

**Minutes of the Bexley Community Policing Engagement Group meeting
held at Bexleyheath School on Monday 21st November 2011 7pm.**

Those present: (65)

Police representation:

CS Dave Stringer Borough Commander
Chief Inspector Tony Gowen
Chief Inspector Ian Broadbridge

MPA

James Cleverly
Sarah Walker

Bexley Council representation:

Cllr Peter Reader
Charlotte Shrimpton Youth Offending Team
Gary Redding Youth Action & Diversity Team

Members

John Abbott
Lynn Barnes
Nell Berwick
Peter Coulter
Nigel Cross
Michael Cutterham
Carol Demuth
Carol Fletcher
Jean Gee
Ray Hudson
Griffith Ingram
Philippa James
Sue James
Richard Mann
Joe McLynn
Karen Paine
Helen Palmer
John Perkins
Anita Reid
Joyce Sutherland – Chair BexleyCPEG
Violaine Therond
Peter Weston

Members of the Public

Mick Barnbrook
Daniel Bevan
Mark Blundell
Elwyn Bryant
Jill Bryant
Nicholas Dowling
Gabriel Fagbenro
Ann Gurney
P Gussman
Ian Hadley
Gloria Heath
Vi Hollett
Carol James
Sandra Johnson
Cherry Kent
M Knight
Mary Lapsley
Chris Lee
Doreen Litchfield
Babs McCrindle
Eric Moore
Marion Moore
Betty Morris
Eileen Mulquin
Terry Murphy
Mr Pearce
Roz Pope
Bernadette Roberts
Charles Roberts
M Simmonds
Jean Stedman
Eileen Turvill
William Turvill
John Watson
Steve Watts

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following people:

James Brokenshire MP, David Evennett MP, Teresa Pearce MP, Cllr Peter Craske, Cllr Steven Hall, Cllr Teresa O'Neill, Cllr Howard Marriner, Cllr Melvin Seymour, Danny Ridgeway, John Hockey, John Elkington, Janet Davis, Wally Davis, Ray Darsey, Trevor Jones, Deborah Louch, Kathleen Leaf, Patricia Slonecki, Liz Newcomb, Ray Darsey, Robert Brown, Firdevske Kaimak, Guy Beattie, Mohammed Khan, Ian Boyling, Cyril O'Brien.

2. **Joyce Sutherland** began by welcoming everyone to the meeting and introduced the speakers.

3. **Borough Commander Chief Superintendent Dave Stringer**

Bexley remains the borough with the lowest crime rate in the met, measured by crimes per month per 1,000 people. In October the average total notifiable offences for London was 9.55 per 1,000 of population, Bexley was lowest at 4.13 with 902 recorded crimes, closely followed by Sutton with 5.1 per 1,000 residents at 917 crimes.

There is an 11.4% reduction in violent crime compared to last year and an 18.9% reduction in property crime. Operation Bumble Bee against burglary has helped to lower the number of burglaries in the borough by 45% over the last year. Personal robbery has increased over the last year but has increased less than the other London boroughs. This is still not good and this crime will be targeted during the run up to Christmas.

Figures can be verified at the crime mapping area of the MPS website
<http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/Bexley>

Stop and Search powers under Section 60 in operation during August helped to prevent any riots in Bexley. Section 60 powers mean officers do not need reasonable grounds to stop and search someone. This was used effectively during the summer because it meant that people had to remove face coverings during that period, and helped prevent any incidents of disorder.

The current IPCC investigation into Mark Duggan's death has not yet been published. Reports in the Guardian newspaper from the last weekend should not be believed.

There have been two serious incidents of violent crime since the summer and people have been arrested for both, one has been charged. There will be CCTV set up in Bexley village and additional patrols until well after Christmas, to prevent this happening again.

Over the last 4 weeks uninsured drivers have been targeted with Operation Cuba, stopping vehicles and seizing those that have no insurance. This work will continue in the future.

Operation Goalkeeper is planned between now and the New Year to keep a real presence out on the street concentrating on reducing burglary, personal robbery, and

making people feel safe, when they are out in the Borough. Last year violent crime rose at this time of year.

Bexley policing is not just about enforcement there is also engagement. TKO is a project that has just finished. It introduced young people to Martial Arts at Crook Log Fitness Centre and we hope to do more of this in the future. The young people have been given a chance to meet their Safer Neighbourhoods teams in a more relaxed environment and it helps those struggling at school to do something constructive.

The two unfortunate incidents recently in the borough give the police a challenge to make people feel safe in our town centres over the Christmas period.

Joyce thanked the Borough Commander for his report and used this opportunity to advertise the DIVERSIONS scuba diving project which PCSO Muriel Edwards began and has been supported by Bexley CPEG for the last 2 years. Scuba diving is also used as a diversionary tactic for young people to get involved with rather than making trouble out on the streets.

Chief Inspector Ian Broadbridge has been in charge of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) on the borough for the last two months. He spoke about the new set up of only 20 teams, Lesnes ward has been split between Thamesmead and Belvedere and 4 teams are sharing sergeants as there are now only 16. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams are fully involved in all the operations going on around the borough, Goalkeeper (personal safety), Cuba (uninsured drivers) and Hawk (drugs) as well as metal theft and licensing. Ian stated he is looking forward to working with the public, focussing on crime reduction and looking at priorities in Bexley.

4. Charlotte Shrimpton Youth Offending Team (YOT) Manager: Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is about repairing the harm, making good the harm done to a victim, so that the offender does not offend again, and giving the victim a voice.

The practitioners in restorative justice are fully trained. The practice must be victim led. It is an opportunity to help the offender make amends. It can be face to face conferences with victim or victims' relatives and offender, or a written letter. The offender has to be willing to go through the process because the victim's feelings come first. If the offender is not willing, it could lead to a harmful confrontation with the victim which must be avoided at all costs. Restorative justice conferences are quite rare and will be tailored to the needs of the victim as "one size does not fit all".

Courts recognise the need for offenders to make amends on a statutory basis through reparation, or community payback as it is known by the probation service.

Charlotte gave two examples where restorative justice has been used.

Example 1: Victim was at home with young children when the offender got up on the roof to steal lead, the victim didn't know if he was going to be violent or not. The offender, who was arrested, hadn't realised he'd frightened young children in their home; he acknowledged his crime and apologised to the family.

Example 2: Victim was a small independent shopkeeper who had had removed a troublesome tenant in the flat above the shop. The week after the tenant had left his shop window had been smashed. The victim felt threatened because he thought it was

retaliation by the former tenant. In fact it was a young person who was drunk and barged into the window too hard, without intending to break it. The victim was so relieved that it was not retaliation that he offered work experience on a voluntary basis to the young perpetrator.

The key to restorative justice is that victims feel better telling the offender the impact their crime has had on the victim. It can also be used for serious crimes and the victim's family. YOT want to continue using restorative justice opportunities when they arise. Community panels are being trained in restorative justice because it is the panels that decide the contract that the young offenders must abide by. The police, who deal with victims and young offenders, are also trained for the restorative justice process.

YOT give lessons in primary schools addressing issues such as bullying in the playground.

Gary Redding Youth Action Diversity Trust YADT.

The Trust runs schemes with preventative ideas to keep young people away from crime and also administer how young people are engaged in reparation. Young people are for this instance aged 14-17. The Trust works at the North Cray Community Centre or Parkside Community Centre.

There is a visible standard method of reporting on and information about the young people so the youth workers can engage with the young offenders and set them a structured supervised programme. The sort of work schemes set will take account of a young person's interests in setting the tasks.

Work undertaken could be repair work, maintaining gardens, cleaning community centres, etc. The young offender is expected to attend on time, which will be during the week if not at school and at weekends if at school or college. The trust will be flexible, for instance there can be holiday work or evening work set, but it will not be the time most convenient to the offender. The young offender must complete the work to a satisfactory standard and inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated. If the young person is in contact with the criminal justice system again this type of reparation scheme may not be available a second time. The YADT reports to the YOT. In a year 42 young people complete 15 hours of work via YADT, which gives a total of 630 hours reparation.

Example 1. Male offender had to plan, present to the Trust, and then implement 5 gardening projects over 10 weeks. Having successfully completed the projects the trust helped him to join a course at a local college and this has hopefully turned his life around.

Example 2. Female offender found it difficult to engage with people, worked with the female staff of YADT and went on a confidence building project.

Chief Inspector Tony Gowen-partnership manager for Bexley Police.

The main task of the police is to catch criminals and they rely on their partnership bodies to deal with restorative justice. There is a triage system in place of arrest, caution and final warning. First time entrants with low level crimes of minor theft/ minor criminal damage/minor assault go before the London Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Charlotte's team report to the LCJB and not one of the offenders who have been referred to YOT have reoffended. The police work closely with YOT.

The Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNT) under the leadership of CI Ian Broadbridge deal with the anti-social behaviour issues in the community and with both victims and offenders. For example a gentleman who deliberately burnt his house down and was

living in his garden shed caused significant problems for his neighbours. The SNT worked with the councillors, and eventually moved him off the borough.

The police work with Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) to support young people by having individual talks with them to get them to change their behaviour. The police also get involved in schools, with teachers, social services and are involved in parent and child conferences dealing with problem children.

Greenwich and Bromley boroughs have a pilot scheme running for adults at the moment dealing with Restorative Justice on the street. Dealing with an incident as it happens, bringing the victim and offender together at the time and getting reparation without involving the police station.

Also for the future after sentencing the probation service in 2012 are going to recruit to work with the Local Authority, police, and prisons, to address offender behaviour prior to release from prison, with restorative justice. The victim must obviously agree for this to happen so that the victim's needs are met as well as the offender.

5. Anita Reid Regional Manager Victim Support (VS)

Victim Support is a national charity and has been in existence for 37 years. The Bexley branch was the second one to be set up, Bristol being the first. Originally set up as 77 local charities VS is now one national charity. VS deal with anything from low level crimes such as theft & burglary to homicide, rape and domestic violence. It is the only charity that deals with all types of crime.

Local volunteers who live or work in Bexley provide emotional support and advocacy to victims in the borough. VS deal with witnesses and their families, within 48 hours of receiving information about an incident. Information can come from the police, the local authority or members of the public themselves. The staff are non judgemental and will treat all information as confidential.

Once referred to Victim Support the victim receives a phone call and a needs assessment is made. Some people need emotional support, which can be provided by a volunteer, others may need to speak to a housing agency or social services. Support can be short term for a week or a month or it can be longer depending on the recovery of the victim.

It is important to prevent people repeatedly being victims due to circumstances. For example, a couple who had a shingle driveway were helped to tarmac it, so that the youth who were throwing stones at their house, were deprived of their ammunition.

If it is the statutory responsibility of another agency, such as a housing agency, VS will contact them to negotiate whatever needs doing for the victim to prevent the incident recurring.

Bexley Community Safety Partnership funds the Bobby Van Project which will give advice on security to people in their homes and to victims of burglary. It is a free service open to all residents of Bexley. New locks, chains, can be fitted to improve security and key safes or individual alarms provided. The aim is to prevent a burglar gaining entry.

VS work with many other third sector agencies such as Women's' Aid, YOT, as well as the statutory services to make sure victims' needs are covered.

6. Questions from the floor.

John Abbott Falconwood and Welling: What impact has the closure of the Welling VS office had?

AR: None – the office is still open 1 or 2 days a week. Economic reasons have forced the closure and restructure of VS offices but the VS work continues unaffected in people's homes.

Ray Hudson Lesnes: How long do you continue to be involved with a victim after the crime?

AR: Volunteers will give support as long as it is needed. The volunteers are trained to empower people to move on past the incident but recovery will be different for each person.

CS: YOT team link with VS to continue to offer support to the victim after the restorative justice period has been fulfilled if necessary. There is no defined cut off period. An offender may have finished the statutory order for work but the victim may still need support past that date.

John Watson – Craymeadows: With reference to the gravel drive incident – where were the police?

AR: The police referred the couple to VS after the incident happened, so had dealt with it as far as they could first.

Michael Cutterham - Barnehurst: Please can the Safer Neighbourhood Panel chairs have a Bexley MPS family tree to help with queries from their panel members?

DS: The SN team can give this to you.

Michael Cutterham - Barnehurst: Can we have numbers not percentages in the police report as percentages can be misleading?

DS: Yes

Ros Pope – Brampton: Ros described a situation of severe noise, nuisance, and criminal damage in her road by a neighbouring family, and a party where the police attended twice. The perpetrators seem to be able to do what they want and the police seem powerless to stop them. Is there any point in reporting crime if nothing gets done about it?

IB: Asked Ros to talk to him after the meeting and will report to her the progress in this particular case.

Betty Morris – Northumberland Heath: Six years ago I was assaulted and it was 2 or 3 months before Victim Support contacted me. Has this now changed?

AR: There is new legislation which provides a Victim's Code of Practice so now VS get a referral from the police immediately. The police computer used to default to no to VS when recording incidents – this has now changed so that the default setting is yes to VS.

Michael Barnbrook - Blackfen & Lamorbey: When you described burglary as a low level crime did you mean in numbers or importance?

AR corrected herself stating that no crime is low level.

Griffith Ingrams - St Mary's ward: Does an offender get asked if he/she wants restorative justice?

CS: Victim always gets asked but the offender would not be put in front of the victim if he/she was not ready to meet the victim. It could do more harm than good if the offender had no remorse or was not prepared to apologise.

The offender has no choice for community payback work because that is part of the justice system and is statutory, but he/she does not come into contact with the victim in this case.

Daniel Bevan – Sidcup ward: Daniel described how he and his family had been victims of anti social behaviour, burglary and assault recently at the hands of a family that lives in the same road. His family are so upset that they want to move out of the borough and he has lived in Bexley all his life. Other neighbours in the road are also upset and worried this will get worse. Although the police have been informed nothing seems to stop these young people and their anti social behaviour.

TG –asked Daniel to talk to him after the meeting. No one should have to put up with such behaviour from neighbours; the police can intervene and work with the neighbours and the young people causing the trouble.

AR offered support form VS as well.

Peter Coulter – Danson ward: On bonfire night fireworks were still being let off at 1am in the morning. Is there a time after which noise should stop of an evening?

TG – midnight.

Martin –Craymeadows ward: Have not seen the police out on the streets since the sergeant left.

IB: A new sergeant is now in place but police teams should still be patrolling as normal. Ian asked Martin to give him details.

Karen Paine – NUSWT member asked to know more about the restorative justice in primary schools.

CS: There is a project with primary school teachers, training them how to deal with conflict in a non-confrontational way, for instance teaching them how to resolve a fracas in the playground. It also teaches how to find a way for pupils, who feel threatened if bullied at school to get back into school, putting a stop to truanting. Schools cannot always deal with the issues themselves so the YOT will go in to help in a situation as well as training teachers.

Elwyn Bryant – St Mary's ward is a victim of hate and obscene crime on the web and enquired if the investigation was still going on?

DS: Yes it is.

Ray Hudson – Lesnes ward: How many victims have been helped with restorative justice?

CS: The numbers are high on the prevention side in schools etc. There are only 5 face to face conferences with victim and offender in a year. Not all victims want to meet their offender, and there are many reasons why they choose not to meet them. Some people just want to put the incident behind the, some choose to have a letter of apology, and few choose to meet the offender. Everyone is different.

John Watson – Craymeadows ward: Bexley has the lowest crime rate in London, but how many reported crimes are investigated and recorded as crimes?

DS: Cannot comment on individual cases, but the MPS investigate all crimes that are reported and the Met checks up that Bexley record the statistics correctly. There are a number of tragic incidents every year but not many will happen in Bexley.

Elizabeth Morris – Northumberland Heath ward: There are academies in the borough which are no longer under Bexley LEA – does the YOT still go into these schools?

CS: YOT go into schools regardless of their status, but the schools do have to invite the YOT. Many schools have teachers that are trained in restorative justice, training is offered to all schools in the borough but not all buy in to the scheme.

Michael Barnbrook – Blackfen & Lamorbey: Do the young people come to YADT instead of going to court, do they get a choice of where to go?

The hours they have to spend with YADT are pre-decided by YOT team, who work around the educational needs of the young people. The young people do not choose what to do or where and when they do it.

Joyce thanked the speakers and everyone for coming. The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

The next public meeting of the Group will be Monday 26th March 2012 at the Civic Centre Bexleyheath 7pm-9pm where there will be a presentation by the Sentencing Council and the Probation Service.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm

