

Notes of the meeting of the DOVER TOWN Neighbourhood Forum held on 23 July 2009 at the Dover Town Council offices, Dover at 6.30pm

Present:

Town Councillor	Jan Tranter	Chairman
District Councillor	Marian Munt	
County Councillors	Nigel Collor and Roger Frayne	

Other Councillors, officers, representatives and 6 members of public.

Apologies for absence were received from Town Cllr Chris Precious and Emma Carey KCC.

1. Chairman's welcome

District Cllr Jan Tranter, the new Chairman of the Forum, welcomed those attending.

2. Notes of previous meeting

Were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

3. How Safe Are Our Streets?

Introductions:

The Chairman introduced the panel who would answer questions at the Forum:

Alison Beaumont	-	Kent Community Warden
Don Covus	-	Community Warden
Sgt. Susan Marsden	-	Kent Police
Steve Mellors	-	Crimestoppers
Lindsey Reed	-	PCSO Supervisor
Sally Cohen	-	Parish & Neighbourhood Watch Supervisor

Don Covus: There are 9 KCC Community Wardens in the area, relying on partnership working to build a thorough knowledge of local issues and support prosecutions for crimes in the area. As well as working with the Police, much of a Warden's role involves welfare, especially for young people on the verge of criminal activity. The PACE project (Pathways Accreditation & Continuous Education) run by Dominic Castle provided outreach into schools; Nations United – working with migrant workers from different cultures and not in full-time education; Smart Move – dealing with youth-on-youth crime by workshops and activities such as bike maintenance/security/problems in conjunction with Community Safety Officers.

Lindsey Reed: every Parish/Ward has a named Police Community Support Officer (PCSO); they don't have the same powers as police but keep a high visibility presence in the community, getting involved with groups and forums. They carry out low-level, local enquiries in criminal investigations using their knowledge of the area and its people. Building up trust and confidence with people who are scared or lacking in knowledge is a key component of a good rapport. Links with

the multi-agency Community Safety Unit on social cohesion and Anti Social Behaviour involves assessing problems, putting in context and forming an action plan for long term engagement by listening to what communities have to say.

Steve Mellors: Crimestoppers provides a call centre for the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year where reports of crimes or criminal activities can be passed to the police through the charity and retains anonymity for the caller. This builds confidence in the public to report what they see/know with no fear of a come-back. Asked if people would phone Crimestoppers rather than dial 999, Tony explained that the charity was not a reactive force but relied on building up community knowledge and intelligence for the police.

Sally Cohen: Neighbourhood Watch members monitor their area and call Community Wardens if necessary, as they have time to spend with elderly and vulnerable people. They help organise the Handyman Scheme, run by Help the Aged, for people over 60 who need locks fitting/changing, security chains, spy holes, etc. The Nominated Neighbour Scheme provides for a caller to be sent to a neighbour who will accompany them back to visit the elderly/vulnerable/confused person or help to write a letter making an appointment.

4. Have your say:

- Why does it take the police so long to respond to 999 calls? By the time 10 minutes has been spent answering the list of telephone questions the crime has been committed and the culprit has escaped.
Action is usually being taken by police while the questions are being answered.
- King's Hall in Dover causes problems with noise, drunks and other people in the streets, groups of youngsters on the pavements, etc which means elderly people are afraid to go out to local shop at 9.30pm onwards. Cllr Frayne undertook to investigate the matter and contact the member of public.
- Owner of a hotel in Folkestone Road, Dover referred to the number of foreign people who gathered in groups on the pavements between the railway station and the shops casing members of the public and hotel guest to feel intimidated or even afraid. Sgt. Marsden appreciated the problem; PCSO Lindsey Reed had spent time with some of these young people in whose different culture this behaviour was normal and not seen as intimidating and they were not aware of the effect it had on local people. PCSO Janet Dawson was currently working hard in Folkestone Road to improve amenities and she would be advised that this problem still occurred. However as one group of young people were spoken to they grew up and moved on, leaving the same problem with the next group.
- Old furniture left on the pavement outside premises at 51 Folkestone Road had been removed by the fly-tipping service but who had paid for this? Speaking to the letting agent had not helped, the owner had not been found so the ratepayer was footing the bill.
- The pub beside the railway station had a lot of very young people there at the weekends who appeared to be drinking, running around in the street and screaming, noise coming from the pub through open doors and windows. The out of hours noise officers had been called but arrived too late. Keeping noise diaries was understood but the problem should be dealt with as hotel guests complained and a poor picture of the area was presented to tourists and local people. The problem appeared to have been solved a year ago but perhaps the licensee had changed since

then. Cllr Walkden reported a new initiative between the Community Regeneration officer, local businesses and others, which was trying to address the problems of under-age drinkers in the area. Sgt. Marsden made a note of the issues and would ask officers to undertake checks; early intervention would be attempted before review of the premises licence became necessary. Cllr Chandler undertook to report the noise issues to see if pro-active action could be taken.

- What action were the police taking about drug dealers on Folkestone Road? A business owner in the area had watched dealing taking place, had telephoned the police 15 times but no action had been taken and the dealers had moved on after 3 days. No questions were asked of the business owner or his guests. Lindsey Reed reported that she was aware of the problem, had spoken to the guest house owner and spent time inspecting the alleyways. Sgt. Marsden advised that action on drug dealing was intelligence led and while she was unable to comment on specific cases it could be that information gathered in one location would lead to arrests in another. Police numbers limited their availability to attend every call and incidents had to be prioritised. The questioner expressed a lack of confidence in the police to act on detailed information given, particularly when every 999 phone call involved exactly the same 10 minutes of questions.
- Who is responsible for the traffic congestion at the A20 Aycliffe roundabout which regularly causes complete congestions and has been known to delay emergency service vehicles? Lindsey Reed advised that there had been a signage problem for lorries and it was recommended that 'KEEP CLEAR' should be painted on the road surface. This was a Highways issue but Sgt. Marsden suggested that a separate meeting be set up with the Police, Dover Harbour Board and the PCSO.
- The Chairman asked the meeting for views on how safe they felt on the streets:
 - Cllr Walkden had received many reports which indicated people felt pretty safe; reducing the fear of crime was important as the actual levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area was comparatively small.
 - Would publishing details in local papers of criminals caught result in people feeling safer because they had been caught or more afraid because the criminals were there in the first place?
 - News about crack houses being closed is good.
 - Public frustration with the time taken for police to arrive when a call had been made should be taken back to a higher level for action. A direct line to the local police station was needed rather than routing through Maidstone.
 - Since the smoking ban had been introduced smokers gathered on pavements outside bars and pubs and these groups appeared intimidating to some, especially when elderly people were jeered at. The law should be changed to provide one indoor room for smokers. Sgt Marsden referred to drinking outside in an alcohol exclusion zone and the need for extra patrols on red routes on Friday and Saturday evenings. The Police would act on issues with specific premises.
 - The seating area outside the Eight Bells was adversely affecting neighbouring
 - businesses who had to clean up the area every morning; should the issue be taken to DDC's Licensing Unit or the police? The town Constable would be asked to liaise with businesses in the area.

5. Opportunities for funding

Will Farmer, KCC, reported the three funding streams available to local communities:

- Neighbourhood Forum Small Community Grants with a maximum of

£5,000 and deadline of 30 September;

-County Councillor grants - £10,000 in one fund over the year for organisations rather than individuals, who benefit the community;

-KCC Local Schemes discretionary grants totalling £65,000 between 7 County Members with a deadline of 30 October.

Emma Carey at KCC (tel. 01622 694599) and Caroline Hargreaves at DDC (tel. 01304 872314) had the application forms and guidance notes; these were also available on-line at: www.dover.gov.uk/community/neighbourhood_forums.aspx

Louise Rogers of Case Kent advised that they too could help with accessing funding; for advice and guidance on other types of voluntary and community sector grant applications the contact details are pampaine@casekent.org.uk (tel 01304 219529)

Additionally Village and Community Hall Grants were made by KCC to support capital projects to improve an existing facility or build a new one that meets an identified need in the community. The maximum available is £50,000 or 25 percent of project costs (whichever is the smaller amount).

For more information email mike.leppard@kent.gov.uk or call 01622 694241

6. The Sea Change Project

Sarah Lang from Dover Pride spoke briefly about the Sea Change project for regenerating seaside towns; the town of Dover had received £3.8 million to help fund improvements to the castle, tower, and wartime tunnels; refurbishing the Bleriot memorial; a feasibility study for the cable car between Western Docks and the castle; and new public space on the seafront. The whole project aimed to attract and keep visitors in the town. Workshops would be held in the Discover Centre on Saturdays at 11.00am and a bigger exhibition would be staged there until 1 September. Everyone was encouraged to visit and comment so that the new cultural framework for Dover would be soundly based on grass-roots support of all kinds.

Members of the Forum asked about the start of the St. James' area development; improvement to the old Snoops nightclub; how to improve Burlington House; having tourist guides in the town to distribute information; adding CCTV cameras in Folkestone Road; producing a tourist map. Sarah replied that regeneration takes time but the old indoor market on Dover Road had already been improved; artists could not be allowed to paint on Burlington House as the structure was unsafe and the Compulsory Purchase Order was taking about a year to complete before demolition could be arranged; leaflets for visitors were programmed and White Cliffs greeters could be booked in advance; the Town Council was working on a visitors' map.

7. Future topics for discussion

- Sea Change and Regeneration in October 2009.
- Tourism
- Invite the Chief Constable and local MP
- Anti Social Behaviour and Regeneration: use the old Sainsbury's building as a big youth club with snooker and discos. How would this be funded and how could transport be arranged for young people living further from the area? Finding

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volunteers to help was always a problem, especially with the teenage group, and CRB checks made it harder.

- Highways the Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and asked whether the current format was satisfactory. She was told that it worked perfectly, bringing the public into direct contact with the relevant bodies so that questions could be answered. More people should come to the Forums and everyone present was asked to help publicise the meetings.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.