

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Agenda Item No.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2003 at 10.00 A.M.**

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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT INTO CRIME & DISORDER
REDUCTION PARTNERSHIPS**

Report of the County Secretary

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Executive Member: Iris Tarry

1. Purpose of report

This report was requested by Ian Laidlaw Dickson. It seeks to examine the effectiveness of the council's input to the 10 crime & disorder reduction partnerships, CDRPs, in the county. This Committee is requested to consider progress made over the last two years and endorse areas for future action.

2. Summary

The county council is represented on the 10 CDRPs through the Crime Reduction Unit. Many of the council's services have a valuable role to play in taking forward and supporting the CDRP's responsibilities. The relationship between our services and the CDRPs works well in most respects and could be improved in others. The demand on the time of officers in service departments continues to pose problems. A typical district based CDRP structure, Appendix 1, is attached.

3. Conclusion

In considering the issues raised in paragraph 4.8 suggested options for the future could be;

- (a) The Committee consider which elements of the criteria listed in paragraph 4.8 they would wish to focus on.
- (b) CRU be requested to identify an improvement plan for submission to this Committee's next meeting.
- (c) Briefing reports be provided to the Crime Reduction Panel.

4.1 Background

4.2 The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory responsibility on the council to work with other agencies to reduce crime & disorder. Section 5 of the Act states that the council is a 'responsible authority' for the purpose of producing a community safety strategy, in partnership with the districts and the Police. From April 2003 this responsibility has been broadened to include the Police Authority and the county council in its role as the Fire Authority.

4.3 The Crime Reduction Unit, CRU, is responsible for the council's strategic lead into the 10 CDRPs. This responsibility includes but is not limited to

- Co-ordinating the council's input to partnership activity across all our services.
- Promoting issues of best practice – what works well for other partnerships?
- Providing the council's agreement to the partnership's spending plans and allocation of resources.
- Co-ordinating partnership activity across the county so that larger projects & plans that cross organisational boundaries can be implemented.
- Ensuring that the work of the Drug Action Team (DAT), is appropriately integrated into the work of the CDRPs (this is part of the Government's national agenda).
- Acting as a link between the partnerships and regional govt. office/Home Office directorates.

4.4 The CRU focuses its contribution to the partnership via attendance on the Responsible Authorities Officer Group, RAOG.- Appendix 1 refers. This group, normally chaired by the district Chief Executive or deputy, is the most strategic group within the partnership structure. It is responsible for managing the performance of the partnership, re-directing resources and providing direction & guidance. The CRU is supported at the RAOG by the CSF Quadrant Manager or Youth Offending Team Manager, YOT. Other council service managers might be requested to attend on a need only basis. The CRU assumes the responsibility to co-ordinated this.

4.5 At an operational level within the partnership structure, through the theme groups/Performance Management Group the CRU provides officer input to,

Working with the district Community Safety Officer to ensure that Home Office financial returns are completed satisfactorily.

Assisting the theme groups in organising their resources so that targets are achieved and services can engage.

Delivering and monitoring cross boundary projects.

Influencing the agendas of police tasking groups to ensure that police activity complements partnership activity.

Merging the workplans of the CDRPs with the work of the DAT, via its annual plan.

Assisting with arranging local and county-wide events that promote the crime & disorder agenda.

4.6 The CRU is supported at this local level by appropriate input from our local services : CSF, (specifically the Youth Service), the Youth Offending Teams, Schools, Road

Safety, HertsHighways, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning, Adult Care Services, Risk Management etc.

4.7 WHAT WORKS WELL

- The council's visible commitment to this area of work has improved, notably so since the creation of the CRU.
- The council is always represented at the 10 RAOGs. This ensures that actions taken at the meeting have the council's endorsement and where agreement cannot be reached an alternative way forward sought.
- The structures of the 10 partnership frameworks are now broadly similar. This was a specific early request from the Crime Reduction Member Panel which the CRU was requested to implement.
- Performance management frameworks are now broadly consistent across all 10 CDRPS. This has largely been due to some initial work around the DAT partnership standards that have been adopted in principle by the CDRPs.
- YOT managers, representing CSF, have been able to improve the contributions that this service can undoubtedly bring to this area of work.

4.8 WHAT COULD WORK BETTER

- Providing the CDRPs with the evidence that the council's mainstream services all have something to contribute to the crime & disorder reduction agenda. There is no doubt that our services can contribute in many ways : a partnership approach to distraction burglary involving ACS, partnership work on focusing on minority groups and joint work on other areas such as combining resources to improve reassurance in rural communities. Other examples are available.
- Successive county council MORI surveys have shown that existing levels of crime & disorder are of concern to our residents. For the council to make a greater impact on reducing crime etc it would be useful if our own services could develop a greater and more in-depth understanding of the crime & disorder agenda and how this could link and even support the development of their own services. This would then allow us to potentially co-ordinate our input to partnership activity in a more organised way; e.g. to prove links between unauthorised absence from schools and local community disorder.
- Crime & disorder is part of a wider agenda of partnership activity across the county. Others include LSPs, preventative strategies, adult/child protection etc. Better relationships between these areas of work e.g. through rationalising the number of meetings would reduce pressure on front line officers.
- An improvement in the understanding by our partners that commitment to this area of work should not be solely judged by attendance at meetings. The CRU receives notification from districts when there is repeated non-attendance of county council

service managers to a particular issue or project. The CRU attempts to construct a compromise solution that allows the project to be appropriately supported. Part of this compromise is a recognition that valuable contributions can be made by our services via other alternative forms of communication. The county council, and indeed other agencies such as health, probation etc are still judged by their ability to support meetings. Some partnerships have shown a willingness to recognise this but for other partnerships there remains scope for improvement.

- Some partners determine the adequacy of the council's contribution as measured by the funds that a service can bring to the partnership table. Partners should be made more aware of the contributions the council already provides through its service plans and mainstream activity. Whilst the importance of readily available budget is self-evident we would wish to see equal commitment from all the districts; yet some districts do not even have access to a dedicated 'community safety' budget.
- More could be done to develop the role of the council's lead chief officers for each district in relation to the crime & disorder agenda. These links back to the previous comment about the need to more closely align our services with the crime & disorder agenda. Greater use could be made of the expertise and authority that the lead chief officers possess to identify solutions to local problems, e.g. no resources available to expand the provision of a particular county council service. The chief officer may be able to identify an alternative way forward which the CRU could then progress in conjunction with the service lead.
- Elected Member input is variable across the community safety (consultation) partnership, Appendix 1, left hand box. Perhaps there is a need to clarify their role/responsibilities within these partnerships so that elected members could work more closely with officers who undertake the core responsibility within CDRPs. Should we do more to co-ordinate officer and elected member input so that partnership effectiveness and county council input is improved? More could also be done to inform elected members about progress at a local level and for members to help us to work towards consistency in this area.
- Each partnership has developed its own way of doing business – some partnerships are more effective than others and the reasons for this are varied. This committee may wish that a further report examines this area in detail.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Rural Implications

6.1 There are no rural implications inherent in this report other than a recognition that some of the CDRPs have rural crime & disorder reduction projects under their management.

Background material referred to by the author while compiling this report:

The Crime & Disorder Act 1998.