

## Overview and Scrutiny Joint Review – Crime and Disorder Management in Buckinghamshire

### Introduction

*‘Crime is consistently one of the top concerns for communities everywhere – and therefore working to keep the areas we live in safe and harmonious is an ongoing priority for politicians and public servants alike’<sup>1</sup>*

1. In April 2009, councils were given new powers to scrutinise crime and disorder issues through provisions made in the Police and Justice Act 2006.<sup>2</sup> Home Office guidance on the new powers states that in two-tier areas such as Buckinghamshire, councils should work together to develop, where possible, a joint approach to the scrutiny of community safety issues.
2. In Buckinghamshire, participating district councils and the county council already work in partnership to carry out joint overview and scrutiny reviews, taking it in turn to lead on the areas of work chosen. Topics for joint reviews are ratified by the Joint Chairmen’s Network (JCN), a forum which allows the scrutiny chairmen of all the various councils to assess and discuss possible subject areas that may be worthy of further examination.
3. This year, in recognition of the new powers given to councils, the joint district and county review has adopted a community safety focus. The review was carried out by a task and finish group led by Buckinghamshire County Council, with welcome participation and keen support from Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils. The group met and gathered evidence between June – September 2010.

### Remit of the Review

4. The original remit of the review (see Appendix 1), was to scrutinise how members of the overarching Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB) were discharging their crime and disorder functions, and to identify any areas for improved partnership working.
5. Members subsequently agreed to use a case study approach for the second part of the review, which involved examining partnership working in the context of reducing the fear of crime in Buckinghamshire and communicating safety messages to residents.
6. Members chose to hone in on this area for two reasons. Firstly, tackling the fear of crime is a key priority in the Safer Bucks Partnership Plan for Buckinghamshire 2010. Secondly, as highlighted in the most recent Place Survey, although crime rates continue to fall overall in Buckinghamshire, residents still consider feeling safe in their community as a key issue. Members acknowledge that public confidence rates are increasing, but they are not doing so at the same level as crime rates are falling.

<sup>1</sup> Home Office, National Support Framework, *‘Delivering Safer and Confident Communities’* – Guidance for the Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters – England, 2009

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/48/contents>

The Task and Finish Group have made the following recommendations for consideration:

*For District and Buckinghamshire Cabinets:*

That:

**Parish, County and District members should be strongly encouraged by their leadership to sign up to Thames Valley Community Messaging, and to use the information included on I: on Bucks, so that they are kept informed about community safety issues in their areas, and can reinforce positive messages to residents.**

**A future joint scrutiny review to investigate uniformity of the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS) be endorsed and supported.**

*For the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board:*

That:

**The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board should continue its focus on the 'Stronger' element of its remit to develop greater community resilience, cohesion and collaboration, whilst still maintaining the safer element.**

**Positive community safety messages such as the simple but highly effective 'Realities of Crime' example attached at Appendix 5, should be publicised widely across all areas including at the 'Have Your Say' events.**

**Partners ensure copies of the Community Safety Information publications are distributed electronically or otherwise to Parishes, Neighbourhood Watch Groups, Neighbourhood Action Groups, Local Area Forums, Residents' Associations and members so that positive community safety messages can be included in local magazines, websites and other communications with residents.**

**Elected members should be kept fully briefed and informed by partners on local community safety issues, and included on community safety distribution lists.**

**The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board provides a report detailing progress against the recommendations set out in this report to Buckinghamshire County Council's Commissioning Committee by May 2011, who will monitor these on behalf of the Joint Chairman's Network.**

*For the Task and Finish Group\*:*

That:

**The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group is asked to write to Dominic Grieve, Attorney General and MP for Beaconsfield, expressing members' support for a single access point for victims and witnesses and asking for a response detailing progress in this area.**

\*Since the time of writing the report, the letter has been written and sent to Dominic Grieve and has subsequently been passed to Kenneth Clarke – Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

## **Membership**

7. The membership of the task and finish group was as follows:

Trevor Egleton (Chairman)	Buckinghamshire County Council
Brian Roberts	Buckinghamshire County Council
Julie Burton	Chiltern District Council
John Wertheim	Chiltern District Council
Alan Oxley	South Bucks District Council
Bill Bendyshe-Brown	Wycombe District Council
Paul Rogerson	Wycombe District Council

## **Methodology**

8. The review has been carried out using the following methods:

- Desktop Research
- Evidence gathering meetings throughout June, July and August
- Questionnaire submitted to members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board
- Influencing Perception Conference – June 2010
- Research using various media articles and community newsletters.

9. Information has been submitted from the following partners:

- Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board Members
- Bucks Fire and Rescue Service
- The Probation Service
- Buckinghamshire Community Safety Partnerships
- Thames Valley Police
- Victim Support – South East Region
- The Police Authority through the Local Member representative.

10. To ensure a balanced view, the task and finish group received community safety information from across Buckinghamshire and conducted meetings in all district areas of the county.

11. The reference to partners in this report indicates those organisations that are members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board, as follows:

- Aylesbury District Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Bucks Fire and Rescue Service.
- Chiltern District Council
- Community Impact Bucks
- NHS Buckinghamshire
- Probation Trust
- South Bucks District Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Thames Valley Police Authority
- Wycombe District Council.

## **Evidence gathering and findings**

### **The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB)**

12. The first part of the review remit was to establish how the SSBPB is discharging its crime and disorder functions. Members were briefed in detail about how the Board works and how it links with the other community safety forums that exist in Buckinghamshire. Members followed this information up by sending a detailed questionnaire, based on one used by Bracknell Forest Council, to Board members. A copy of the questionnaire used is attached at Appendix 2.

### **Structure and Governance of the Board**

13. The SSBPB is the Countywide Community Safety Partnership (formally known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) for Buckinghamshire, reporting into the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP). The District Councils also have their own Community Safety Partnerships. The Board's Chairman is the Chief Superintendent Police Commander for Buckinghamshire. A diagram showing the partnership arrangements for the area is attached at Appendix 3.

### **Plans and Priorities**

14. Members were told that the role of the Board primarily is to set community safety priorities for the area based on a partnership assessment and to be accountable for delivery against community safety targets contained in the Local Area Agreement. The agreed priorities are progressed through the development of the Safer Bucks Partnership Plan. The Board is also able to hold partners to account with regard to their contribution to reducing crime and disorder, and is able to deploy resources to meet local priorities.
15. Members learned that the District Councils compile their own community safety partnership plans, which are refreshed annually as a result of data from the joint partnership strategic assessment. The Board also carries out an annual review of Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) priorities.

### **Key Achievements**

16. When asked about the Board's recent key achievements, members were told how concerted efforts had brought about a significant fall in Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC) rates in Buckinghamshire. Numbers have reduced from 7,666 in 2008/09 to 6,550 in 2009/10 (see Appendix 4). SAC levels are higher in South Bucks, however members were informed this historical situation is exacerbated by the areas close proximity to Slough and the M40, which results in increased levels of cross-border crime.
17. Another welcome achievement is the introduction of a new, countywide Integrated Offender Management (IOM) project in Buckinghamshire. The aim of this project is to reduce re-offending in the area. The IOM project aims to achieve this through intensive work with offenders; making them aware of the repercussions of their behaviour and helping them make lifestyle changes. To place emphasis on this area of work, the SSBPB has included reducing re-offending as a key priority in its Safer and Stronger Plan.

18. Additionally, members were impressed by the Board's delivery of the 'I: on Bucks'<sup>3</sup> website. I: on Bucks provides a web-based method for people who live, work and visit Buckinghamshire to find up-to-date information about crime in their local area. The website includes interactive hotspot maps, and charts and tables which display offence totals at postcode level. Members were advised that people can also use the website to read about news and events relevant to their neighbourhood and follow web links to crime prevention sites.

## Summary

19. Based on the evidence gathered, members concluded that the Board is fulfilling its crime and disorder functions. There is good governance and structure; decisions are clearly recorded and actions followed up. Attendance at meetings is good, and members did not establish any significant gaps in membership. They were assured that Board members liaise with other relevant agencies, such as the Judiciary, as and when needed.
20. Results from the questionnaire indicated that there were no significant major obstacles to the progress of the Board and that shared outcomes were now being developed with partners.
21. The Board was clearly able to demonstrate how strategic priorities were set, how resources were used and how targets were monitored. Members were particularly impressed by the Board's work in helping to reduce SAC in Buckinghamshire and by the introduction of the I: on Bucks website.
22. During the evidence-gathering process, members heard from two Local Area Police Commanders who expressed the view that there is duplication of partnership arrangements - a particular problem for two-tier areas such as Buckinghamshire. For instance there are Community Safety Partnerships at both county and district level. Members heard that the new Policing Green Paper is looking to take away some of this bureaucracy.<sup>4</sup> It makes sense to members that, in light of cutbacks and the current financial situation, duplication of partnership arrangements should be reviewed. As it is likely that the Policing Green Paper will bring about streamlining of the process, members have chosen not to include recommendations in this area at this time.
23. Results from the questionnaire indicated that the Board has historically focussed on the 'safer' (reducing crime rates) element of its remit and needs to balance this by increasing its attention on the 'stronger' element. This includes taking action to build community spirit and develop better community resilience, by getting people more involved in local safety initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch. Evidence provided by Ipsos MORI confirms that people do feel safer where they are more in contact with each other.
24. Members know that the Board has recently started work in this area. They wish to add their support to this way forward, which they feel fits well with the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ionbucks.info/ionbucks/html/home>

<sup>4</sup> *Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: reconnecting police and the people*, Home Office, 2010  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/consultations/policing-21st-century/>

new Government's approach to developing a 'Big Society' where people are encouraged to be more involved in their local area.

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board should continue its focus on the 'Stronger' element of its remit to develop greater community resilience, cohesion and collaboration, whilst still maintaining the safer element.**

### **Fear of Crime**

25. The second part of the review involved members finding out how partners work together to reduce fear of crime in Buckinghamshire and how they communicate safety messages to residents.

### **National Context**

*'Perceptions are truth because people believe them' Epictetus (Greek Philosopher),  
1<sup>st</sup> Century AD*

26. The most recent British Crime Survey (BCS) was published in July 2010. A striking finding was that the types of crime measured by the BCS and police recorded crime both showed falls in overall crime compared with 2008/09. BCS crime decreased by nine per cent (from 10.5 million crimes to 9.6 million crimes) and police recorded crime by eight per cent (from 4.7 million to 4.3 million crimes).<sup>5</sup> Both sources showed marked falls in vehicle crime (BCS vehicle-related theft down 17% and police recorded vehicle crime down by 16% compared with the previous year).
27. Reasons for the fall in crime rates are thought to include:
- improved vehicle and household security;
  - the presence of CCTV in car parks;
  - local crime reduction initiatives;
  - reductions in the real value of many household items;
  - social change and controls; and
  - improvements in police performance and increases in police numbers.
28. However, the 2009/10 BCS also showed that a large proportion of people (66%) believe crime has risen across the country as a whole in the last few years. The report showed continuing disparity between people's perceived likelihood of being a victim of crime and their actual risk. For example, 15 per cent of people thought they were fairly or very likely to be a victim of burglary in the next year compared with an actual risk of two per cent.

<sup>5</sup> <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf>

## The Local Picture

29. In Buckinghamshire there is also significant disparity between people's perception of crime levels and actual crime rates. During an evidence-gathering meeting with the Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern for example, members learned that in that area (with approximately 90,000 residents) there is **less than one house burglary per day and fewer than two thefts from vehicles**. When asked by the Local Commander, people living in that area assumed the figures were much higher. Similarly, members learnt that there are on average **10 – 15 crimes per week across the whole of the Aylesbury Vale area**. When asked, people thought these figures were more likely to be around 100 per week.
30. Members were informed that there is also an assumption that crime is carried out by people coming into Buckinghamshire from outside of the area. Whilst this is true for a small proportion of crime, most is carried out by people who are locally born and bred, and most crime is carried out by a relatively small number of people who are persistent re-offenders.

## Communications

31. The British Crime Rate Survey shows that the proportion of people perceiving an increase nationally was highest for those crimes that receive the most media attention. For example 90% of people perceived knife crime had gone up nationally, compared with lower profile crimes such as homes being broken into (67%) and cars being stolen (60%). The British Crime Survey also states that the readers of 'popular' newspapers were more likely to think that crime had increased nationally than readers of 'broadsheets' (72% and 52% respectively).
32. The role of the media in sensationalising criminal cases is an area that has caused a great deal of interest during the review. Members learnt of problems that are caused in Buckinghamshire by the fact that areas such as Wycombe and South Bucks receive London news rather than local news. This gives residents in those communities an incorrect picture of their local area with a distorted view of criminal activity, as crime is likely to be higher in a city.
33. Members heard from the Police Communications Manager that although the work of the Police did receive some favourable press, when crime occurs, it is very newsworthy and reporting is often sensational. He stressed to members the importance of providing reassurance by balancing this with good news stories featuring activities that are being carried out to tackle crime.
34. The Local Area Police Commanders spoke to members about the difficulties they have had in persuading local newspapers to publish positive community safety stories. They advised that they were making headway thanks to a determined effort but it was slow progress. Mix 96 had been more supportive of reporting good news stories in the Aylesbury Vale area. The representative from Victim Support highlighted to members his view that everyone had a personal responsibility to promote positive stories, and that councils could provide most help by helping to ensure positive community safety messages are reported in the media.

35. The Police Communications Manager reported to members that where communication levels were higher (i.e. Aylesbury), public confidence was also higher. The public wanted to know that particular issues for their area were being tackled, which then brought about feelings of reassurance. He also informed members that Buckinghamshire has the lowest level of community safety communication resources in the Thames Valley area.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

36. More problematic for partners, was trying to reassure people about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). A member of the Task and Finish Group described his view that fear of crime may fall into two categories: fear of crime in the home, i.e. burglaries, and fear of crime in the street i.e. muggings and ASB. He proposed that whereas people can protect themselves at home to a certain extent by locking up properly etc. they expect to be 'protected' on the street and this can lead to feelings of vulnerability.
37. The Local Area Police Commanders spoke to members about concerted efforts in Buckinghamshire to deal with ASB. For instance, the Police have specific ASB teams assigned to deal with ASB incidents and a priority system that ensures calls are dealt with swiftly. The Police Commander for Buckinghamshire spoke to members about ASB problems that could be associated with people congregating late at night due to the proximity of food outlets to premises that have extended drinking hours. Aylesbury Vale has managed this by locating food outlets away from the main town area. The approach in South Bucks is the use of 'tactical' policing, which involves having a high visibility at peak times in the evening, greeting people as they enter and leave pubs and clubs, and working closely with taxi drivers and food outlet owners during those times.

### **Getting Community Safety Messages Across**

38. A key point for members was to establish how community safety messages can be better portrayed to residents to help them feel reassured about the safety of their neighbourhood. Some of the members of the task and finish group attended a Bucks Strategic Partnership conference in June on 'Influencing Perceptions'. Information provided there by the market research company Ipsos MORI stressed the importance of letting people know about public sector activities being carried out locally (including those aimed at combating crime) as this correlates with greater public satisfaction levels. Their view was that 'Communication Matters' in terms of influencing perception.
39. Members heard that there are many good news community safety stories in Buckinghamshire and positive messages about crime rates that together could give a more realistic picture of the real scale of crime in Buckinghamshire. They heard of numerous community safety activities being carried out by the district level Community Safety Partnerships, supported by the obvious enthusiasm of the people who manage them. To help combat the negative and more sensational type of messages that are often reported in the press, members feel it is very important that these positive messages are highlighted to the public.
40. Partners contributing to the review told members that, in their experience, using local methods such as Parish magazines is the most effective way of

getting community safety messages across to residents. The Police and the Community Safety Partnerships in each area hold regular 'Have Your Say' events as a new way of consulting with communities. The events take place in key local meeting places such as libraries, churches and shops. Residents are encouraged to come along to let the team know what their local concerns and priorities are. There is also a 'Have Your Say' email address for residents use.<sup>6</sup> The Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern has used the 'Have Your Say' forum to publicise community safety messages about his area, through the use of a Fact sheet called 'The Realities of Crime'. This received a very positive response from the public and members would like to see this duplicated in other areas.

## Recommendation 2

**Positive community safety messages such as the simple but highly effective 'Realities of Crime' example attached at Appendix 5, should be publicised widely across all areas including at the 'Have Your Say' events.**

41. During the course of their investigations, members discussed with partners whether it is most useful to use figures or percentages when describing crime rates and numbers of incidents to the public. These discussions have led members to believe that it is preferable to use actual numbers of incidents as these seem to be more meaningful and tangible for people. The Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern asked people in his area directly how best to represent this sort of statistical information. The view was that people wanted to be told the number of offences that occur each day.

42. A member of the task and finish group has referred to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham who are putting community safety messages on highly visible sites such as lampposts. Members were advised that this sort of approach is also used in Buckinghamshire. For instance, Aylesbury Vale District Council is working with the Police to put community safety messages on billboards outside the new theatre to reassure people that Aylesbury is a safe area to come to at night as well as during the day.



42. Media methods that could potentially be used to better effect and which were raised a number of times throughout the review are Parish magazines and websites, Neighbourhood Watch magazines, the new county and district magazine, and information provided through the Neighbourhood Action

Groups (NAGs).

43. The Police and local Community Safety Partnerships compile a very useful magazine for each of the local areas called CSI (Community Safety Information). Members would like to see this distributed to key local outlets so

<sup>6</sup> haveyoursay@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

that they can include the information in their local magazines or communications with residents.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Partners should ensure copies of the Community Safety Information publications are distributed electronically or otherwise to Parishes, Neighbourhood Watch Groups, Neighbourhood Action Groups, Local Area Forums, Residents' Associations and members so that positive community safety messages can be included in local magazines, websites and other communications with residents.**

### **Role of Members**

44. As leaders in their local communities, members have expert knowledge about the concerns of local residents. When asked, partners felt that members could play a key role in proactively delivering community safety messages to their local electorate.
45. One source of information that could help inform members is the use of a free community messaging system provided by Thames Valley Police.<sup>7</sup> The service provides information to subscribers about crime and police activity in their area by phone or email. It also includes information on what the police and partners are doing to bring offenders to justice or combat anti-social behaviour.

### **Recommendation 4**

**Parish, County and District members should be strongly encouraged by their leadership to sign up to Thames Valley Community Messaging, and use the information included on I:on Bucks, so that they are kept informed about community safety issues in their areas, and can reinforce positive messages to residents.**

46. One member advised the Task and Finish Group that members at Chiltern District Council have paid for access to 'PublicNet Briefing, which provides regular emails to subscribers about changes in the public sector, including the Police.<sup>8</sup>
47. Members of the Task and Finish Group did not feel that local members generally were kept sufficiently informed about community safety issues in their local areas, or were always included in the circulation of community safety communications provided by partners. They are keen that both District and County members are actively sought out when community safety information is disseminated locally, and are appropriately briefed with key messages targeted to their local area.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tvpcommunitymessaging.org/rmwebportal/startup.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.publicnet.co.uk/about/publicnet-briefing/>

### **Recommendation 5**

**Elected members should be kept fully briefed and informed by partners on local community safety issues, and included on community safety distribution lists.**

#### **Victims of Crime**

48. During the course of the review, members received a presentation from the Regional Manager from the South East Victim Support and Witness Service about the support that it provides to people that have been affected by crime. The sorts of activities the organisation carries out are as follows:
- emotional support by specially trained volunteers;
  - some practical services such as paying for locks to be changed;
  - carrying out needs assessments on potential clients;
  - pre-trial visits to show witnesses the Court rooms and talk through the process;
  - special measures at Court e.g. giving evidence behind screens, video links etc; and
  - support for young witnesses through home visits.
49. The Regional Manager explained that the initial reaction of those who are victims of crime is that they just want the crime to stop and the criminal to be caught. He referred to research which supports the view that some victims want the criminal to be punished so that they are less likely to commit an offence on another person. The view of Victim Support is that fear of crime can be reduced through the support their organisation offers, but that it is a complex area as fear of crime is dependent on a number of factors and is different for individual people.
50. The British Crime Survey shows us that those who have experienced crime in the last 12 months are more likely to think that crime in their local area has gone up - 44% of victims compared with 27% of non-victims.
51. A key point from the Regional Manager's presentation was the view from victims that the Criminal Justice System can be very confusing and victims frequently struggle to find out information about their cases. Victims of crime also receive calls from a wide variety of people involved in the criminal justice process which can be very disconcerting.
52. Victim Support is working with the Ministry of Justice, Courts and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to streamline the system. Victim Support's goal is to ensure a single point of contact is established for those that have experienced crime. The view of task and finish members was that the review should take appropriate action to support this move.

### **Recommendation 6\***

**The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group is asked to write to Dominic Grieve, Attorney General and MP for Beaconsfield, expressing members' support for a single access point for victims and witnesses and asking for a response detailing progress in this area.**

\*Since the time of writing the report, the letter has been written and sent to Dominic Grieve and has subsequently been passed to Kenneth Clarke – Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

### **Good practice in Buckinghamshire**

53. Throughout the review, members heard of many areas of good practice and partnership working to help reduce fear of crime in the county which they would like to highlight. Examples came from a range of partners including Police, the District Community Safety Partnerships, Bucks Fire and Rescue and the Probation Services.
54. Examples of good practice include:
- Work to combat ASB through a project called 'Operation Confidence,' - a joint scheme between environmental health, Community Safety and Thames Valley Police. This involves door to door surveys to find out what residents concerns are, and ASB patrols in hotspot areas. Once hotspots are identified, partners work to deliver diversionary activities, which have had a positive impact.
  - 'Have Your Say' events organised by the Police in high footfall areas to provide a visible, reassuring presence, and to find out what the community safety issues are for local people.
  - A Victim Support project funded by Buckinghamshire County Council for victims of ASB, providing specially trained volunteers to support people who are repeat victims or who are particularly vulnerable.
  - Community safety packs for rural areas provided by Bucks Fire and Rescue at the 2009 Buckinghamshire County Show, which included a rural risk management strategy for farmers and businesses.
  - Monthly meetings with the Police and the media to help foster partnerships.
  - 'We asked, You said, We did' communication initiative carried out by the Police demonstrating action taken to address local concerns.
  - Intensive, cross-border partnership working in South Bucks by the Local Area Police Commander and his team, which has helped lead to a reduction in crime rates.
  - Community Safety Partnership banners used in Wycombe High Street to promote messages and advice.
  - Community Safety Information (CSI) magazines produced by the Community Safety Partnerships.
  - Use of branding to show that the Police and Councils are working together i.e. 'Working Together for a Safer Chiltern'.
55. Members are also aware from their discussions that many partners are carrying out less visible but equally important community safety activities. For

instance, members heard from the Director of the Probation Service about their work in reducing fear of crime which is focussed on helping to reduce re-offending rates. Members would like to acknowledge the important work that the Probation service carries out in this area.

56. Activities include:

- treatment packages for offenders who have substance misuse or mental health problems;
- supporting victims of domestic violence and proving them with a clear structure of how the perpetrator is being dealt with; and
- providing un-paid work in the community as part of the 'making good' agenda.

57. Equally, members heard how Bucks Fire and Rescue carries out activities that help to reassure the public through initiatives such as home safety checks. These involve officers from Bucks Fire and Rescue visiting residents in their homes and advising them on how to make houses safer. The organisation also provides diversionary activities for young people, including courses that warn them about the dangers of being involved with crime.

## **Conclusion**

58. Members of the Task and Finish Group were impressed by the range and level of community safety activities taking place in Buckinghamshire, and by the enthusiasm of partners in taking these forward. They are satisfied that Buckinghamshire has an effective and well-structured strategic Board overseeing community safety activities in the form of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board, which has been instrumental in helping to reducing Serious Acquisitive Crime in the area.

59. Members acknowledge that a great deal of work is being carried out by partners to help reassure residents about levels of crime in Buckinghamshire, but that this is often not reflected in the local media. Members agree that communicating clearly with the public, using numbers not statistics, is the best way to help reassure them, and that the use of very local media such as Parish magazines and appropriate websites seems to be the best way of getting messages across. They also feel that all members, through their community leadership role can, and should, play a clear and proactive role in helping to deliver community safety messages.

### **Recommendation 7**

**The Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board provides a report detailing progress against the recommendations set out in this report to Buckinghamshire County Council's Commissioning Committee by May 2011, who will monitor these on behalf of the Joint Chairman's Network.**

60. During the review, members expressed concern about the lack of consistency in how Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS) operate in Buckinghamshire. The new Police Commander for Buckinghamshire has indicated that he will be looking to standardize the process. Members are keen that this is followed up by scrutiny and so have included the following recommendation.

## Recommendation 8

**A future joint scrutiny review to investigate uniformity of the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS) be endorsed and supported.**

### Acknowledgements

61. Task and Finish Group Members would like to thank the following people who contributed to the review. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group would particularly like to thank Susie Yapp – Acting Head of Localities and Safer Communities – who provided the initial briefing on the Safer and Stronger Board and was on hand throughout the review, and the Local Area Police Commanders.

Name	Title	Organisation
Richard Beaumont	Head of Overview and Scrutiny	Bracknell Forest Council
Susie Yapp	Acting Head of Service, Localities and Safer Communities	Buckinghamshire County Council and Thames Valley Police
Bryan Dugdale	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Bucks Fire and Rescue Service
Katie Galvin	Community Safety Manager	Chiltern District Council (Community Safety Partnership)
Martin Holt	Head of Health and Housing	Chiltern District Council
Nathan March	Community Safety Manager	South Bucks District Council (Community Safety Partnership)
Gilbert Houalla	Local Area Police Commander for Wycombe	Thames Valley Police
Ian Hunter	Local Area Police Commander for Chiltern	Thames Valley Police
Paul Cook	Local Area Police Commander for South Bucks	Thames Valley Police
Paul Emmings	Buckinghamshire Commander	Thames Valley Police
Pierre Dubois	Communications Manager	Thames Valley Police
Richard List	Local Area Police Commander for Aylesbury	Thames Valley Police

Stephen Czajewski	Director	Thames Valley Probation
David Carroll	Councillor	The Police Authority (Elected Member Representative)
John Hayward-Cripps	Regional Manager	Victim Support
Gillian Stimpson	Community Safety Manager	Wycombe District Council (Community Safety Partnership)

### Reporting arrangements

Committee	Approximate Timescale
Joint Chairmen's Network	14 September 2010
Buckinghamshire County Council's Commissioning Committee	19 October 2010
Buckinghamshire County Council's Cabinet	8 November 2010
Participating District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees	Autumn 2010
Participating District Council's Cabinets	Autumn / Winter 2010
Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board	26 November 2010

## Appendix 1

<b>Subject of the Review</b>	<b>Crime and Disorder Management in Buckinghamshire – Joint Scrutiny Review</b>
Chairman	Trevor Egleton – Buckinghamshire County Council
Review members, including co-optees	Two members from each of the District Councils who wish to participate and two members from Buckinghamshire County Council.
Officer contact	Claire Street – Buckinghamshire County Council
Purpose of the Review (Reasons for undertaking the review, including where the ideas have come from)	<p>Councils have new powers to scrutinise crime and disorder issues resulting from provisions made in the Police and Justice Act 2006, which came into force in April 2009.</p> <p>The purpose of the joint review is to scrutinise how members of the overarching Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board are discharging their crime and disorder functions, and to identify areas for improved partnership working.</p> <p>Concerns about the level of crime in Buckinghamshire were flagged as a high priority by local residents in the 2008 Place Survey.</p>
Anticipated outcome(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify opportunities for improved working with our partners</li> <li>• To have reviewed performance against the relevant LAA indicators</li> <li>• To have reviewed two areas of countywide concern with recommendations for improvement.</li> </ul>
What is the potential impact of the review on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Equality issues, e.g. access to services, vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Health inequalities</li> <li>• Adding value to the organization</li> <li>• Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective management of crime and disorder functions in the local area</li> <li>• Help to address fear of crime and concerns about levels of crime in Buckinghamshire</li> <li>• Improved working with partners to manage crime and disorder matters</li> </ul>
Link to Council Corporate Plan priority	Promote community spirit – Work with you to make you and your communities safer
Consideration of Local Area Agreement targets	NI 16 Serious acquisitive crime rate NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police NI 49 Number of primary fires and related fatalities and non-fatal casualties, excluding precautionary checks
Link to Sustainable Community Strategies outcomes	By 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buckinghamshire is in the top 25 percent of safest counties</li> <li>• Buckinghamshire’s record on the number of people killed or seriously injured in road collisions</li> </ul>

	<p>is among the best nationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most residents agree that anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area are successfully dealt with.</li> </ul>
Key Issues for the review to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current arrangements for managing crime and disorder functions in Buckinghamshire</li> <li>• The extent to which partners are working well together</li> <li>• Opportunities for improved working</li> <li>• Consider if there are any areas of weakness so these can be addressed</li> <li>• Good practice</li> </ul>
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing for members</li> <li>• Joint Task and Finish Group</li> <li>• Select Committee style evidence gathering meetings</li> <li>• Desktop research to include associated reviews both locally and nationally</li> </ul>
Press & Publicity	Members E-Newsletter, BSP Newsletter
Key background papers	Guidance for the Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters – England
Use of demographics/ needs data	Contextual information to be provided by BCC's Research team about crime rates and by the Consultation Officer about crime and disorder concerns expressed through the Place Survey I-on Bucks data
Written evidence to be provided by:	Residents' Panel and others to be identified
Oral evidence to be provided by:	Members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board and relevant officers Front line workers
Potential partners	All members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Board, active partnership officers including District Council colleagues, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Probation Service, NHS Buckinghamshire
Resources required	Policy Officer Democratic Services Officer Support
Timetable	June – September 2010
Reporting mechanism	District and County Council Executive Committees, Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board

## Overview and Scrutiny Joint Review into Crime and Disorder

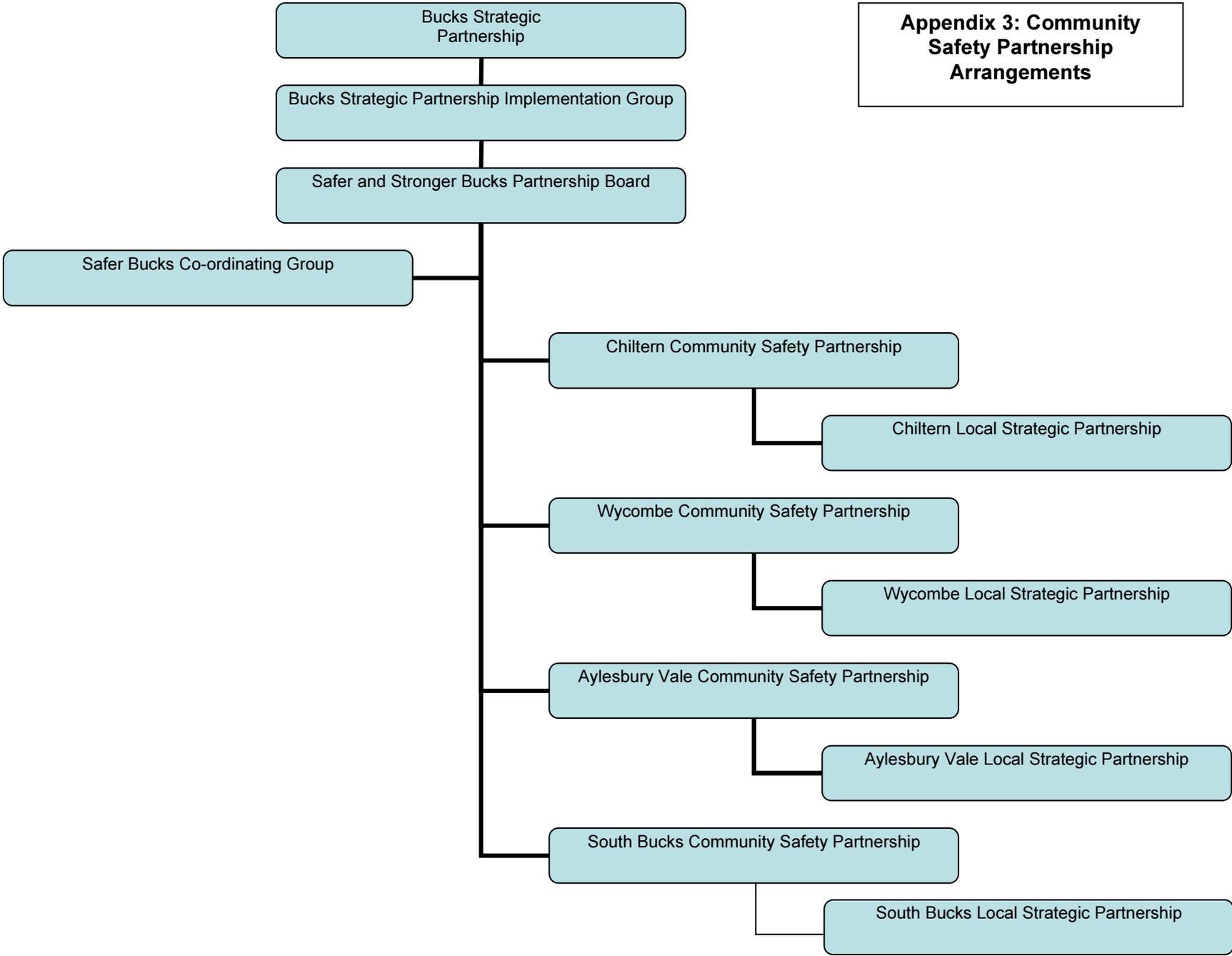
### Questionnaire for Members of the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board<sup>9</sup>

No:	Question:	Response:
1	Your Name	
2	Contact details	
3	Please describe your role on the Board and the specific professional spectrum that you cover	
4	Please provide a few examples of the Board's major achievements	
5	Where do you think the Board currently is in terms of its stage of development? E.g. early formation, delivering shared outcomes, or fully developed?	
6	Please describe any major obstacles towards the Boards success	
7	Please describe your understanding of how members are appointed to the Board?	
8	How are decisions recorded?	
9	Who makes sure decisions are acted upon?	

<sup>9</sup> Based on a questionnaire produced by Bracknell Forest Borough Council – amended and reproduced with their permission

10	Please describe your understanding of how the Board is held to account and by whom?	
11	As a Board member, please describe how you monitor and report progress against targets set by the Board?	
12	Can you describe how issues are raised through the local Community Safety Partnerships through to the Board?	
13	How does the Board agree action on targets that are not likely to be met?	
14	How do you demonstrate publicly that the partnership adds value?	
15	How does the public know that the Board achieves value for money?	
16	Do you think the work of the Board is sufficiently accessible to the public?	
17	Do you have any views on how O&S can assist in the development and achievement of the Board's objectives?	
18	Councils are now required to scrutinise crime and disorder arrangements on an annual basis – particularly in relation to performance. For future reviews, do you have any views on how this could be most efficiently achieved?	
19	Are there any other comments you wish to make?	

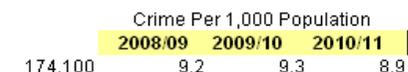
**Appendix 3: Community Safety Partnership Arrangements**



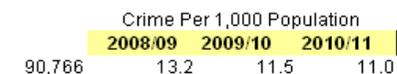
**Neighbour - hood  
Action  
Groups  
(NAGS)**

## Buckinghamshire BCU SAC - LAA Three Year Annual Reduction Targets

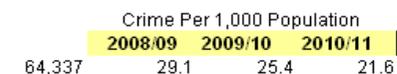
Aylesbury LPA Serious Aquisitive Crime	Actual	Actual	2010/11	% Target	% Target	2010/11		
	2008/09	2009/10				Weekly	Monthly	Daily
Burglary Dwelling	572	524	536	8.4%	-2.3%	10.3	44.7	1.5
Theft From Vehicle	742	803	727	-8.2%	9.5%	14.0	60.6	2.0
Theft of Vehicle	212	197	212	7.1%	-7.6%	4.1	17.7	0.6
Robbery (Personal & Business)	84	89	73	-6.0%	18.0%	1.4	6.1	0.2
All Serious Aquisitive Crime	1,610	1,613	1,548	-0.2%	4.0%	29.8	129.0	4.2



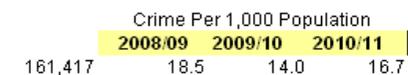
Chiltern LPA Serious Aquisitive Crime	Actual	Actual	2010/11	% Target	% Target	2010/11		
	2008/09	2009/10				Weekly	Monthly	Daily
Burglary Dwelling	478	326	332	31.8%	-1.8%	6.4	27.7	0.9
Theft From Vehicle	531	537	502	-1.1%	6.5%	9.7	41.8	1.4
Theft of Vehicle	130	142	130	-9.2%	8.5%	2.5	10.8	0.4
Robbery (Personal & Business)	61	37	36	39.3%	2.7%	0.7	3.0	0.1
All Serious Aquisitive Crime	1,200	1,042	1,000	13.2%	4.0%	19.2	83.3	2.7



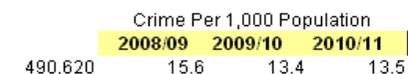
South Bucks LPA Serious Aquisitive Crime	Actual	Actual	2010/11	% Target	% Target	2010/11		
	2008/09	2009/10				Weekly	Monthly	Daily
Burglary Dwelling	599	514	443	14.2%	13.8%	8.5	36.9	1.2
Theft From Vehicle	962	920	682	4.4%	25.9%	13.1	56.8	1.9
Theft of Vehicle	235	149	194	36.6%	-30.2%	3.7	16.2	0.5
Robbery (Personal & Business)	73	48	73	34.2%	-52.1%	1.4	6.1	0.2
All Serious Aquisitive Crime	1,869	1,631	1,392	12.7%	14.7%	26.8	116.0	3.8



Wycombe LPA Serious Aquisitive Crime	Actual	Actual	2010/11	% Target	% Target	2010/11		
	2008/09	2009/10				Weekly	Monthly	Daily
Burglary Dwelling	933	796	813	14.7%	-2.1%	15.6	67.8	2.2
Theft From Vehicle	1,499	1,060	1,376	29.3%	-29.8%	26.5	114.7	3.8
Theft of Vehicle	342	254	342	25.7%	-34.6%	6.6	28.5	0.9
Robbery (Personal & Business)	213	154	164	27.7%	-6.5%	3.2	13.7	0.4
All Serious Aquisitive Crime	2,987	2,264	2,695	24.2%	-19.0%	51.8	224.6	7.4



Bucks BCU Serious Aquisitive Crime	Actual	Actual	2010/11	% Target	% Target	2010/11		
	2008/09	2009/10				Weekly	Monthly	Daily
Assault Less Serious (Non DV)	1,733	1681		-2.0%				
Burglary Dwelling	2,582	2,160	2,124	16.3%	1.7%	40.8	177.0	5.8
Theft From Vehicle	3,734	3,320	3,287	11.1%	1.0%	63.2	273.9	9.0
Theft of Vehicle	919	742	878	19.3%	-18.3%	16.9	73.2	2.4
Robbery (Personal & Business)	431	328	346	23.9%	-5.5%	6.7	28.8	0.9
All Serious Aquisitive Crime	7,666	6,550	6,635	14.6%	-1.3%	127.6	552.9	18.2



Data Sources:  
Crime Summaries & Bucks BCU Targets as at 31st March 2010

## **Chiltern Police Commander's Review**

**March 2010**

### **Do you know the realities of crime in Chiltern?**

Before reading on, I would like you to pause and consider how many house burglaries, car crimes and robberies you think occur in Chiltern on average each day.....

It has long been thought that perceptions of crime are higher than the realities. I have tested this recently with a number of community groups and found this to be true. Many of you who responded to my first article in February have asked me for more information about the levels of local crime having read about our successful initiative, Operation Guillotine.

I have looked at the best way to get this message across given the difficulties with statistical information. Take house burglary as an example, should I tell you that we have 156 fewer victims than last year, or explain it as a reduction of 33.5%?

I emailed some of those who kindly replied to my first article to get some advice on the best way to present it and the overwhelming view was to provide the average number of offences that occur each day.

### **So, what were your answers and how close to reality were they?**

Between the 31<sup>st</sup> March last year and 10<sup>th</sup> March this year, the average number of offences per day in the Chiltern District were:

House burglary -	0.9 a day
Theft from vehicle-	1.4 a day
Theft of vehicle -	0.4 a day
Robbery -	0.1 a day
Total -	2.8 a day

### **Are these higher or lower than you thought?**

I have provided these numbers as I want to reassure you that levels of Crime in Chiltern are often nowhere near what the perceptions are.

I know some of you may say that not all crime is reported, my experience is that this might be true regarding having something stolen from your vehicle, but I believe that most stolen cars, house burglaries and robberies are reported.

Chiltern have a dedicated team of officers who investigate these offences and target those people who we believe are actively engaged in criminality. The numbers of people who commit house burglary and car crime in Chiltern are relatively small, some are local and some travel into our area to commit crime. I would like to reassure you that we are very robust and are having increasing success in bringing

offenders to justice. This was demonstrated last week when an 18 year old man from Chalfont St Peter was sentenced to 14 months in prison for burglary and car crime offences. He also admitted another 24 offences across Chiltern and South Bucks Districts. This individual will now have plenty of time to consider the impact of his actions and hopefully steer clear of crime in the future. This also highlights the importance in managing our persistent offenders effectively to ensure you are kept safe and that crime continues to fall.

You can all do your bit to help us reduce crime with some really simple steps. This month I would ask you to ensure you don't leave valuables on display in your car and check that you have LOCKED your car. A high percentage of car crime is committed because cars are left unlocked; even worse, many of them are left unlocked with laptops and sat nav's on display! The Community Safety Partnership has launched a Clear Car Campaign where council and police staff will note any cars with valuables on display and send out a crime prevention reminder to the registered keeper.

Thank you for taking the time to read this second article. I was delighted to receive so much feedback from the first and really pleased that there was strong support for the operational activity to tackle burglary, car crime and anti-social behaviour.

It has also been very positive to receive so much valuable information from you at the **Have your Say** events that have been taking place and continue to take place across Chiltern. This is helping us to communicate more effectively with you and to solve the problems that matter most to you. You can obtain details of the Have your Say events and read local monthly updates from your Neighbourhood team by visiting the Thames Valley Police website at: [www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk)

You can contact Thames Valley Police on our non-emergency number 0845 8 505 505 or if it is an emergency call 999.

Your views are important and you can email me your thoughts on this article to: [haveyoursaychiltern@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:haveyoursaychiltern@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)

Finally, please remember the low crime figures in Chiltern. 90,000 people live here and there is less than one house burglary a day. This is a safe place and together we can keep it that way.

Regards,



Chief Inspector Ian Hunter  
Chiltern Police Area Commander

**Working together  
for a Safer Chiltern**



