

Hallmarks of Effective Practice

1. At the last meeting, on 6 July, the Partnership received feedback on this process from John Tench.
2. John's general feedback was that we appeared to be a very strong Partnership, and in particular that
 - (a) our results in the 'Lead & Guide' section were as strong as seen anywhere in the Region;
 - (b) the sequence of moving from 'clear, evidenced priorities' via 'detailed strategies' to 'resources deployed.' was also exceptionally strong; and
 - (c) that the free text / open ended comments made by respondents to the survey were generally very positive, which was an indication of the prevailing culture within the Partnership.
3. John identified two leading questions for us, as follows:-
 - (a) what is the deal with the public?; and
 - (b) what is the deal with austerity?

Public Engagement

4. In discussion, it was suggested that our overall relationship with the public is along the lines of 'You tell us what the problems are, and we'll do something about them' (as outlined in our 3 yearly consultation programme and Face the People sessions) rather than, for example, 'You tell us what the problems are and we'll empower and facilitate you to do something about them yourselves' (although, of course, we do draw on public involvement at the tactical level, in terms of community intelligence on issues including drug dealing and ASB, and by involving victims of ASB in compiling evidence for us to use on their behalf).
5. Some doubt was expressed about whether or not there is a groundswell of public enthusiasm for getting more involved, above and beyond the opportunities which already exist (e.g. special constabulary, police volunteer scheme, Neighbourhood Enforcement volunteer scheme, Neighbourhood Watch / Junior Neighbourhood Watch etc).

6. Successive governments have advocated providing more localised information on crime and disorder to enable 'the community' to hold the partners to account, but turnout at our Face the People sessions and the Chief Constable's annual consultation meeting does not suggest widespread dissatisfaction.
7. Ben Page of MORI, on his last visit to Stockton on 2009, made the point that the best way of securing community engagement is to provide very poor services, as in London Borough of Hackney in the 1980s. In terms of Community Safety we are currently at the opposite end of the spectrum.
8. One specific form of community involvement which we touched on in discussion was the involvement of Area Partnership Boards (APBs) in the work of SSP. Potential measures which we could adapt to make this link with residents more robust are
 - (a) placing the standing agenda item on feedback from APBs in a more prominent position on the SSP agenda (it's currently at the end)
 - (b) provide more training./support to APB reps to give them greater skills and confidence in their roles (SRCGA may have a role in this)
 - (c) encouraging APBs (or even requiring them) to nominate a resident rep
 - (d) feeding back to APBs on the attendance records of their reps at SSP in order to inform their nomination process (see Appendix A attached)
 - (e) supplementing APB representation with representatives from the Community Engagement Network, as is the practice at other thematic partnerships.

Austerity

9. All partner agencies can expect to have their budgets severely squeezed over the next few years. In particular, there is a significant likelihood that Home Office allocations to the Partnership i.e. Basic Command Unit Fund (via Police) and Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (via Council) will be drastically reduced or eliminated.
10. This will force us to re-consider our priorities. Some preliminary work was done on the Partnership Investment Plan to prepare 'triage' into low, medium and high priorities – see Appendix B attached.

11. John Tench also mentioned the 'cautionary tale' of a Community Safety Partnership in a city (not in the north east region) where there had recently been a major disagreement precipitated by Government cuts. In Stockton there is a high level of commitment to continuing dialogue, not only via the Safer Stockton Partnership and associated informal channels, but also via Stockton Renaissance Main Board, the other thematic partnerships, the Local Public Services Board etc, and a widespread recognition of the need to keep all the channels of communication open in the interests of continued effective multi-agency effort.
12. It is clear from the Government's intention to reduce the budgets of all Government departments, except for Health and International Development, by 25% over the next 4 years, that we will all be providing fewer services, with a significant reduction in head count. Cuts in services will carry the associated risk of a reversal in the long term reduction in crime which we have secured over the last 12 years, particularly if unemployment also increases significantly, as appears likely.
13. The challenge to our Partnership will be to limit the damage in terms of impact on community safety across our Borough. This means that we need to protect as much as possible those aspects of service delivery which have the most beneficial impact on levels of crime and ASB.
14. There will be a potential challenge in terms of co-terminosity. For the Council it is relatively straightforward to involve and consult other partners on the impact of its decision-making, but less so for the partner agencies that are organised at 'county' level e.g. Police, Fire and Probation, where decision-making ranges across Cleveland and beyond (in the case of Probation), and the PCT, although nominally based on Stockton-on-Tees, seems to be increasingly subject to decision-making at the level of wider geography.