

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 6
16 March 2015	Public Report

Report of the Head of Housing and Health Improvement and the Head of Community and Safety Services

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KEEPING RURAL COMMUNITIES SAFE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report follows a similar but broader report that was debated by the Committee in January 2015, and contains recommendations for progressing a smaller number of initiatives that will contribute to rural community safety and confidence.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the committee scrutinises the content of this report and agrees the various recommendations for progressing individual projects that are contained throughout this report, specifically at sections 4.1.3, 4.1.4 (iii), 4.2.1, 4.2.2 (iv), 4.3.2.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In January 2015 a report was provided to members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities with an overview of the activities that are and could be delivered in the rural areas of Peterborough, to ensure that crime levels within the rural community remain relatively low and community confidence remains high. The report explored some sustainable alternatives that would maintain safety and confidence in rural communities with a more local focus within a very challenging financial landscape.
- 3.2 During the debate in January 2015, the Committee focussed primarily on three initiatives, namely:
- Rural Specials (including the Employers' Specials Scheme)
 - Neighbourhood Watch including Farm Watch
 - Use of volunteers (other than Specials).
- 3.3 This report presents some further context to these three initiatives and recommends a way forward for each.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 Rural Specials Initiative

- 4.1.1 The committee may be aware that Cambridgeshire Constabulary has recently launched the Rural Special Constable Scheme. It consists of six Special Constables (working from Police HQ) who will be tasked to concentrate on rural crime across the county when they are on duty. This is the first step and if successful it is hoped that it will be rolled out to each district.

4.1.2 Officers have made contact with Victor Kerlin who is the Head of Cambridgeshire Special Constabulary. He has provided an update stating that the initial indications are that the scheme is working well, although the team is relatively small when considering the scale of the area and size of the community that they are attempting to serve. However through being intelligence-led and focusing work on their priorities they have been able to make some impact.

4.1.3 The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation for the Chair to formally approach Victor Kerlin and emphasise our support for the scheme. The purpose would be to make it clear that if there is to be an expansion then the Committee would not only support it but would appreciate that they start in the Peterborough area. It would also be helpful to receive back from Victor ideas that the Committee might support through, for example, the new Rural Strategy to promote the scheme or to properly resource it.

4.1.4 Employers Special Scheme (ESP)

(i) This scheme seeks to develop partnerships between employers, their staff and Cambridgeshire Constabulary. It would ask companies to encourage their members to become volunteer Special Constables and (depending upon the individual circumstances of the organisation) agree to further support their staff members by assisting them in the performance of their duties. An example would be agreeing to allow the volunteer to do 4 hours of duty in the company's time if they have already done 16 voluntary hours.

(ii) A number of businesses in the Peterborough area have already been approached and the initial action has been positive. This includes the city council, Cross Keys Homes and the BGL Group.

(iii) The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that officers, during the next few months, deliver a number of recruitment presentations initially to local rural businesses in order to promote this initiative. Whilst this will be led by the Special Constabulary, the Safer Peterborough Partnership would support and give assistance where necessary.

4.2 **Neighbourhood Watch including Farm Watch**

4.2.1 Rural Watch Patrols

(i) Countryside Watch and Farm Watch are part of the Neighborhood Watch scheme and operate specifically to serve farm and rural land owners. There are around 800 members in Cambridgeshire, with 95 percent of those being farmers, so effectively it is a farm watch scheme. There are around 130 members in the Peterborough area, with the majority of those being in north and east Peterborough.

(ii) Officers have linked in with the Countryside watch co-ordinator, Stefan Gidlow. The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation for there to be a targeted recruitment campaign which will take place in the form of rural crime evenings. These will be held in tractor dealerships as experience has shown us that this is where the farming community tend to prefer.

(iii) It is further recommended that we work closely with crime prevention officers from the Constabulary. It has been identified that whilst these officers are visiting victims of crime they will be able to communicate countryside watch messages as well as promote the benefits of joining the scheme. There is also capacity to do joint visits which will demonstrate the close working relationship that exists.

(iv) The Constabulary are increasing staff awareness of the scheme through scheduled training days. All shift reliefs in Peterborough will be receiving this input through an electronic interactive training package. This will take place in April and May.

- (v) With the Committee's support the Safer Peterborough Partnership will encourage other agencies to do the same through sharing the training package. Not only does the package raise awareness of the scheme so that officers can engage with possible new members in an informative manner but it gives advice on crime prevention that officers can pass on. Finally it gives staff an insight into the work that Farm Watch does and demonstrates how the scheme can assist agencies with issues such as hare coursing etc.

4.2.2 Neighborhood Watch

- (i) Neighbourhood Watch is about local communities working together and with the Police to help make their neighbourhood safer. Neighbourhood Watch schemes can help reduce crime in local areas, and are a great way to help people protect themselves, their family, friends and home. They are also an effective way to create community spirit.
- (ii) There are currently 71 neighbourhood watch schemes in the rural wards of the City:
- 11 in Eye & Thorney Ward
 - 5 in Newborough Ward
 - 12 in Barnack Ward
 - 15 in Glinton & Wittering Ward
 - 28 in Northborough Ward
- (iii) Where schemes work effectively with both Police and other partner agencies the areas do not experience as many problems as non-Neighbourhood Watch areas. The setting up of new schemes is led by Neighbourhood Watch with Police support and there is a committee for Peterborough.
- (iv) The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that a targeted campaign is developed to increase membership in rural communities.

4.3 **Use of volunteers (other than Specials)**

- 4.3.1 The Committee will recall in the previous report that a volunteer scheme could be developed and implemented through the Council's Community Capacity team or with our voluntary sector partners that would co-ordinate volunteers to patrol in rural locations. Volunteers would need to have some affiliation to the community/village that they are patrolling. They would be briefed by the Council so that they are aware of local issues and would have a single point of contact to report non-emergency issues back to. These would be non-confrontational roles with nothing more than citizen powers. Their sole purpose would be to reassure the community and report matters to the relevant authorities, similar to the Council's former Street Leaders scheme.
- 4.3.2 The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that officers visit Parish Councils in order to raise awareness of this scheme and gauge what support there would be for it. If there is sufficient interest this would then be piloted with feedback presented to a future Committee meeting.

5. **IMPLICATIONS**

As previously mentioned, any new schemes specific to rural communities would require investment of time and potentially finance, as well as significant support from rural communities.

6. **CONSULTATION**

The options contained in this report have been developed with the input of Cambridgeshire Police.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

That officers take forward the recommendations made at the Committee meeting, and reports back on progress during the 2015/16 municipal year.

8. NEXT STEPS

That any recommendations made by the committee are acted upon.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

10. APPENDICES

None