

Minutes of Meeting 35

Thursday 19 July 2007

ATTENDANCE

Carl: Police Authority
John: Force Diversity Inspector
Kay: Gender Trust
Mark 1: RESPECT Youth Group
Michael: Intercom (Chair)
Nic: Western Boys
Rhea: Independent Member
Sorrel: FFLAG
Tess: Intercom Trust

Visitors Jo: Police Authority
Acting Assistant Chief Constable Bob Spencer

APOLOGIES

Andy: Intercom Trust
Juliet: Force Diversity Manager
Keith: Independent member
Kevin: Number One Centre Trust
Mark 2: Plymouth Pride Forum
Martin: Cornwall GMHT
Teresa: Force Diversity Officer

The meeting opened at 10:25am.

Minutes and matters arising

The minutes were agreed as a true record after the correction of one error.

Eathorne case. John is still pursuing this. No member of the Group who was present had heard that there were any community concerns around developments in the Eathorne case in Plymouth.

Action point to be carried forward: John to follow-up on Eathorne case

Community Justice Pilot Scheme meeting. Michael explained that he had encountered difficulties with the practicalities of organising a meeting with several senior members of different organisations quickly but that he had been persevering.

Plymouth Policing Board. Rhea reported that on Tuesday she had received news that the pilot had been 'mothballed'. It was agreed that Michael should write to Jim Webster to enquire about the level of LGB/T input into Plymouth BCU partnership working and community consultation.

Action point: Michael to write to Jim Webster

Gender Recognition Act (record-keeping systems). The Group had received no information on whether Juliet had contacted him about the Group's concerns over GRA compliance. It was generally agreed that it would be good if Chief Superintendent Ian Ansell were invited to attend the Group, particularly as the recurring issue over crime statistics could also be raised with him.

**Action point to be carried forward: Juliet to follow up
Michael to invite Mr Ansell to visit the group**

Goods and Services Regulations leaflet. This had been circulated and feedback passed back to Emma at Middlemoor. It was generally felt that the examples in the leaflet were very useful. Michael reported that he had recommended that the leaflet make clear that the Regulations cover contracts with public authorities, since the leaflet would be for use by every level of Police Officer including those involved in funding the voluntary and community sector. John said that the Service use a system called 'Weekly Orders' to circulate information to officers; they would include a link to the guidance leaflet on this system. Michael encouraged everyone to report back if they hear of this new guidance being used (or not used). John said that he would let the Group know when the document goes live in Weekly Orders, and would ensure that suggested amendments had been made.

Action point: John to follow-up on guidance leaflet and circulate go-live date through Tess

Michael said he had received no feedback on developing and improving the PLG's current procedures. He encouraged everyone to consider possible improvements. Michael reported that he had circulated a link to the terms of reference as requested and that he and John were currently re-organising a postponed meeting of the IAG Chairs to which he would add to the agenda the topic of joint-working.

Action point: John to confirm new date for joint meeting

Andy was unable to attend and give an update on the Safer Cruising project so this action point will be carried forward. Michael and John reported that the training of the call handlers was now moving ahead with dates booked in for September. The launch of the project will follow once the training has been completed. Nic raised his concerns that Crownhill call handling staff are unaware of these training proposals. John explained that training would be rolled out to both call-handling centres from Headquarters. Bob noted that there are over 400 staff in the call centres so this process may take some time but the Group was informed that all staff have scheduled training time set in advance so it would not be difficult to co-ordinate in that sense. The Group agreed that it is very important that supervisors ensure that all staff attend and benefit from this training.

Action point to be carried forward: Teresa to circulate Safer Cruising update through Tess

Carl informed the Group that the PA is currently in debate with the Home Office over whether magistrate members should finish their term of office in March 2008. The recruitment process would have to begin in September if this were the case but, as this may not be possible, the magistrate's term of office may be extended until March 2009.

1. Meetings, membership criteria and Marketing / Publicity of the PLG

It was agreed that in view of the attendance record for Thursday meetings over the last two years meetings should henceforth be arranged for Saturdays. The scheduled meeting for October will be moved to Saturday 20th. Mark asked if some meetings next year could be held in Exeter given the number of people who have to travel large distances for the Plymouth meetings. It was agreed that 2 meetings out of 8 should be held in Exeter, preferably as close to means of public transport as possible for those travelling from Cornwall.

Michael circulated a copy of the competencies outlined when the Group originally recruited for Independent members, and moved that the Group formally adopt these competency criteria as the minimum standards every member of the Group should live up to. This was carried unanimously.

Michael invited people to contact him with any suggestions for further improvement of the Competencies. Bob noted that the competencies were mainly aspirational statements, whereas on the Service's list of competencies they also included negative traits which should be avoided—this helped officers to identify and articulate problems. Michael enquired as to whether this document had been posted on the internet as he felt it could be an effective tool in promoting trust and confidence. Bob said that it is a national police standards document, not protectively marked.

Action: John to circulate link to Service's competency criteria document

Mark reported that the Dorset LAGLOs were distributing promotional material from a stall at Bournemouth Pride this year and he wondered whether the PLG could be more involved in Pride events too given what a prime opportunity it is to promote the services. He circulated some of the leaflets/cards and the Group agreed they were very effective: the Group should have something similar.

Michael showed the Group a flyer he had drafted, which was greeted positively. The Group agreed there ought also to be a fuller leaflet, based on the current text on the PLG web pages. Michael noted the difficulties in producing large quantities of promotional material given how quickly they can become defunct due to phone numbers changing, information becoming out-of-date etc. John drew attention to a possible formatting issue with the current PLG main web page, which Michael undertook to investigate.

John said that the Diverse Communities Team will also be re-marketing now that their department name has changed.

Nic requested copies of the flyers Michael had circulated for the Western Boys conference to be held in September.

**Action: Michael to provide Nic with PLG flyers
Michael to check out PLG website
Michael to draft PLG leaflet**

Mark went on to enquire as to whether the Service would be open to a representative from the PLG joining them at the Prides and it was agreed that the cost implications should be looked into and a potential representative be found to attend. Michael assured the Group that there would be promotional material ready to take along to the next Pride that the PLG is represented at.

Action: Mark to liaise with John/Tess to find PLG rep and firm up details

2. Discussion: workplan for the next five meetings

Michael circulated the proposed workplan he had drafted following the last meeting's discussion. It was agreed that this should be taken as a basis for work over the coming months. There was a brief discussion about the next meeting, which is to focus on phobic bullying in schools. It was agreed that this meeting should include issues of the school environment, schools' failure to support and/or to challenge, lack of reference to minority bullying in school bullying policies, and possible sources of positive support for LGBT people in schools.

Rhea suggested the Group enquire about the current Force strategy on working with schools.

Bob noted the importance of ensuring that this work be directed at independent schools as well as state. Mark agreed this was important particularly as the same OFSTED inspection framework is now used for both state and independent.

Michael said that he would try to arrange to invite a visitor from the independent schools sector.

Action: Michael to invite relevant parties to meeting on phobic bullying

3. Territorial Policing & Justice: Assistant Chief Constable Bob Spencer

Acting Assistant Chief Constable Bob Spencer introduced himself and gave the Group some background on his career and the areas he had specialised in before coming to D&CC. He informed the Group he had been Acting ACC for 12 months now and he would continue in this role until the end of February 2008. His principal responsibilities were territorial policing across the four BCUs—including the implementation of neighbourhood policing—and criminal justice. Bob went on to talk about the 356 PCSOs that have recently been recruited and was very positive about their maturity and skills. These PCSOs have been engaged in visiting every victim of a crime in their area so that their contact with the Police consists of more than just a cold phone call. It was also reported to the Group that Roger Coe-Salazar has already moved on from the CPS. Bob and Michael both paid tribute to his work, and specifically the turn-around he had achieved within such a short time as Chief Crown Prosecutor for Devon and Cornwall.

Michael raised the issue of neighbourhood policing and the difficulties that lie in only thinking in terms of geographical neighbourhoods. He went on to say that it is much more useful to think of the LGB/T community as an extended neighbourhood and that frequently LGB/T voices aren't heard in discussions concerning geographical neighbourhoods (particularly as a lot of LGB/T people feel very vulnerable in their neighbourhood). He felt that it was not necessarily a case of deliberately excluding LGB/T people but that they are not offered a secure environment in which they can be consulted and make their voices heard. Bob said that the PLG itself can help, by influencing strategic thinking. John said that these issues had been raised within the Operational Development Group, and now the Diverse Communities Team leaders link in with Neighbourhood Policing leaders to voice concerns. Michael noted that this arrangement places huge responsibility on the DCTs as they are basically being expected to triage local community developments and their possible impacts. The possibility of training to 'diversity-proof' the neighbourhood policing units was raised and John said that training did go on. Bob said that as far as he is concerned diversity skills should be core skills and not solely the responsibility of an individual team. The Group agreed that widespread skills with these issues would be the ideal scenario but in the meantime it's important to have someone that people know they can refer to. Michael felt it was difficult to say how these channels of communication could be created. For example, there are huge amounts of neighbourhood harassment going on that remain unreported because of (e.g.) a lack of trust and confidence in the Police.

It was noted that trust and confidence in the Police is a very different issue for LGB/T people than for the majority of the public because there is a such a high level of residual suspicion. Michael referred to the interviews Intercom had recently conducted to gauge people's feelings on community safety and noted how dispiriting some of the responses in those interviews were. He said it was clear that many are still labouring under a heavy legacy of antagonism, and despite all the good work that D&CC have done the levels of distrust are still very high, and expectations are very low.

Michael asked the Group members that if there was a prioritising meeting held in their neighbourhood, a meeting at which they didn't want to Out themselves but did want to hear the issues being raised, what would be the barriers to their attendance. Nic felt that very often people use those types of meetings to raise their own personal concerns rather than community concerns. He also said that there can often be a general malaise as they may view the Police in a certain way and of course people can be very worried about people's attitudes if they were to come Out. Bob said that work needed to be done to bring home the realisation that people at these meetings can change priorities and the deployment of resources and will be able to see

their suggestions being implemented. He went on to say that different methods of encouraging people to get involved are being explored. The Police have just printed 500 cards to be distributed in shops, doctor's surgeries, dentists, etc. – these cards ask for people to simply write down their postcode and what their main priority is in terms of their neighbourhood. Nic noted the low uptake on questionnaires. Bob said that they had also been holding street surgeries which had been very impactful. Nic said that they should have more publicity for street surgeries just to let people know where and when they will have the opportunity to talk to an officer.

Bob informed the Group that there is a 'no abstraction' policy for Neighbourhood Policing and a commitment from senior Officers in this field to stay in post for a minimum of two years. The NP strategy is also being built into the five and ten year plans in order to provide continuity.

The issue of difficulties around promotion of positive events was raised (given people's misgivings about being Outed by the media) and it was generally felt that getting good news out into the community had always been a difficult hurdle to overcome. Michael did report however that he had had an unusually positive talk with a journalist from BBC TV South West. The Group agreed it was much easier to get positive news on the radio. It was felt that the internet can be less helpful when trying to target rural populations. In terms of local papers, many members felt as though they were at the mercy of editors but Bob said that the Police can facilitate this as they currently hold an Editor's Conference once a quarter. Jo said that editors would be more receptive if the Group could build a theme and provide material for a series of articles. Bob informed the Group that D&CC have £470k in capital funding for this year to help implement neighbourhood policing across the 190 neighbourhoods. Bob assured the Group that they were receptive to applications and that if an effective marketing and media strategy was needed then D&CC could possibly assist with funding.

Michael raised the issue of consistency across the four BCUs and the fact that issues do not get addressed with consistent determination in different areas. Bob said that Stephen Otter had issued a clear mandate about 'postcode policing' and the lack of corporacy. Bob explained that because there has recently been a period of expansion within the Police Service, and also because of the way different types of partnership funding affect staffing structures, this has resulted in disparity. The aim has been to deconstruct some of these staffing structures and establish a generic operating framework so that the roles are the same across the BCUs. An urban and a rural model have had to be developed to meet specific requirements. Bob also said that BCU Commanders are to remain in post for a minimum of three years in order to provide consistency.

Michael asked Bob how he could ensure that LGB/T issues are treated similarly across the BCUs because. Bob said that the Police need to be given specifics about when this happens as issues of diversity are dealt with very robustly. He went on to talk about PIP – Professionalising the Investigation Process. In this process the target for satisfaction with race hate crime is 100% and there is a dedicated DI in each BCU to work on these cases. There was uncertainty over whether in order to investigate a phobic crime an officer has to be trained to PIP level 2 or whether this only applies to racially motivated crimes. Bob said he would look into this. Michael asked if there were any LGB/T issues involved in the training for PIP. Bob assured him that there were and offered to circulate copies of the training to the Group.

Action: Bob to clarify situation with PIP level 2 and phobic crime
Action: Bob to circulate copies of Level 2 PIP training through Tess

Bob reported that the PIP training is completed to a National Standard and informed the Group that Centrex has now been replaced by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). The Group spoke about the fact that there is IPLDP for new officers but little available to existing officers who aren't progressing up the ranks. There was general concern that these officers are being missed and that they could potentially have a negative influence on new recruits.

Nic said a young trans man had been assaulted and had reported the incident, without mentioning the phobic motivation. Nic queried whether this man should have brought it to the officer's attention because that would have ensured a DI would be working on the case. Bob said this depends on whether the PIP level 2 only applies to race hate crime. Michael said it was very important that this confusion be cleared up as the Group members need to ensure they're not misinforming people. Michael reported that he had heard of people being told by the Police that if they had said an incident was homophobic motivated they would have come sooner. John said that this is not tantamount to special treatment but that the extra support is provided in order to ensure equality – it is a proportionate response to the need.

4. Critical Incident Working Group (Critical Friend Profile)

Mark handed round a draft of the Critical Incident Working Group's proposal to recruit 'critical friends'. Critical Friends would be on hand to be consulted by senior officers after incidents and they are looking for volunteers. The next round of training would be in October if they can book the Hydra Suite. Mark reported that they need names by September 8th. Michael asked if the proposal could be e-mailed round.

Action: John to circulate CIWG proposal through Tess
Action: Members to apply by Sept 8th if interested

The meeting closed at 13:30.

The next meeting is:

Saturday 8th September
10:15 for 10:30
Saltash Guildhall

and the following meeting (subject to confirmation of the venue) will be:

Saturday 20th October
10:15 for 10:30
Saltash Guildhall