

Walsall Strategic Community Reference Group

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 20 March 2014 at Walsall Police Station.

In attendance:

Nirmal Singh (NS)	Sikh Community
Harnik Rama (HR)	University of Wolverhampton
Sandeep Singh (SS)	Sikh Forum
Michael Gladstone (MG)	Mencap/Walsall College
Thomas Hargroves (TH)	Mencap/Walsall College
Pete Griffin (PG)	Mencap/Walsall College
Alison Davies (AD)	Mencap
Mahmood M Sacha (MMS)	Muslim Welfare Society / UMO
Imran M Sacha (IS)	Darlaston Youth Club
Cllr. Rose Burley (RB)	Councillor Bentley/Darlaston North
Elizabeth Vodden (EV)	Over 50's Forum
Elizabeth Kardynal (EK)	EWA CIC, Polish Community
Vasant Mistry (VM)	Hindu Forum
R K Mehmi (RM)	SGRT Darlaston
Chris Wilkes (CW)	Walsall Police
Kevin Pitt (KP)	Walsall Police

Apologies:

Pauline Beckett
Michelle Small
Bill Ellens
Madeleine Holland
Ashley Lovell

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were read and accepted. RB pointed out that she was representing Bentley and Darlaston North ward, not Darlaston South. This error has been corrected.

Matters Arising and Action Updates.

There were no matters arising.

Stop and Search Update

CW introduced himself as the LPU's Detective Chief Inspector and explained that he was standing in for Sue Parker.

To date this year (since April 2013) there have been around 1700 stop and searches in Walsall, a drop of around 59% on last year. This is attributed to improved training and more targeted use of the power. In February 2014 217 people were stopped and searched, a drop of 70.4% on last year. Of these 10.6% (23 people) were arrested.

ACTION – KP to investigate if it is possible to provide information on what offences arrests were made for.

Performance Update.

Hate Crime – last February 8 hate crimes were reported, this year 21 have been reported, a rise of 162%. Of those 19% have been detected. This rise in reports is seen as good as it indicates that people are more willing to report hate crime. So far this year (since April 2013) 228 offences have been reported, of these 44.8% have been detected.

EV asked how Walsall compares with the rest of the West Midlands, CW replied that he didn't have figures but that we compared very well.

Knife crime – so far this year 214 offences have been reported, a drop of 27%. Most often type of knife used was a kitchen knife. Lock or flick knives accounted for just 5 offences, and a dagger 2 offences.

Response times – immediate response (within 15 mins), the target is 90% of calls, Walsall LPU is currently running at 94/95%. Early response (within 1 hour), 94.6% of calls were met within the target time. This puts Walsall LPU as the best in the force.

EK enquired about response times for interpreters, CW replied that it is most important to get an officer to the incident quickly to prevent further harm and therefore there may be a delay in obtaining an official interpreter.

ACTION – KP to investigate possibility of obtaining information about interpreters, nos. for different languages, response, etc.

Estates Update.

CW outlined the plan that will see Walsall neighbourhood teams and the Partnerships Team move to Walsall Civic Centre. It is hoped a contract will be signed with Walsall MBC very shortly. Most other local police functions will move to Bloxwich. The PCC has stated that if front offices close they must be replaced with alternative provision. Channels of communication are changing but the quality of policing will improve. The non-emergency response in the centralised call centre is now better than it was. CW invited the members to visit the non-emergency contact centre.

RM raised concerns about policing in Darlaston if the police station closes. RB added that she was keen to see the Darlaston Neighbourhood team operating from a base in the town, moving them to Bilston was too far away. The response from the neighbourhood team has improved, they are now on the beat a lot more.

CW reassured members that the PCC required any closure to be re-provisioned, i.e. like for like in the local area. The response to any serious incident would come from Walsall. Contact centres can now deploy the nearest resource to an incident, even if not from Walsall LPU.

MS pointed out that the community have lost their base, Darlaston is in between several police stations. Vulnerable communities are often reporting crime as they are too frightened. The community are keen that they should have a police base.

CW explained that the police are looking closely at accessibility, including front offices. This project will take about two years. Re-provisioning will look at using technology to improve access to police.

RB stated that she didn't want communities to lose confidence in local teams.

CW stated that neighbourhood teams will have a local base under re-provisioning.

Recruitment.

Around 25000 applications have been received for constable posts being recruited over the next two years with slightly less than 20% of applicants being from BME backgrounds.

Any Other Business

EK raised the issue of grooming, particularly in relation to European communities. This subject is to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 15 May, 6pm at Walsall Police Station.