

# **SPECIAL MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 9 November 2016

Present: Councillor P Brightmore (Chair)

Councillors	S Foulkes	A Sykes
	J McManus	T Anderson
	C Muspratt	B Berry
	L Reecejones	C Carubia
	T Usher	A Leech (In place of T Jones)
	J Walsh	C Blakeley (In place of T Pilgrim)
	I Williams	A Hodson (In place of L Rowlands)

## **24 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP**

No such declarations were made.

## **25 COMMUNITY PATROL SERVICES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the procedure to be adopted in respect of the matter under consideration, reading out the requisition notice for the benefit of those members of the public in attendance.

The Managing Director for Delivery introduced his report that had been prepared in response to Members' enquiry into an allegation that the Council's Community Patrol service had undertaken security checks at private premises. The report also provided information on the roles and duties of the Community Patrol Service.

Reference was made to a number of report paragraphs 3.4 [part of] to 3.7 that were inadvertently omitted from the initial agenda paper distribution. Copies of the relevant paragraphs were circulated and Members agreed to accept these with the report.

A Member explained that the matter for calling this meeting had been raised, not to attack the Community Patrol Service, but to shed light on the allegation of 'free security'. He also relayed his disappointment at the length of time it had taken to bring this matter to the attention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Managing Director for Delivery informed that Wirral Community Patrol delivers a paid for service undertaking security checks across a range of premises and locations. Some of the premises are private and the typical Service Level Agreement (Contract) requires a physical patrol to proactively visit a location up to 5 times per week depending what level of SLA they had signed up to. As a result, the patrol service is often in a position to be able to drive-by identified ASB 'hot spot' locations without varying too dramatically from their route. He further informed that the allegation from an anonymous employee made to a Councillor stating that the Council's Community Patrol Service were providing 'free security services' to Sherlock House, Manor Road, Wallasey should be viewed in context to other requests, and as no different to many other requests for Community Patrol assistance.

The report explained that to enable Members to understand the amount of time Community Patrol spent on 'drive-bys' of Sherlock House the Head of Community Safety and Transport Services undertook an interrogation of the patrol officers GPS and work data. The outcome of which highlighted the following:

- During the 21 day period between the 13 July and the 9 August Community Patrol undertook 29 'drive-bys' of Sherlock House (some days received multiple visits – weekends, etc).
- No 'drive-by' exceeded 3 minutes in real time at the location.
- In comparing the number of 'drive-bys' undertaken at Sherlock House against a randomly selected 21 different days, measured between March and August 2016, 229 'drive-bys' to hotspots were recorded on these days.

As such, the report concluded that whilst data was unable to provide an accurate picture of the impact, what could be confirmed was that Sherlock House did not receive any preferential treatment, in either prioritisation as a 'hotspot' location or in terms of numbers of 'drive-bys'.

Discussion took place regarding the number of service level agreements, location of the building in question, recording of the report (notified by whom? and when?) and the subject of 'drive by' terminology and procedures.

The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services informed the committee that working as part of a multi-agency team, the incident in question had been raised initially by the Police, and that the site was also in close proximity to Liscard Town Centre which is known to be a 'hotspot' location. He further informed the Committee that Council's Community Safety Officers and Police Officers use very similar terminology but not always the same and 'drive-by' was commonly understood language to both agencies. He also reported that the service had recently undergone a restructure and

that given the direction of travel in terms of the new 2020 pledge and move towards a more integrated service, procedures were being checked, and copies of relevant procedures would be provided to Members subsequent to this meeting.

The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services informed the Committee that the Community Safety Patrol vehicles were each fitted with GPS, enabling records to be checked regarding locations visited and the times spent at this site. He also informed that during the course of regular patrolling the Council's Community Patrol Officers would, by the very nature of their routing, pass by private properties. This would further provide a high visibility, high profile deterrent covering a broader security service than for just Council owned assets or indeed of what the police alone could provide.

The Chair reminded those present that discussion should focus on the matter as raised within the meeting requisition.

A Member referred to e-mail correspondence regarding the 'drive-bys' to private properties and current procedures / protocols for charging, requesting further clarification to ensure that the Council was not moving away from agreed procedures.

The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services referred to the report informing that the Community Patrol Service also offered a paid-for security and alarm monitoring services to a wide customer base, both public sector and private via some 138 Service Level Agreements (SLAs) – tailored to suit requirements - delivering an important income generation role for the Council. He further informed that although 'drive-bys' did not involve Patrol Staff leaving their vehicles, the intelligence gathered as a result of reporting of incidents and general update reports on a daily basis provided valuable information in the identification of 'hotspots' and the ultimate reduction in ASB.

Answering a question from a Member about how a 'hot spot' location was decided, the Head of Community Safety and Transport Services explained that 'Hot Spots' were selected by the number of complaints/reports received by the Police and or the Council about a specific location. He noted that similar intelligence reporting was provided from Ward Councillors and this intelligence would also be added to the 'rich picture' of what constitutes a 'hot spot'.

Discussion took place regarding public sector partnership working and how the arrangements currently in place were of benefit to all, in terms of helping alleviate the impact of financial cuts to the Police and the Council, and identification of 'hotspot' locations – helping target resources to best effect. This included the reporting of fly-tipping, graffiti etc.

A Member asked if Sherlock House had been contacted to inform that a private service (SLA) was available? The Committee was apprised that this was not current practice, but should a request be forthcoming, information on the services available would be provided. The Head of Community Safety & Transport Services reminded the Committee that Community Patrol 'drive-bys' were as a result of locality ASB and not as a security service to any property at that location.

A Member asked about the number of times the Police instruct the Community Patrol Service to take action, and how often did others make similar requests. The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services advised that reports were received from the Police and Ward Councillors regarding anti-social behaviour, and this information was collated to identify 'hotspots'. He informed that, using the Cherry Tree Centre as an example, Community Patrol respond to the location, as opposed to individual businesses.

A Member questioned whether the murder of Jo Cox, MP had affected how Community Service Patrols had operated i.e. why a broken window constituted the need for a 'drive-by'. The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services explained that the security of MP's was a responsibility that fell to the Home Office and therefore the Police, but that Liscard as a location was the 'hotspot' issue, not specifically Sherlock House.

A Member asked if an area is identified as a 'hotspot' and problems continue beyond 6 weeks, would this then be classified as in need of a Service Level Agreement. The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services informed that should anti-social behaviour extend beyond the normal 6 weeks maximum period for 'drive-bys' a multi-agency approach would be undertaken, which would include talking with local businesses as to their responsibilities. This had been the approach taken in parts of Birkenhead.

Members then discussed the trigger points for 'drive-by' patrols, priorities given to incidents of fighting, ASB and property damage, and missed opportunities to increase revenue as a result. Confusion still existed regarding what people were getting for free, and entitlements to 'drive-bys'. In an attempt to clarify this the Head of Community Safety and Transport Services explained that 'drive-bys' could be viewed as a community related response to ASB in a specific location. The Drive-By patrols were intended to offer a deterrent to further ASB and also to collect intelligence from those areas. These are free as they are delivered as part of the wider community safety responsibility for the Council. An SLA was a specific request for security service, with alarm monitoring and alarm response and is a contractual arrangement.

The Managing Director for Delivery noted Members comments and confirmed that this service would definitely be looked at as part of the Council's commercial / income generation programme.

A Member pointed out that should a business decide to enter into an SLA they often get positive outcomes e.g. reduce insurance premiums

Further discussion took place regarding the Council's transformation agenda, restructuring, customer engagement, enhancing the service, generating income and ensuring the process was managed effectively. All Members agreed that the Community Patrol Service provided a highly valued and visible presence, wishing to see it enhanced, without losing sight of its primary function. Mention was made to Magenta Housing and how ASB was handled in these localities. A Member commented that Magenta used to have an SLA but withdrew it, expressing his view that they now have their own ASB team.

It was:

**Proposed** by Councillor C Blakely  
**Seconded** by Councillor A Hodson

*"That a Task and Finish Group be established to carry out a full review of Community Patrol Services and report back to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee".*

**A vote was put and lost (5:10)**

It was then:

**Proposed** by Councillor S Foulkes  
**Seconded** by Councillor A Leech

*"That this Committee notes the report, and commends the work of the Community Patrol Service across the borough in reducing levels of anti-social behaviour. Committee would welcome any initiatives that raise the income from the private sector to support its work as part of ongoing scrutiny of this valued service".*

**RESOLVED: (unanimously) - That**

- 1) this Committee notes the report; and**
- 2) the Committee commends the work of the Community Patrol across the borough in reducing anti-social behaviour; and**

- 3) as part of ongoing scrutiny of this valued service, the Committee would welcome any initiatives that raise the income from the private sector to support the work of the Community Patrol.