

LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting in Public of the Policing Committee of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership held in the Connect Hall, Dromara, on Tuesday 17th May 2022 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Guy (Chairperson)
Councillor A Gowan
Councillor S Skillen
Mr J Bentley
Mr D McBurney
Ms G McCann
Ms P Leeson

IN ATTENDANCE: Acting PCSP/Manager Services Manager
PCSP Officer (JB)
Member Services Officer (BF)
Administration Officer (EW)

Designated Organisations

Superintendent J Mullan, Police Service of Northern Ireland;
Chief Inspector J Wilson, Police Service of Northern Ireland;
Mr D Marley, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairperson, Councillor M Guy, welcomed those present to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to the members of the public. She indicated that the theme for the meeting would be rural crime and gave an overview of the agenda and the speakers. She pointed out that PCSP and PSNI officers were in attendance to offer information on a range of initiatives, including Farm Watch, Neighbourhood Watch and Text Alert and she encouraged members of the public to engage with the officers in this regard.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were reported on behalf of Councillors R Carlin and H Legge; and Independent Members, N Bradshaw, A Landa, E Millar and Preeti Yellamaty.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **PSNI Presentation on Rural Crime – Chief Inspector Jonathan Wilson**

The Chief Inspector gave an overview of the work of the PSNI within the area and provided examples of the types of rural crimes which had been reported and investigated. He explained that there were many types of rural crimes, including organised plant theft, livestock theft, burglaries and scams. He stated that rural

crime accounted for approx. 1% of overall crime in Northern Ireland, but that the cost associated with such offences was disproportionate.

He pointed out that, whilst there had been a reduction in the number of rural crimes reported since 2010/11, there had recently been a level of under-reporting of such instances given the pandemic. However, despite the overall downward trend, the statistics did not account for the significant impact that this type of crime had on individuals, farm businesses and the wider community. He added that the PSNI would continue to work with partners to combat and deter criminals who sought to target the rural community.

He then outlined the types of operations which had been carried out by the Neighbourhood Policing Teams in combatting crime in partnership with a range of bodies and agencies. In addition, he gave an overview of the community engagement work which was carried out, such as attending the Balmoral Show and the 'Grand Choice' participatory budgeting event, which had taken place in Moira on 9th April. He concluded by outlining the work that would be undertaken over the summer period in conjunction with statutory bodies to maintain the level of protection provided within rural areas through the delivery of further community engagement and outreach work.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Inspector for his presentation.

2. Presentation from PSNI Crime Prevention Officer – Shelley Grimes

Ms Grimes gave an overview of her role within the PSNI and outlined the advantages of the Text Alert scheme, which operated within the Council area. She explained that the scheme enabled the PSNI and the PCSP to communicate directly with individuals who signed-up for the scheme by SMS text messages to alert them of issues within their area. She added that there were 1,500 registered users and encouraged members of the public in attendance to join by completing the form which was available at the crime protection promotional table.

She then gave an overview of the types of crime prevention gadgets which were available at the meeting and drew attention to a stand within the hall which was promoting a Tracker device. She indicated that the Tracker assisted police in the recovery of stolen farm property or machinery and there had been a significant success rate in either stopping thefts or recovering property through its usage.

Ms Grimes then responded to a number of questions on the types of vehicles which could be protected by the Tracker and the Chairperson thanked her for her presentation.

3. Camilla Mackey, Agricultural Inspector, HSENI

Ms Mackey delivered a presentation on farm safety and concentrated on the following topics:

- the dangers from slurry
- the dangers from farm animals
- the dangers from tractors and other farm machinery

- the dangers from falls and falling objects

She explained that farm machinery presented many dangers and it was essential that such items were kept in good condition. Where faults did arise, especially in relation to brakes and braking systems in vehicles, she pointed out that farmers should make sure that the person carrying out repairs was qualified to do so.

She outlined the dangers associated with mixing slurry, particularly the risk posed by the gas hydrogen sulphide, which, at a low concentration, could impair a person's sense of smell and impair the ability to recognise the presence of the gas. At higher concentrations, the gas could impair breathing, cause confusion and pose a danger to life. As such, the mixing process was the most dangerous period for farmers and she emphasised the importance of leaving a shed as soon as the mixing had begun and to stay out for at least thirty minutes.

The meeting was advised also by Ms Mackey of the 'Farm in Mind' website, which had been developed by HSENI, in partnership the Farm Safety Partnership and the Workplace Health Leadership Group, to help farmers and the wider farming community identify areas of stress and to help signpost people to the right support services. The website was tailored to the specific needs of the farming community and contained a range of resources which would provide additional support.

In response to a question from the floor, Ms Mackey reported that the average age for farmers in Northern Ireland was 58. She added that a majority of accidents involved individuals over 44 years and that the aging farming population was a cause for concern. She reported that there had been a trend identified that younger members of farming families were opting to take on the responsibility of farm ownership. She indicated that, as a step to address this matter, the Department for Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEARA) provided schemes to assist farmers in succession planning.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Mackey for her presentation.

4. Question from the floor

A member of the public referred to an incident which had occurred recently in the village when damage had been caused to his fence by an unlicensed vehicle. He indicated that he had located the vehicle and had informed police, but expressed frustration that no action had been taken by the PSNI to recover the vehicle and the matter had only been progressed whenever a local councillor had raised the issue with police on his behalf.

Superintendent Mullan undertook to investigate the matter and discuss the issues raised with the member of the public after the meeting.

5. Any Other Business

None.

Conclusion of the Meeting

PCSP 17.05.2022

The Chairperson thanked those present for attending and extended thanks the representatives of the Connect Hall for allowing the premises to be used for the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7:51pm.

Chairperson