

The Community Role in Neighbourhood Policing

As a Neighbourhood Watch lead-coordinator, along with a few hundred others from the city and county, I attended this conference yesterday. There was a common theme throughout that community and police together can reduce crime and make our neighbourhoods a better place to live.

Susannah Fish, Assistant Chief Constable, Nottinghamshire Police Force was the first speaker. She outlined the Force's vision to:

- Cut Crime
- Spend their budget wisely
- Earn the public's trust and confidence

ACC Fish outlined the continuing falling crime figures in the county. Since joining the force in 2004 she has seen annual reductions and attributed these significant improvements to effective partnerships working together. Anti-social behaviour was given no less importance than the crime figures and this behaviour has decreased by 34% since April of this year.

Notts police had an imposed budget saving of £43m over four years. £10m was saved last year and they are on target to save a further £10m this year. In the satisfaction league tables (compiled from victims) Nottinghamshire is currently 7th best nationally out of the 43 forces. Not wishing to be complacent, ACC Fish wants to further improve on this but pointed out this is a far improved situation to being consistently mid-table a few years ago. Confidence in the police force used to be around 40% and has now risen to 60%.

ACC Fish stated that together with the Chief Constable, Chris Eyre, they were determined to further improve the force and that community together helps sustain success, despite the constraints of their budget by:

- **Collaborating** across all areas of the East Midlands, including sharing specialist departments, which achieved significant savings.
- **Estates/Sharing front counters** – In Rushcliffe the police and borough council share a front counter. Beeston police station will close but the new facilities in Gedling and Broxtowe will offer longer opening hours.
- **100% Attendance** – The police will now attend every reported crime
- **Mobile Data** – Most beat officers can now update the control centre via their blackberries. The system is more effective and cheaper than using a “middle man” for updates.
- **Future Plans** – To install computers in response cars to take witness statements. The force is embracing Twenty-first century policing.

ACC Fish said the critical factors for success were:

- Effective partnerships within the community
- Community engagement
- Enforcement, prevention and protection to have a more holistic approach
- Vision – for 1000+ volunteers. She plans to set up a cadet service, in 2013, for young people.

Kenneth Clarke, MP, Minister without Portfolio was the second speaker. He agreed that the reduction in the crime figures in Nottinghamshire were significant but blamed the media for reporting rises in crime when this isn't the case. He

embraced the positive changes in our justice system. He said over the years juries were now more representative of the general public when in the past a juror needed to own property. He felt there were still improvements to be made in reducing desk jobs held by police in favour of civilian staff and in cutting sick leave but had seen the improvements made over the last twenty years since the police force had been organised into neighbourhood teams.

He applauded the moves in the justice system towards concentrating on the victims and felt they had been treated badly in the past. He advised of imminent changes in the prison and probation services, currently being reviewed.

Anti-social behaviour was finally being taken seriously. KC reported of a previous Chief Constable, some ten years ago, saying he couldn't tackle ASB as he didn't have a target for it!

Four speakers gave successful examples of collaboration and community role in solving neighbourhood problems with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Ravensdale Estate, Mansfield – Inspector Neil Williams advised that prior to 2010-11 their budget had been allocated to crime types, e.g. burglary, violence etc. The decision was taken at this time to change their focus to target fifteen specific troubled areas where there was high unemployment and crime and all the relevant agencies – council, fire and rescue, social care etc. came together to work in partnership to tackle the problems. Together they created an analytical document leading to a delivery plan for April 2010- April 2011.

Street drinking around the shops was perceived by the community as a major problem. The council granted, and the police implemented a “Dispersal zone” in this area, allowing the police to ask groups drinking to leave the area. The police had sought approval from 200 local residents and all had supported this action.

The police found that Tuesday and Friday nights were particularly problematic and, with a council grant, set up a youth club on these nights providing **multi-sport activity sessions**. Youth workers were deployed to talk to the young people to find out what they wanted which led to a course being set up teaching them to repair quad bikes plus adventure days were offered. Mansfield FC matched the council's funding and provided a sports leadership course. They targeted the key forty kids who were causing the problems in the area. On a Saturday morning they would learn about nutrition and physical health and in the afternoon were treated to home matches. To stay on the course, they had to stay out of trouble. Insp Williams said one of the young lads was likely to have ended up in prison but through this course he was now a ball collector, for Mansfield FC, on match days.

He continued to say that most of the activities were sports based and didn't always interest the girls, so they set up beauty courses with help from Boots and are currently looking to set up street dancing workshops. Three girls who were on the verge of receiving ASB contracts are now involved in helping to set up future workshops.

Various **Operations** were set up to target hot spots which proved to be successful. The **Housing Department** would send a follow up letter to the family when a youth was found to be drunk (after warnings were given) warning this could affect their tenancy.

Environmental improvements were made to improve the perception of safety in the area. For example, ensuring bulbs in street lighting were replaced more quickly and installation of CCTV.

Community engagement – Unfortunately there are not many NHW schemes in deprived areas but a “safer neighbourhood committee” was set up (like our LCM group). They encouraged joining the alerts scheme – see <http://www.broxtowecommunity.co.uk/> and encouraged extensive use of crime stoppers <http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/giving-information> Last year they sent calendars and this year Christmas cards to each address on the Ravensdale estate, with their key messages to prevent crime and dates for beat surgeries.

Outcome A reduction in all crime except domestic violence, which the police are seeing as a positive for victims to have confidence now in reporting.

Clifton – Chief Insp McCarthy and Insp Nick Waldram told of their successes with community engagement. CI McCarthy illustrated how “intelligence” within policy is critical to success and the public need to feel confident with the police before they will confide. Shespoke of **listening, acting and feeding back.** **ASB** was a major problem in the area. A community face book page was created, by the residents, giving regular updates of incidents. This heightened the residents’ perception of crime. Insp. Waldram joined the group and gave regular police updates to reassure residents of the police presence. They also saw significant reduction in crime using similar operations and schemes as Ravensdale.

Boxing – Marcellus Baz was the first of twocivilian speakers. He is the co-founder and head coach of the KK School of Boxing. He himself, as a boy, had been involved with street gangs but found a way out of this through boxing. He explained how anger and aggression are natural feelings, but they need to be controlled in a positive way. Having been attacked and his hands badly injured, he had to give up his dream of professional boxing so studied sports rehabilitation and got a job with KK Sports Centre. He is now helping young people to break the vicious circle of crime – criminal record – unable to find employment – crime. As well at teaching boxing, they offer mentorship and help with writing CV’s, interview techniques and hold substance misuse workshops. They enforce positive relationships to the young people, particularly the girls. MB hopes to work with other groups. He said, “working together, we can make Nottingham safer.

Radcliffe-on-Trent – David Griffin started his own NHW Scheme in 1999. By 2008 he had brought together 25 local existing schemes. Today, this group has escalated to 49 NHW Schemes.

Police & Crime Commissioner – Paddy Tipping was the final guest speaker. He admitted to being the new kid on the block and that he had a lot to learn but endorsed the common theme of community together. He said police themselves can’t sort out crime; they need to reach out and talk to other people. There are 10million members in NHW nationwide and 100000 in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and he wants to work with us. He believed NHW had not always had the recognition and support that it deserves but said to “count me in” as he needs our support to achieve his aims. He wants to not fight crime but prevent crime; to be the peoples’ commissioner. He can be contacted via his website at <http://www.paddy4pcc.co.uk/contact/>.