



meeting CORPORATE STRATEGY AND COORDINATION SELECT COMMITTEE

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agenda item number

## **Report of the Chair of the Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee**

### **DOMESTIC BURGLARY RATE – RESPONSE FROM CABINET**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To summarise the response of the Deputy Leader to the Cabinet report by this Committee on its latest findings in its ongoing scrutiny of domestic burglary rates in the county. This is to give background to questions to the Deputy Leader who will be attending the meeting.

#### **Background**

2. The Committee's latest report on progress towards meeting the burglary reduction target, as set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2001-2005, was presented to Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004 (Appendix A). A letter in response by the Deputy Leader, Cllr Kirkham was considered at the last meeting of this Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004 (Appendix B). The Committee requested that the Deputy Leader be invited to this meeting to discuss crime reduction issues further.

#### **Recommendations to Cabinet**

3. The following summarises the response to the Committee's recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: The Cabinet considers how to raise the profile of crime and disorder reduction within the portfolio of the responsibilities of the Deputy Leader to give it similar prominence to education, social services and the other portfolios.**

"Crime and Disorder" will be specifically listed as part of the portfolio of responsibilities of the Deputy Leader, together with "community safety", "youth offending" and "substance misuse". In light of the public concern about crime and disorder, it will remain top priority for both the Deputy Leader and the County Council as a whole, and as expressed in the community strategy.

**Recommendation 2: The Cabinet considers arranging a Member seminar to raise awareness of a range of community safety issues.**

A draft list of speakers for an event is attached as Appendix C. Given that there are currently a number of seminars on crime/drug related issues being organised by the Community Services Select Committee, it is proposed that this Committee's event should be held in March 2005.

**Recommendation 3: Nottinghamshire crime and Disorder Partnerships should consider commissioning research into stolen goods markets.**

The Deputy Leader has approved an allocation of £14,000 to pilot such a scheme in the Mansfield/Ashfield area between September 2004 and the end of February 2005. Lessons learnt through this process will be fed back to relevant agencies and best practice can then be adopted across the county. The Deputy Leader is also working on a scheme to recruit additional neighbourhood wardens in conjunction with district Councils. He will be asked to give an update on progress at this meeting.

**Recommendation 4: The Committee discusses progress on burglary and crime reduction with the Chief Constable at a future meeting.**

The Chief Constable has agreed to update the Committee on the latest position on burglary rates and crime related issues at our meeting on 22 November 2004.

**RECOMMENDATION**

4. It is recommended that:

the Committee discusses the issues raised in the report with the Deputy Leader.

**Cllr Darrell Pulk**  
**Chair of the Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee**

## Crime Trends in Nottinghamshire

5. For the Nottinghamshire county area (i.e. excluding Nottingham City), the number of crimes overall has risen by 0.5%. There are reductions in the number of household burglaries, other burglaries, robbery, and vehicle crimes. Nottinghamshire Police has provided the following summary:

### Year to Date – Nottinghamshire County

|                          | 2003/04 | 2002/03 | %+ or - |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>All Crime</b>         | 80,037  | 79,575  | +0.5%   |
| <b>Burglary Dwelling</b> | 7,853   | 8,022   | -2.2%   |
| <b>Burglary Other</b>    | 9,298   | 9,707   | -4.3%   |
| <b>Robbery</b>           | 653     | 682     | -4.3%   |
| <b>Vehicle Crime</b>     | 14,624  | 15,246  | -4.1%   |

6. Between December 2003 and February 2004, statistics show a significant fall in burglaries and robbery in the County compared to the previous year:

### Dec 2003 – Feb 2004: County

|                          | 2003/04 | 2002/03 | %+ or - |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Burglary Dwelling</b> | 1,982   | 2,224   | -11%    |
| <b>Robbery</b>           | 137     | 173     | -21%    |

7. The level of burglaries in the county continues to be a major concern. The significant falls shown in the figures for the last quarter are to be welcomed and it is to be hoped that the downward trend will continue. However, academic research has shown that when we are in an economic peak, burglary levels tend to fall whilst violent crimes increase. The opposite is true when you have an economic trough. Given the current low levels of unemployment and relative prosperity, it can be predicted that burglaries would increase if the current economic cycle goes into reverse.
8. The latest burglary rate is 27.2 burglaries per 1000 households. This is 8.4 burglaries per 1000 higher than in 2000/01 – an increase of 45% on the actual level in 2000/01. Encouragingly the trend is now downward again but there is still a long way to go to get back to the levels of four years ago, let alone get below that figure.

## The Role of Police in Reducing Burglary Rates

9. The Chief Constable has explained that he has to allocate resources to deal with all types of crime. Nottinghamshire has been particularly badly hit by violent crime, including a significant number of murders, and this is a big drain on resources. In addition significant officer numbers are

required to deal with public order issues such as violence when people are leaving pubs and clubs at night. He appreciates that the public want more done about anti-social behaviour, for example, but there are a number of priorities to be addressed.

10. Internally the Chief Constable has been undertaking reorganisation and modernisation within the force. New Divisions have been created whilst IT systems have been introduced to replace manual systems with a comprehensive database. A number of additional scientific officers have also been recruited to ensure that most crime scenes are assessed for forensic evidence as soon as possible. It is felt that being able to gather forensic evidence quickly makes detection much more likely.
11. The Chief Constable believes that the reorganisation and modernisation will deliver significant improvements in detecting and preventing crime within the next twelve months. A number of initiatives are being undertaken to 'target harden' homes such as 'Safer Homes' and 'Kickstart'. There are also initiatives to target burglars. For example, 'Clean Slate' is an initiative which offers people the opportunity to confess to all crimes they have committed rather than just the ones for which they have been charged. If they fail to declare a crime, then they risk being put before the courts if it is discovered in the future. Similarly 'Roman Plus' is about arresting criminals for whom there are outstanding arrest warrants. This is particularly about targeting volume criminals who commit crimes on a regular basis. It is clear that a small group of criminals are responsible for a significant proportion of crime so by getting them off the streets, it should lead to fewer incidents.
12. Nottinghamshire County Council is directly supporting burglary reduction by making £50,000 available to Police 'target hardening' projects and by supporting the 'Lock Up' campaign in south Nottinghamshire with a £15,000 contribution.

### **Drugs and Markets for Stolen Goods**

13. As part of a pilot project, Nottinghamshire Police has been testing its prisoners for drugs. This research found that a majority of those arrested were drug users so it can be assumed that a great deal of burglaries take place so that drug users can sell on stolen goods to fund their drug habits.
14. The Committee received considerable evidence from Dr Mike Sutton of Nottingham Trent University about stolen goods markets. People usually steal goods, primarily through burglary or shoplifting, to sell on for cash. This might be to fund a drug habit, for example. Research suggests that possibly 20% of the population knowingly buys stolen goods. According to a Home Office Research Paper: "Theft is concentrated upon relatively few products. These products share a number of common attributes in that they are generally concealable, removable, available, valuable, enjoyable and disposable. While each of these elements may be

important in explaining which products are stolen, how much they are stolen may depend critically on just one attribute – the ease of disposal.”

15. A key issue to consider is where does the disposal of stolen goods take place? Dr Sutton has researched this issue and identified five types of stolen goods markets including certain second-hand shops, ‘fences’ and door-to-door hawking. However little is done to target the specific marketplaces where the disposal of stolen goods takes place as very few people actually get caught selling stolen items. If you make it tougher to sell stolen goods, then potentially you can reduce the incidences of burglary as there is little point in stealing something that you cannot sell on for cash. Linked to this is a need to be aware as to the current ‘hot property’ in stolen goods as markets continually change. For example, videos used to be popular items to steal but then it moved on to DVD players. However as DVD players can now be purchased relatively cheaply, the discs themselves have become targets.
16. It is suggested that a good way to gather intelligence about what are current ‘hot’ items and where the disposal of goods takes place is to talk to prolific burglars themselves. It is probably best for social scientists to undertake such research as they can offer the burglars anonymity which would be an issue that would prevent them from opening up to others. Such research has been commissioned by the Derby Crime and Disorder Partnership and it is something that may wish to be considered by Crime and Disorder Partnerships within Nottinghamshire.

### **Tackling Crime at an Early Age**

17. Why people turn to criminal activity is a complex issue that has been the subject of many studies. However evidence shows that some criminal activity can be tracked back to poor educational careers and the environment in which people grow up. In particular it is suggested that if people live in an area where they see people profiting from crime, then it might influence them to adopt a similar lifestyle. Therefore young people perhaps need opportunities to earn money legally so that they are not tempted in to crime. Clearly there are strong links between citizenship and crime reduction. The Committee was given details of various initiatives including:
  - **Burglar Bill Project** – aimed at 7-9 year olds
  - **DARE** – drug resistance education delivered to Year 6 pupils by the uniformed police
  - **ARC Project** – ‘Actively Reducing Crime’: this project makes schools crime reduction centres to take the focus away the police
  - **Rizer** - £1.1m project to make young people aware of the consequences to their lives as a result of a criminal conviction
18. These initiatives are to be welcomed and illustrate the inter-agency approach to tackling crime. Reducing burglaries is very much a cross-cutting, inter-agency issue as illustrated by the establishment of Crime

and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Therefore it is important to consider all agencies, not just the Police, in respect of burglary reduction. All County Council departments have a role in reducing crime with corporate responsibility located in the Deputy Leader's portfolio. However when people see the list of Cabinet Members, there is no mention of crime and disorder in the titles. It is important to raise the profile of crime reduction from a public perspective as it was the top of the list of concerns in the recent MORI Nottinghamshire liveability study. The Committee feels that Cabinet should consider ways of raising the profile of crime and disorder in the list of cabinet responsibilities so it is seen alongside education, social services, economic development etc. We would like the Cabinet to consider ways in which 'crime and disorder reduction' could be reflected in the Deputy Leader's title.

19. It is also recommended that the Cabinet considers holding a Community Safety seminar for all Members to give them information on the various crime initiatives such as Kickstart, Rizer and Project Sherwood.

## **Conclusions**

20. Performance in regard to reducing burglary rates over the past four years has been very disappointing. The Committee previously recommended revising the 2005 target rate from 15.1 incidents per 1000 households to 16.2 per 1000 households. There was media criticism of this decision but it was done to bring it in line with the national and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership targets of a 25% reduction on the 1998/99 baseline. The picture was further complicated by the introduction of new targets as part of the PSA (Public Service Agreement).
21. In the event, the targets are now largely immaterial as it is clear that they are not going to be met by 2005. What is important is that the current downward trend in burglary rates continues to be maintained and the number of incidents continues to be driven down. Now that the Police has been modernised and recruited additional scientific officers, the Chief Constable has indicated that the number of burglaries should continue to fall over the coming months and years. The Committee will be meeting with the Chief Constable again in October 2004 to check that progress is being maintained.
22. It is also vital that all the partners involved in reducing crime continue to play their part in both the short and long term. Projects to make homes more secure can yield results in the short term whilst, in the long term, the challenges include turning young people away from crime and reducing drug and alcohol addiction. In particular it would appear that ending people's addiction to drugs should have a major impact on reducing burglary rates.
23. The Committee particularly commends the research undertaken on the identification of popular goods for theft and their disposal in stolen goods

markets. It strongly encourages local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to commission research into these issues.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

24. It is recommended that:

- (i) The Cabinet considers how to raise the profile of crime and disorder reduction within the portfolio of the responsibilities of the Deputy Leader to give it similar prominence to education, social services and the other portfolios;
- (ii) The Cabinet considers arranging a member seminar to raise awareness of a range of community safety issues;
- (iii) Nottinghamshire Crime and Disorder Partnerships should consider commissioning research into stolen goods markets;
- (iv) The Committee discusses progress on burglary and crime reduction with the Chief Constable at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2004; and
- (v) This report is submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2004 with a report back to the Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee.

**Cllr Darrell Pulk**  
**Chair of the Corporate Strategy and Coordination Select Committee**