

## Communities Scrutiny Meeting June 24<sup>th</sup> 2015

The meeting started with me in a state of pleasant shock, this was caused by the public gallery being full. The cause of this surprise was the first item, a report into the Roma community. The report outlined the work the Roma people, the Council, the University of Manchester and the Black Health Agency for Equality. A group called Roma Voices has been established to represent the community. Overall all present (including me) were encouraged by the progress made. The representatives from the Black Health Agency and the University noted there was still progress to be made. Cllr Reed of Gorton seemed to accuse her predecessors of stirring up tension in the community for political advantage. I think that if one seems to accuse someone of such behaviour evidence should be referenced, particularly when this accusation is made without the accused being present.

After this matter the meeting moved to a discussion of Tackling Anti Social Behaviour – Students. The meeting received a report from Sara Todd the Deputy Chief of Growth and Neighbourhoods. The report basically outlines that a more interventionist approach will be made by the Council, Universities and police in relation to large student parties and other behaviour which causes distress to other residents. This intervention will be targeted at the ten streets which have the most recorded incidents.

Councillors reported that the approach seemed to be working as they had received fewer complaints over the ParkLife weekend than in previous years. There were questions relating to the report but none that really shed any new light on the approach. I would have liked to have seen more questions about the precise ways certain procedures are carried out. For example, how many complaints are needed against a property before people are sent to investigate? There was also a reference to intelligence gathering; what does this actually mean?

The meeting moved a little off topic with a mention of Liverpool Council decision to ban 'To Rent/Let' signs from certain streets. Cllr Murphy said that the Council was taking a voluntary approach on this issue but agreed that it was a problem.

Cllr Cooley asked if the new approach mentioned student personal safety. A representative of the University of Manchester said that yes it did and reported that students themselves could feel unsafe in their own home if a party got out of hand.

The final item for discussion was a report on tackling the most frequently committed crimes. This report focused on burglary and robbery and how Home Watch, which is changing its name to Neighbourhood Watch, is working with others to tackle these crimes. For the record the third highlighted crime is domestic violence/abuse, which will be reviewed at another meeting in November.

Home Watch is changing its name to Neighbourhood Watch and this signals a change in approach. The organisation is moving to more general crime prevention as the number of burglaries has decreased. A chair of Home Watch from New Moston, Janet, said that the organisation was increasingly focused on an approach which uses a sense of a collective community to prevent crime. She noted that crime prevention takes time and commitment. The New Moston group has seen crime decrease but this has taken twenty-eight years of hard work. She also raised the point, which was made throughout the meeting, that statistics around Home Watch were out of date and unreliable mainly because there is no way to de-

register a Home Watch group. Janet said that since job losses at GMP coordination with the police had decreased in quality and frequency as local PCSOs were now expected to do the work a specialist team had done previously.

Cllr Azra Ali questioned what was being done to help prevent the usual increase in crime over Eid. The representative from GMP said that the usual community engagement would occur and that messages would be passed out via social media. Numerous councillors noted the crime prevention work they did as part of their surgeries and were encouraged by the Home Watch representative to make Home Watch a recurring agenda item and to join Home Watch.

The meeting ended with the Chair inviting suggestions for guests to discuss items on the Communities calendar.

The above is an abridged impression of the meeting. For more detail please contact me at: [mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk)

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