly be attending a Senior Management Team meeting to give their views on how the police could be more responsive and visible.

- **Were protocols in place for dealing with dysfunctional families where they were not keeping their children in line? Would the police liaise with social services and GPs? What could Councillors do to assist?**

The Force did not want to criminalise children and young people. This type of issue was supposed to be addressed by partnership working, with a joined up response, looking at antisocial behaviour and if it was caused by particular children and young people or particular families. The Force wanted to move from neighbourhood policing to neighbourhood management, which would not be driven by the police. The fifty-seven Neighbourhood Specialist Officers (NSOs) were key to this and they were trained in communication skills and chairing meetings. Any members of the public, including Councillors, were advised to escalate a problem through their Neighbourhood Management Team, especially via a Neighbourhood Specialist Officer. Problem families were an issue in the county and a coherent approach needed to be taken with regard to education, health and crime and disorder in order to break the cycle of deprivation. Consistent problem solving around these issues needed to take place.

In terms of Councillor involvement, local authority officers needed to be prioritising community safety and Councillors could assist by holding them to account, for example, by asking them how they were contributing to offender management.

- **Such families were often moved to council housing in different areas of the county. If Councillors did not have time to escalate an issue could they be assured that if they told the police, the family would be looked at by the whole team around the child?**

Ongoing support was available and any concerns should be fed straight to the Neighbourhood Team.

- **Was the Force joined up within itself, ie was lower level policing joined up with higher end policing? For example was burglary data cascaded down to officers on the beat?**

Yes, but the Force could do much better in this respect. Briefings were key to a joined up approach. It was essential that Neighbourhood Policing Teams were linked closely with the Counter Terrorism Unit. National security was dependent upon Neighbourhood Security. Neighbourhood Officers had received communication and awareness training. PCSOs also had a role to play in relation to core offenders as they could knock on offenders' doors during the day to ascertain their whereabouts. This approach had resulting in a fall in offending.

- **Could an update be provided on relationship building with communities to counter violent extremism and what was the “reality check”?**

Prevention and Engagement Officers had been working with the community. Officers had been working with the County Council to ensure that the toolkit went to schools. Progress in general had been reasonable across the community, although quite slow. This was a new area of business for schools, local authorities and the police and there were not experts in the field to draw upon. The Chief Constable would be seeking evidence of what worked and the impact of activities to date.

- **Burglary was of concern to most people these days. Wasn't the grouping of burglary, theft of a vehicle and robbery - to produce an overall figure - misleading?**

This grouping of data could be misleading, but the target had been using the Home Office category.

- **Was it not the case that burglaries in Oxford City had doubled in comparison with the previous year?**

Burglaries had risen in Oxford City, but starting from a very low baseline.

- **It appeared that a third of accidents involving commercial vehicles were caused by foreign nationals. Would anything be done to reduce accidents, especially with regard to HGVs?**

There had been a couple of fatal accidents on the M40 involving HGVs. Enforcement work could be carried out if drivers were breaking the rules regarding driving hours but a lot of work around this area was about preventative work.

Chief Superintendent O'Dowda undertook to speak to the Roads Policing department regarding this matter.

A formal response from the Chief Constable in respect to the above question was circulated to the Committee following this meeting and is appended to these Minutes (Refer Annex 1).

- **Was the reduction in the number of casualties and deaths on the roads a result of better profiling from the traffic division or as a result of better advertising from the government?**

This was partly a result of better emergency care and better car design although the police had looked at trigger points where they could undertake preventative action, for example, seatbelt campaigns. The 'Safe Drive, Stay Alive' Campaign project aimed at young drivers and passengers (16 – 18 year olds) was about getting them to realise that they could make good choices to keep themselves safe. This was conducted every November. The police had also focused on motorcyclists, and not just young people. An intelligence led approach resulted in successful preventative work.

Following the question and answer session, the Committee **AGREED** to thank the Chief Constable and her colleagues for their informative presentation and responses to questions.

In response to the Chief Constable's suggestion that Councillors should hold county council officers to account, the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer then reported on progress underway by the partnerships to tackle many of the issues raised in the presentation and ensuing discussion. This is listed below:

- **Gypsy & Travellers Service** – the council used to have an enforcement and control role and be a sleeping partner but it now managed the service very proactively, as well as managing the service in Buckinghamshire. As a result of its success, the Service was now actively progressing further external contracts (subject to delegated decision agreement).
- **Rogue Traders** – usually targeted vulnerable people, for example, the elderly. A police officer had been seconded to Trading Standards and was able to carry out arrests. Three people had been arrested for rogue

trading in the past month. Evidence had shown that people who were deceived by rogue traders were more likely to require nursing care and died earlier. The Head of Trading Standards was now in discussion with the Chief Superintendent, in the hope that the police officer post could remain with the council.

- **Domestic Violence** – the county council worked very closely with the police on this matter. As a result there had been an increase in the number of reported incidents. This was a success because of the very low profile of such incidents, and this work had been instrumental in achieving Local Area Agreement reward grant. The sanction detection targets (ie - the number of occasions when perpetrators had had sanctions applied against them) had not been met by the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership and more work needed to be done to ensure that they were met.
- **Youth Offending** – considerable work was being undertaken in relation to this area, although it was within the remit of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. For example, the Fire & Rescue Service undertook work to give young people self esteem and self discipline. They also worked with children and young people who were on the verge of being excluded (the three week Fire Phoenix Scheme).
- **Fear of Crime** – Trading Standards had set up 'No Cold Calling Zones' which had been a good deterrent despite having no legal status. Stickers publicizing the zones had been stuck onto lamp posts. It would be very expensive to legalize the scheme and it would be hard to gain support for the scheme at a national level.
- **365 Alive Road Safety Campaign** – the Fire & Rescue Service undertook considerable activity to target young male drivers. A large number of parents in the Thames Valley bought cars for their offspring on passing their driving tests. The Fire & Rescue Service provided the opportunity for young people to have an extra driving lesson, where they were cut out of a car and they were shown the 'Consequences and Choices' video. It was notable that the Fire & Rescue Service had to spend a considerable amount of money on hydraulic equipment in order to cut people out of vehicles due to accidents.
- **HGVs** – it was hard to extricate people from HGVs and more research needed to be undertaken into this area. Investigative work had shown that in the past on a specific section of the M40 motorway a high level of accidents were also caused by people falling asleep at the wheel when going on holiday, as a result of having driven too far when tired and not having taken sufficient breaks.

The Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer then drew the Committee's attention to 'The Truth about Crime' three part series which had focused on Oxford as a typical British City in terms of crime types and trends. This would be broadcast on BBC1 and would look in depth

at the causes of crime and whether it was being addressed on a partnership basis. The Committee was advised that the series might highlight issues for future scrutiny activity.

9/09 FINAL EVALUATION OF THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS SCRUTINY REVIEW

(Agenda Item 7)

This scrutiny review had been considered by the Cabinet on 24 June 2008. The Cabinet had agreed all of the review recommendations subject to referring the review to the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS) to enable the Chief Fire Officer to develop an action plan to show how it would deliver the recommendations.

As requested by the Cabinet, the Community Safety Scrutiny Committee had conducted an interim evaluation of progress at its February 2009 meeting, the record of which was detailed in the Minutes to this meeting.

It was now time for the final evaluation to take place.

Mr John Parry (Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer), together with Mr David Etheridge (Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Head of Service Delivery) and Mr Martin Crapper (Service Delivery Manager) attended before the Committee in order to answer Members' questions in relation to progress on those recommendations which had been unfinished at the point of the Committee's last evaluation.

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

- there were over three hundred retained fire fighters in the county, who provided an essential service
- eighteen out the county's twenty-four fire stations were only manned by retained personnel
- the more populated areas of the county were serviced by a mix of whole time and retained fire fighters
- in terms of recommendation 5(b) – the draft Fire-fighter Recruitment Pack/Suite of Materials drew on best practice from other Fire & Rescue Authorities and included a poster to be placed on Employers' notice boards.

Members of the Committee were invited to take away a copy of the draft Recruitment Pack/Suite of Materials and to send any comments to Mr Etheridge.

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

- **What proportion of the county's retained fire fighters were self-employed?**

This data was not collected at present although some self employed retained fire fighters were known to the service. Officers could do some work on this.

The retained fire fighter system was very fluid and there was increasing turnover, with the average length of service being seven years. Anecdotal evidence suggested that people used to stay with the service for about twenty years. The increased turnover resulted in higher costs for the Fire & Rescue Service in terms of training costs, equipment and uniform.

- **Why had length of service amongst retained fire fighters reduced?**

No single factor could be pinpointed. Reasons for the change included:

- the dramatic change in Oxfordshire's communities over the years. For example, many young people from Oxfordshire's small villages and towns could not afford to buy property where they had grown up
- the average length of time in a job was now two years and three months
- many of the cottage industries in the smaller towns and villages had closed down and craftsmen who might have joined the service had moved on
- many of Oxfordshire's towns and villages were now dormitory villages, largely populated by commuters.

- **Could retained fire fighters be recruited through the Fire Cadet scheme?**

Yes, but under equalities legislation prior recognition could not be given to fire cadets. Forty people applied for every whole time fire fighter place and some ex fire cadets became retained fire fighters.

Approximately one hundred young people were on the Fire Cadet Scheme and it was hoped that the scheme could be extended into more of the county's schools.

However, the service was close to getting a BTEC award into schools (awaiting accreditation and currently being trialled in three of the county's schools – Gosford, Marlborough and Woodstock) and if this could be achieved schools could obtain the necessary funding. If the BTEC award was not introduced it was unlikely that the Fire Cadet scheme would be expanded.

The Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer undertook to report to the Committee's next meeting on progress with regard to the BTEC award.

- **Were key worker schemes working in terms of giving fire fighters priority housing?**

There had been four successes: two in relation to the Slade [Fire Station], one at Bampton and one at Goring. Firefighters could obtain key worker housing by virtue of their role but did not necessarily stay in that role.

- **Did the service look at the potential of recruiting retained fire fighters from local firms that employed local people, who might stay in the county for longer?**

The best ambassador to encourage people to become retained fighters was a retained fire fighter in the local area. Station and Watch Managers acted as a support mechanism for this but local knowledge of crews was very important. The service had focused too much on certain employers in the past to its detriment. For example, one major employer decided to relocate, which had ramifications for the service. Knowledge was utilised from fire fighters in stations, who knew who the service should work with and fire fighters actively tried to recruit more retained fire fighters as it was in their interest to do so, as they would then be able to spend more time with their families.

- **Was there a need for more education for local businesses?**

Awareness was not as high as it could be. Articles were being placed in the press to raise awareness of the importance of retained fire fighters. Some areas did not have many local employers.

- **Could more use be made of volunteers?**

Some brigades made use of local people to look after fire hydrants but this still required management and administration. There was not a high cost/benefit associated with the use of volunteers.

- **Did exit interviews take place?**

Yes, for every member of staff that left the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities urged the Committee to take their cars to be washed at the charity car washes held at the county's fire stations and to spread the word about the importance of retained fire fighters.

Mr Etheridge then drew the Committee's attention to the update paper on issues for Fire & Rescue Services in relation to the Working Time Directive, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes.

The Committee then **AGREED** to request the Chief Fire Officer to report back when there were any further developments with regard to the Working Time Directive.

Ms Coldwell undertook to circulate the Minute of the discussion and decision relating to the Working Time Directive - which took place at the April 2009 Council meeting - to all members of this Committee.

10/09 FIRE SERVICE COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM – THE FIRECONTROL AND FIRELINK PROJECTS
(Agenda Item 8)

Mr Colin Thomas (Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Head of Service Support) gave a presentation to the Committee as a background brief on the projects, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes.

The Committee also had before it a written update on progress of the Fire Service Command and Control Room (FiReControl and FireLink Projects) (SSC8).

The Committee asked a number of questions, a selection of which are listed below, together with Mr Thomas's responses:

- **SSC8 – page 3 – Incident Reporting System – it was a concern that the centralised system was not supported out of normal working hours and that crews had been unable to access the system for whole weekends leading to disruption and additional cost to the F&RS.**

This was a purely administrative system and not operationally critical. However, a user group in the South East was lobbying the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to look at the support network.

- **Would the authority be paying rent on the control room whilst waiting for the building to become operational?**

The South East Fire & Rescue Services had decided not to occupy the building at this stage but if they did, they would receive a grant from New Burdens funding to pay the rent until staff were in the building.

- **What were the originally anticipated savings going to be spent on?**

The savings had not been earmarked for a particular area but would have been considered as future efficiency savings for the service and the county council.

Following the questioning session, the Committee thanked Mr Thomas for his informative presentation and requested that the highlight report be

more user-friendly in future (eg less jargon, more comprehensive glossary).

11/09 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda item 9)

The Committee was asked to suggest items from the current Forward Plan on which it may have wished to have an opportunity to offer advice to the Cabinet before any decision was taken.

The Committee noted that the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities would be reviewing the financial implications of the latest version of the FiReControl (Fire Service Regional Control Room Project) Business Case on 14 September 2009 and therefore it would wait until after that time before any further consideration of that matter.

Members noted that Councillor Stratford intended to arrange a number of presentations at future meetings of this Committee on those areas which fell under its remit, in order to increase Members' familiarity prior to any scrutiny activity.

12/09 TRACKING SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item 10)

Report back on advice given by this Committee to the Cabinet, full Council, other scrutiny committees, relevant strategic partnership bodies and other organisations where appropriate.

- Coroner's Bill/Coroner's Caseload and Interaction with Oxfordshire County Council Scrutiny Review

Councillor Mathew reminded the Committee that an update report on the Coroner's Bill/Coroner's Caseload and Interaction with Oxfordshire County Council Scrutiny Review had been circulated to it outside of Committee. Although several of the recommendations had already been carried out, its future direction would be clarified once the Coroner's Bill had been through the House of Lords.

- Debt and **Money** Advice Scrutiny Review

Councillor Mathew reported as follows:

- the above review had originally been raised by Trading Standards as an area worthy of investigation;
- the review had been intentionally restricted to areas such as what Oxfordshire County Council was doing to assist people in debt, its procurement costs and value for money, due to time limitations;
- the Cabinet had not agreed the review recommendations;

- the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer had responded to the Lead Member Review Group on 13 June with commentary on the recommendations and three options: to take no further action, to pick the review up with a new Lead Member Review Group (LMRG) or for previous LMRG members to follow up the recommendations with him;
- Councillor Mathew was of the opinion that Councillors should focus on the interim recommendations and produce a final review to Cabinet and he would wish to participate in any future activity on this.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** to study the Debt and Money Advice Scrutiny Review, together with the Cabinet's response and the commentary on the review recommendations which had been provided by the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer, to enable it, at a future meeting, to decide what, if any, further action, to take in relation to the review.

Ms Coldwell undertook to send both documents to all members of this Committee.

Mr Strick (Head of Service – Community Safety and Trading Standards) gave a short update to the Committee detailing progress currently underway in relation to a number of the review recommendations. Agreement had been obtained in principle for the most serious loan shark cases to be investigated by the specialist Illegal Money Lending Unit run by Birmingham City Council and officers were also working on communication between the advice agencies and the county council.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing.....2009

Foreign LGV's data

The attached spreadsheet provides information regarding foreign lorry drivers and a breakdown of the LGV and foreign LGV stats for the years 2006-2008 and the first three months of 2009.

In summary:

On all roads:

5.5% of Thames Valley collisions involve an LGV (7.5+ tonnes)

1.3 % of Thames Valley collisions involve a foreign LGV

Therefore, 23.8% of collisions involving an LGV actually involve a foreign LGV

On motorways:

22.1% of Thames Valley motorway collisions involve an LGV (7.5+ tonnes)

9.5% of Thames Valley motorway collisions involve a foreign LGV

Therefore, 42.9% of motorway collisions involving an LGV actually involve a foreign LGV

So what are we doing...?

The Roads Policing department currently uses Operation Mermaid to target HGVs and conducts some 10 – 15 formal operations targeting large goods vehicles each year, this is a national initiative. We work in partnership with VOSA, the Benefits Agency, the Highways Agency, the Motor Insurers' Bureau and other agencies at these checks.

Following the recent introduction of the change in the Road Safety Act 2006, regulations have been introduced to deal with Roadside Deposits, Graduated Fixed Penalties and Immobilisation. Roads Policing are rolling out Roadside Deposits and Graduated Fixed Penalty notices to target these very offences and offenders. We are currently in the process of training and re-skilling officers to equip them to deal with tachographs, digital tachographs and LGV prohibition. Some 30 officers will be trained to issue these tickets.

With the roll out of roadside deposits the Road Safety Constables will be increasing the numbers of checks on the motorway. As part of the training process, some 10 – 12 checks will be carried out over a 3 month period. Depending on the issues uncovered this will be continued with appropriate tasking.

In addition the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership has 5 officers trained in this area of expertise and is currently looking to take on a 6th officer to work with the Highways Agency to target some of these specific issues.

Currently the Road Safety Team Constables are undertaking planning with the Highways Agency to highlight the issues of fatigue to drivers of all vehicles with a campaign in October around the M4 Corridor.

In addition the road safety team is planning to introduce an initiative from Germany (Operation Stamisch) where officers will engage drivers to gain intelligence about companies and drivers whilst giving advice to drivers on general driving in the UK. This is gathering support from other partners including the Highways Agency, Motor Insurers' Bureau and VOSA.

Foreign registered LGV statistics (collisions)

All collisions in Thames Valley

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	132	111	89	15	347
Serious	878	847	767	159	2651
Slight	6319	5880	5509	1171	18879
Total	7329	6838	6365	1345	21877

All collisions in Thames Valley involving an LGV

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	16	14	9	1	40
Serious	48	51	45	6	150
Slight	369	329	261	56	1015
Total	433	394	315	63	1205

5.5% % of TV collisions involving an LGV

All collisions in Thames Valley involving a foreign LGV

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	0	2	2	0	4
Serious	8	10	4	1	23
Slight	112	78	59	11	260
Total	120	90	65	12	287

1.3% % of TV collisions involving a foreign LGV

23.8% of LGV collisions involve a foreign LGV

MOTORWAYS

All collisions on Thames Valley Motorways

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	17	12	13	1	43
Serious	71	68	59	10	208

Slight	654	631	498	114	1897
Total	742	711	570	125	2148

All collisions on Thames Valley Motorways involving an LGV

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	3	5	2	0	10
Serious	20	11	14	3	48
Slight	159	140	101	17	417
Total	182	156	117	20	475

22.1% % of TV motorway collisions involving an LGV

All collisions on Thames Valley Motorways involving a foreign LGV

	2006	2007	2008	2009 (3 mths)	Total
Fatal	0	2	2	0	4
Serious	6	3	3	0	12
Slight	83	58	39	8	188
Total	89	63	44	8	204

9.5% % of TV motorway collisions involving a foreign LGV

42.9% of motorway LGV collisions involve a foreign LGV