

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH  
ON 13 JANUARY 2014**

**Present:** Councillors D Over (Chairman), D McKean, D Sanders, D Harrington N Sandford and E Murphy

**Officers in**

<b>Attendance:</b>	Adrian Chapman	Head of Neighbourhood Services
	Gary Goose	Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager
	Sgt Roy McMichael	British Transport Police
	Neil Darwin	Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough
	Dania Castagliuolo	Governance Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lamb.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meetings Held on 18 November 2013**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2013 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Presentation from Transport Police – Railway Crossings**

The report was presented to the Commission at the request of the Chairman. Sargent Roy McMichael – British Transport Police, introduced the report and delivered a presentation. The following key points were highlighted within the presentation:

Previous Actions:

- Council members had been invited to see a crossing van in action
- Concerns of Council Members had been passed on to the Network Rail regarding increasing train speeds at Foxcovert Crossing.
- A school liaison visit to Peakirk Primary School to present on crossing safety had been arranged.

Level Crossing Offences Summary:

Road Traffic Act Offences:

- Dangerous Driving
- Careless Driving
- Failing to conform to a traffic signal

Railway Specific Offences:

- Obstruction of a train with or without intent
- Endangering the safety of a train
- Failure to fasten a crossing gate
- Failure to obey a safety instruction
- Trespass on a railway

Typical Court Sanctions:

22/02/2012 – Sandy Level Crossing – Dangerous Driving:

- Community Order was made until 28/08/2013.
- Unpaid work requirement for 200 hours.
- Supervision requirement
- Licence or counterpart endorsed
- Disqualified for holding or obtaining a driving licence for 12 months

11/02/2013 – March Level Crossing – Careless Driving:

- £100 fine.
- Six point licence endorsement

16/04/2013 – Helpston Level Crossing – Careless Driving:

- £400 fine.
- Four point licence endorsement.

26/05/2013 – Helpston Level Crossing – Careless Driving:

- £310 fine.
- Six point licence endorsement.

29/04/2013 – Foxton Level Crossing – Failing to conform to a traffic signal:

- £190 fine.
- 3 Month driving disqualification.

Other Disposals:

- Police Cautions
- Driver Improvement Programme

Enforcement included:

Proactive:

- Overt/Covert officer presence
- Mobile Crossing Camera Van
- Static Crossing Camera

Reactive:

- Police Investigation and follow up.

Education:

- Network Rail 'Run the Risk' Campaign
- International Level Crossing Awareness Day – 07/05/2013
- Web based public safety information
- Network Rail and British Transport Police 'Rail Life' Campaign.

The Commission was asked to consider the presentation made by Sergeant Roy McMichael and make any recommendations.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that promotion work could be carried out through Peterborough City Council's Facebook and Twitter pages. *Members were advised that Andy Trotter, ACPO Media Chief, was the lead for this work and to contact him for any joint work.*
- Members queried whether intelligence was shared from Cambridgeshire Constabulary as the British Transport Police were the only police presence left in rural areas. *Members were advised that the National Intelligence model was designed for Cambridgeshire Constabulary to pass on information to the British Transport Police on a regular basis. Duty vehicles would also listen in on Cambridgeshire Constabulary's radio channels and assist if needed.*
- Members commented that it seemed a third of all offences took place in the north of Peterborough and queried whether cameras should be installed in the worst areas. *Members were informed that reports of crime came from signallers or railway staff, although it would be useful to have cameras at every crossing.*
- Members queried as the population was increasing in rural areas, the frustration levels of closed crossings would get high and increase the number of people not waiting at level crossings. *Members were informed that the proportion of bad drivers would most likely increase with the increase in population.*
- Members queried whether there were resources in place for the British Transport Police to regularly visit primary and secondary schools. *Members were advised that there was only one School Liaison Officer available at present who was based in London, therefore had a very large area to cover. This gap in cover had been recognised and that is where the 'Rail Life' scheme came in. Sgt McMichael advised the Commission that he had volunteered to visit schools in Peterborough and was currently awaiting training.*
- Members commented that Cambridgeshire Constabulary had virtually withdrawn its police presence from rural areas and it would be valuable for the presence of the British Transport Police to be noted by them driving or walking around rural communities as this would be reassuring for residents.
- Members queried if the expansion of the rail network use to Lincoln had an effect on the Foxcovert Crossing. *Members were advised that no issues had been raised regarding this crossing.*

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission agreed for Sgt Roy McMichael from the British Transport to investigate whether train speeds and the volume of traffic passing through the Foxcovert Crossing had increased and what mitigation Network Rail had undertaken to reduce the risk to pedestrians.

## **5. Crime and Disorder in Rural Areas**

The report was introduced by the Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager, at the request of the Commission, to give an update on the current position in relation to crime and disorder in rural areas, as well as the strategies employed to reduce crime and disorder.

Community Safety Partnerships were formed as a result of legislation produced in the late 1990's and were an acknowledgement that crime and reducing crime was not the remit of the police alone.

The key issues raised within the report were as follows:

- **Vulnerable people and groups** – The Partnership would ensure that vulnerable people and groups were identified and supported appropriately and not disproportionately suffer as victims of crime.
- **Antisocial Behaviour/Quality of Life and Road Safety Services** – The partnership would prioritise work around Antisocial Behaviour and quality of life issues within the city.
- **Integrated Offender Management** – The Partnership would continue to support the view that a relatively small number of individuals had a disproportionate impact upon crime levels in the city and that targeted work with these individuals would have the biggest impact upon levels of recorded crime.
- **Domestic Abuse** – The Partnership would continue to prioritise, develop and improve the city's response to Domestic Abuse.
- **Reducing the Harm Caused by Substance Misuse** – The Partnership would continue to support the development and delivery of high class modern drug and alcohol services for the city based upon the latest Government drug and alcohol strategies.
- **Dwelling burglary** – The Partnership would continue to prioritise burglary as a core indicator of levels of serious acquisitive crime and support work that drove down burglary further.
- **Violent Crime Linked to the Night-Time Economy** – The city would continue to prioritise its response to violent crime in particular violent crime linked to the night-time economy.
- **Racially Aggravated Offences and Hate Crime** – The Partnership would continue to recognise the special impact of racially aggravated offences and hate crimes in all its forms.
- **Sustainability, Performance, Value for Money and Communication** – The Partnership recognised the drivers that posed a potential threat to sustainability of current structures and would look to increase sustainability in order to maintain and improve the city's safety and feelings of safety.

The Commission was asked to scrutinise levels of crime and disorder and to consider and comment upon the crime reduction strategies.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members were concerned with the significant reduction of Police presence in rural areas and commented that rural communities felt let down by this reduction. The last police panel meeting reported that rural crime had risen, this installed fear in to the communities. *The Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager informed members that although there was little police presence in rural areas, there was significant unseen work taking place.*
- Members queried what the One Service was, which was mentioned in 4.3 of the report. *Members were advised that the One Service (Social Impact Bond) was a service in Peterborough which offered rehabilitation to people who had served a short term prison sentence.*
- Members asked:
  1. Were there plans to hold future Safer Peterborough Partnership Meetings in public?
  2. Some of the money from the Police and Crime Commissioner could be used for rural communities.
  3. For further explanation on antisocial behaviour, how it would fit in to the plan and who would be the lead on it.

*Members were advised that:*

1. *Would be referred back to the Safer Peterborough Partnership.*
2. *The Police and Crime Commissioner had the entire Police budget.*

3. *The Council had developed its own antisocial behaviour team. At the same time the Police and registered Social Landlords were dealing with antisocial behaviour there was a lack of discussion between partners. These had now merged together and held regular meetings to understand issues around antisocial behaviour.*
- Members asked for the following to be considered in the refreshed Safer Peterborough Partnership Plan:
    1. Exploitation of migrant workers.
    2. Environmental Crime
    3. Illegal Hare Coursing
    4. Wildlife Protection Officer
    5. Farm Watch
    6. Domestic Violence as a priority
  - Members commented that there was no visible policing in rural areas and queried if there had been a reduction in Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's). *Members were advised that there had not yet been a reduction.*
  - Members requested that an officer came to the rural communities to give them information on the Safer Peterborough Partnership.
  - Members were concerned that the work that the PCSO's had achieved would be lost due to the recent lack of PCSO's on patrol in villages.
  - Members queried whether there were any campaigns in place to inform people of crime trends. *Members were advised that the Neighbourhood Policing and Antisocial Behaviour teams were dealing with this aspect. Their Campaigns were about predicting and preventing.*
  - Members commented that they would like some recognition for the rural areas of the city.

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission agreed for the Safer and Stronger Peterborough Strategic Manager to:

- Inquire if the Safer Peterborough Partnership had any plans to hold any future meetings in public.
- Give presentations to Parish Councils regarding the Safer Peterborough Partnership and its remit.
- Provide feedback on the criminal damage on the open space in Eye.

## **6. Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership**

The report which set out how the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership was addressing rural issue was introduced by the Chief Executive of Opportunity Peterborough.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that when the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was formed there had been two concerns. 1) The lack of accountability and transparency. 2) Cambridge would dominate. Both of these fears had been fulfilled. *Members were informed that Government did not believe that the LEP should meet in public. Cambridge did receive ministerial visits when they wanted which usually generated them some form of income. The LEP board felt that transport on the A14 was the biggest issue therefore that is where a lot of the money would be spent.*
- Members queried what was being done to get business opportunities in rural villages and the existing employment sites up and running. *Members were informed that a*

*proactive campaign was being run to promote all of the business units. The reason there had not been many business opportunities in rural areas was due to the state of the economy.*

- *Members queried whether Peterborough was engaged in the A47 and its under capacity on the stretch from Thorney through Eye and to the A113, Junction 39. Members were informed that there was a strategic alliance in progress, led by Norfolk, which was going to cover the entire stretch. Guyhirn and the A1139 had been recognised as a priority.*
- *Members were concerned that if these business sites were not used for business then developers would use the land for housing. Members were informed that the planners needed to ensure that the land allocated was in the correct place for business use. One of the biggest problems for Peterborough was that there was a lot of land allocated that was not in the correct place for businesses..*
- *Members were advised that Opportunity Peterborough was commissioned by Growth and Regeneration. A 30% cut in funding had been given to Opportunity Peterborough which would make a big impact.*
- *Members queried whether Peterborough's representation had been strong enough to give it a fair chance as other local economies were expanding and completing projects that Peterborough seems to be missing. Members were informed that the biggest strategic block was Central Government.*
- *Members commented that the LEADER programme and the Rural Strategy was essential.*

### **Action Agreed**

The Commission agreed for the Chief Executive of Opportunity Peterborough to:

- Draft a letter on behalf of the commission to the Member of Parliament for Peterborough to advise him of the need for help with employment and businesses in Peterborough.
- Give feedback from the Commission to the Local Enterprise Partnership, encouraging them to hold their meetings in public, due to the large amounts of public funds they were spending.

## **7. Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Commission received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Commission's work programme.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission noted the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of key Decisions.

## **8. Work Programme**

Members considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2013/14 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission agreed to add the following items to the Work Programme:

- Local Produce (to possibly include a food exhibition)

- Fracking

*The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.25pm*

CHAIRMAN

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