



**East Herts District Council
Community Scrutiny Task & Finish Group**

Community Safety

Task: With partnership resources reducing, how should the Community Safety Partnership prioritise the activities it supports?

Interim report to Community Scrutiny

7th November 2011

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Introduction

This Task and Finish group was set by the Community Scrutiny Committee, with the intention of providing advice to the Community Safety Partnership Board, a multi agency group made up of senior representatives of various different agencies. This report deals with one of two subjects that the group has been asked to look at, namely partnership funding and public reassurance.

The Task and Finish group was invited to make:

- Recommendations about future grant allocations
- Recommendations about how the East Herts Public Space Surveillance camera network should be funded
- Identify high, medium and low risks to how the CSP priority – keeping crime levels low and improve public confidence through reassurance and crime prevention measures – can be delivered.
- Highlighting activity that effectively contributes to delivering the CSP priority.

The first two items are the subject of this interim report and are timed to coincide with the budget process.

Methodology

Members were provided with detailed information about the projects that were currently funded by the Community Safety Partnership, including feedback from the recent Conversation Café and Rural Conference.

- Taxi Marshals
- PCSOs
- Diversionary activities
- Life Project
- JAG (Operational response) pot

Each was discussed in turn with members considering the relative merits, measurable outcomes and impact of the schemes. It quickly became apparent that each scheme was valuable and contributed to addressing the Partnership Reassurance priority. The group consequently considered how withdrawal of any project would impact upon the reassurance priority.

The group agreed that it was necessary to construct list with projects in an order which reflected the “least worst” option for making cuts or withdrawing funding.

Report

Taxi Marshals:

Taxi marshals disperse and clear people (potential victims as well as aggressors) as quickly as possible away from Hertford town centre. This prevents crowd build up and reduces the opportunity for confrontation. Seen as a visible, capable guardian and provide a focal point and reassuring presence.

The group recognised that their value was difficult to evidence through quantitative data as their role is largely preventative. It was recognised that prevented events may not be discovered and therefore would be very difficult to measure.

The group heard how local people and those living in Hertford town centre reported that things are better since the scheme started. A local councillor confirmed the positive impact

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reported by local residents, which prompted concern over the negative impact that their withdrawal could have on the ‘reassurance’ message to public especially if coupled with cut backs in other community safety funding/projects.

The group were made aware of the different sources of funding for taxi marshals, including a Hertford Town Council Contribution, EHDC contribution and match funding by the County Council.

The group agreed that

- Realistically, the scheme impacted upon a limited number of people in a limited area and is of generally of ‘no interest’ to EH residents across most of the district.
- Hertford town operated reasonably well on a Thursday (“the new Friday”) when marshals were not on duty.
- Other town centres operated well without such a scheme
- Often doormen at establishments elsewhere can fulfil the same role

After some further discussion on overlap of roles between police, taxi marshals and street pastors – members concluded:

- Taxi Marshals have value but should be funded by contributions from the licensed trade/night time economy outlets which benefit from the scheme.
- With no strong local PubWatch or town business body, the idea would need the active support/input of the Town Centre Manager.
- Members proposed that the levy could be based on the customer capacity of the outlet and the length of their opening hours (after midnight).
- The CSP board should work towards moving the funding responsibility across on a voluntary standing in the first instance but that new Localism proposals should provide a route to more formal imposition of collecting this levy as part of the conditions of licensing.

Decision: The group agreed that despite having introduced and supported taxi marshals in Hertford, it reluctantly recommends that the CSP consider withdrawing its contribution for this project whilst exploring suggestions about alternative funding.

Diversionsary Activities:

The group was again presented with detailed information including the most recent evaluation report. The group were impressed that despite funding having already been cut from £7K to £2.5K, statistics shown to members illustrated the high number of young people who had been involved in activities in the last year, demonstrating the demand.

The group noted that because of the relatively low cost of this project, withdrawing funding would provide very little resource to other projects.

The group were informed that the activities were so popular because they changed every year as they were based on demand and requests from young people themselves.

The group heard how the organisers benefited from equipment which had already been purchased and was now available for use every year and so the main costs were essentially venue hire and transport costs. Providing transport is vital to get involvement with young people in rural communities with poor public transport.

Members heard about low cost/high attendance events such as Rock at the Castle which took place on Halloween 2010. The group also heard of police reports of disturbances by

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youths overturning cars this Halloween and noted that no such concert had taken place this year. The group noted national concerns about opportunities for young people generally.

Members valued the project and were impressed with the amount done on very little funding. It recognised that much more could be done at very little extra cost.

The group suggested:

- activities which attract high attendance and have lowest cost should be used as far as possible to get value for money
- explore use of more school and other partner premises/equipment/minibuses to lower costs where possible
- County Councillors with a request to use some of their ‘personal’ Locality Budget to fund all/part of an activity going on in their area.

Decision: The group recognised the value for money provided by this project and agreed to recommend that the CSP continues with this funding

PCSOs:

An additionally funded PCSO is allocated to each of the following:

- Stanstead Abbots/Ware
- Hertford Sele
- Bishop’s Stortford North
- Bishop’s Stortford South

The group received detailed quarterly activity reports provided by police as well as a summary sheet. These activity reports are the same as those routinely published in the Members Information Bulletin. This information summarised the activities of “our” 4 PCSOs.

The group recognised the extent the officers could be considered “ours” from the different funding sources;

- SSCF Grant contribution
- LAA Performance Reward Grant contribution
- Local Police contribution (matching)
- East Herts Council contribution

The group recognised the fragility of the funding sources for these officers. The amount of Grant funding and Performance Reward Grant (currently used towards PCSOs) is not known for next or future years – and it cannot be counted on. If East Herts signs a new SLA to continue with 4 PCSOs then any loss of grant funding would have to be made up by the council resulting in a higher expenditure than currently. The group found this to be unsustainable. However, need to balance any cuts in PCSOs with the negative reassurance message to the public.

The group again noted how difficult it was to measure real value. Much of PCSOs work is preventative (as described previously above re Taxi Marshals). They have time to talk, offer a reassuring presence on the streets, become the visible face of policing and crucially produce/report community intelligence. It was noted that PCSOs provide much more than bare statistics can show, and hence the group noted the ‘freetext’ reports alongside the figures.

It was noted that the number of times these PCSOs used their enforcement powers is very limited, although a new tranche of traffic penalty fixed notices have been added to their existing powers. In an area like East Herts, the likelihood of them happening to come

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across a crime as they walk around is very low – so ‘arrests’ will be minimal. The group acknowledged that Policing is intelligence led and the PCSO contribution to this is important, especially when they get to know an area and its residents very well and vice versa. The group also agreed that continuity adds value to their role and outcomes.

The group agreed that whilst the officers should be ancillary or extra to usual policing cover, the nature of their role has, in reality, been absorbed in to core resources as other police funding has been reduced over recent years.

The group had concerns that with further reductions in funding, the police could withdraw PCSOs from any where as they deem fit for operational reasons as they have the management of these officers.

Recommendation: That EH should actively work with the police to promote and help recruit more “Specials” to work within their local communities. Any additional special constables could be used as a positive message to counter any negative response to the reduction in PCSOs operating in the district.

Decision: The group accepted how difficult this decision was, but unanimously agreed that they would recommend that partnership funding should be reduced incrementally as the grant diminished. The Police should decide, on an operational basis, which posts would be the ‘least worst’ to cut.

LiFE:

Members heard that this project is part of a national Fire and Rescue Service scheme and is widely thought of as being the most successful youth diversion scheme existing. As such the group understood why in recent years the CSP has strongly supported this project. The group heard that as grant income has reduced, the allocations have reduced accordingly, in recent years from £10K to £6K and now down to £4K this year.

The group understands that the project has sought and secured some other third party funding – including County Councillors allocating some of their locality budgets to it. The group agreed on the success of the scheme but noted that the analysis provided by the organisers was 5 years out of date, so current impressions are anecdotal.

Members decided that LiFE would be most likely to continue even without CSP funding and they agreed that the courses definitely had merit.

Recommendation: Members noted that the course is very intensive and wondered whether there was some scope for exploring a “LiFE Light” option which would link up with “Diversion Plus”.

Recommendation: Members would like to see a Post-LiFE follow up scheme so the previous good work could be consolidated with some follow up on/with ‘graduates’ from previous LiFE courses to touch base with them, remake contact, re-engage and maybe see whether they might be in a position to move on into other mainstream community agencies or voluntary groups.

Despite strong support from the CSP in recent years, the group has no alternative but to reluctantly recommend withdrawal of funding for this project.

JAG:

This is the only operational funding available for responding to specific, identified needs on the street in respect of community safety. The group received a summary of recent projects

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(2009/10 and 2010/11) and noted that particularly useful, well received and reassuring projects have been

- Tack marking equipment and Hare coursing warning signs
- Police cycles and riding kit
- Pagers for intelligence gathering and community alerts - RIGS
- Funding support for Street Pastors and Neighbourhood Watch.

The group noted that because of the relatively low cost of this project, withdrawing funding would provide very little resource to other projects.

Members thought that having an unallocated ‘contingency’ budget of 5% (of whatever the final budget for 2012/13 turns out to be) was vital. It would allow flexibility and a quick response to any identified need. This in itself would be reassuring and give a positive message.

Members agreed to recommend to the CSP that they continue with this level of funding.

In Summary:

Members thought all existing schemes have merit, make a positive contribution to community safety, help to reassure the public and contribute to making EH a safe place to live and work in. Making any cuts is challenging and they have looked at the ‘least worst’ options.

The group decided that as the extent of future funding cuts were unknown as yet, they recommended a ranking order for making cuts in the funding outlining which should ‘go’ first, through to the one which should have the funding ‘protected’ as far as possible.

Reduction of funding should apply to this order of items:

First	LiFE (as national scheme and has alternative funding sources)
Second	Taxi Marshals
Third	PCSOs (in 0.5 FTE increments)
Fourth	Diversionsary activities
Fifth	JAG pot

BS HCS&HS

Recommended CSP grant funding strategy

This is a list of CSP funded projects which the Community Scrutiny (Task and Finish group) has reviewed in detail. They have been ranked in order should grant funding further reduce. The project which the Scrutiny committee recommend the CSP should withdraw first is listed at the top with the remainder following in order.

Project	Discussion points	Recommendations	Decision
LiFE project	<p>Successful youth diversion scheme</p> <p>Funding has been reduced already</p> <p>Some alternate funding already secured</p> <p>Analysis out of date.</p> <p>LiFE likely to continue even without EH funding</p> <p>All agreed that the courses definitely had merit.</p>	<p>Members wondered whether there was scope for exploring a “LiFE Light” option which would link up with “Diversion Plus”.</p> <p>Members would like to see a Post-LiFE follow up scheme so the previous good work could be consolidated with some follow up on/with ‘graduates’ from previous LiFE courses to touch base with them, remake contact, re-engage and maybe see whether they might be in a position to move on into other mainstream community agencies or voluntary groups.</p>	<p>Despite strong support from the CSP in recent years, the group has no alternative but to reluctantly recommend that the CSP consider withdrawal of funding for this project.</p>
Taxi Marshals	<p>Recent HCC evaluation considered</p> <p>The scheme impacts upon a limited number of people in a limited area.</p> <p>Hertford town operated reasonably well when marshals were not on duty.</p> <p>Other town centres operated well without</p>	<p>Taxi Marshals have value but should be funded by contributions from the licensed trade/night time economy outlets which benefit from the scheme.</p> <p>With no strong local PubWatch or town business body, the idea would need the active support/input of the Town Centre Manager.</p>	<p>The group noted that despite having introduced and supported taxi marshals in Hertford, it reluctantly recommends that the CSP consider withdrawing its contribution for this project whilst noting suggestions about alternative funding.</p>

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	<p>such a scheme</p> <p>Often doormen at establishments elsewhere can fulfil the same role</p>	<p>Members proposed that the levy could be based on the customer capacity of the outlet and the length of their opening hours (after midnight).</p> <p>The CSP board should work towards moving the funding responsibility across on a voluntary standing in the first instance but that new Localism proposals should provide a route to more formal imposition of collecting this levy as part of the conditions of licensing.</p>	
<p>PCSOs</p>	<p>The fragility of the different funding sources. Liabilities should other funding fail.</p> <p>Fewer PCSOs and the reassurance message.</p> <p>Difficulty of measuring value. Bare statistics and PCSOs preventative role.</p> <p>Improved communications between police and public.</p> <p>Volume of community intelligence. Excellent local knowledge.</p> <p>Use of any enforcement powers</p> <p>Role of PCSOs in intelligence led policing</p> <p>PCSOs - Ancillary or absorbed into core police establishment</p>	<p>Continuity adds value to their role and outcomes.</p> <p>East Herts should actively work with the police to promote and help recruit more Special police constables to work within their local communities.</p> <p>Any additional special constables could be used as a positive message to counter any negative response to the reduction in PCSOs operating in the district.</p>	<p>The group accepted how difficult this decision was, but unanimously agreed that they would recommend that partnership funding should be reduced incrementally as the funding diminished.</p> <p>The Police should decide on an operational basis, which posts would be the 'least worst' to cut. This could be by 0.5 of a post at a time as per available funding.</p>

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	Increasing likelihood of abstraction.		
Diversionsary activities	<p>Problem focussed activities, chosen by participants.</p> <p>High number of young people involved despite funding cuts, demonstrating demand.</p> <p>Withdrawing funding would provide very little resource to other projects.</p> <p>Existing equipment and resources in place.</p> <p>Main costs limited to venue hire and transport costs. Support for rural communities with poor public transport.</p> <p>Diversion can be focused at times of likely problems – ie Halloween</p> <p>National picture about opportunities for young people generally.</p> <p>Much more could be done at very little extra cost.</p>	<p>Activities which attract high attendance and have lowest cost should be used as far as possible to get value for money.</p> <p>CSP to explore use of more school and other partner premises/ equipment/ minibuses to lower costs where possible</p> <p>The CSP approach County Councillors with a request to use some of their ‘personal’ Locality Budget to fund all/ part of an activity going on in their area.</p>	<p>Decision: The group recognised the value for money provided by this project and agreed to recommend that the CSP continues with this funding</p>
Joint Action Group ‘pot’	<p>This is the only operational funding available for responding to specific, identified needs on the street in respect of community safety.</p> <p>Recent projects were particularly useful and well received.</p>	<p>An unallocated ‘contingency’ budget of 5% (of whatever the final budget for 2012/13 turns out to be) was vital. It would allow flexibility and a quick response to any identified need. This in itself would be reassuring and give a positive message.</p>	<p>Members agreed to recommend to the CSP that they continue with this level of funding.</p>

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	Relatively low cost. Flexibility and quick response to any identified need.		
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