

SOUTH RICHMOND POLICE LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting – Wednesday 6 July 2011

Headlines

Richmond is one of four London Boroughs to join a Home Office pilot project on how to handle reports of anti-social behaviour. This makes it important to report all significant anti-social behaviour to the police (Safer Neighbourhood Team telephone number 020 8721 2006).

Numbers of reported offences continue to fall – there were 4% fewer offences reported in April to June 2011 than in the same period in 2010. Disorder offences, in particular, have fallen by 56%.

Richmond Street Pastors begin operations (on Friday nights to start with) from 15 July 2011.

Agenda Items 1 and 2 – Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

1. Those attending were:

Lisette Simcock (Chairman of the South Richmond PLG)
Sgt David Allan (Head of the South Richmond Safer Neighbourhood Team)
PCSO Chris Walden (South Richmond Safer Neighbourhood Team)
Councillor Pam Fleming (Richmond Borough Council)
Tony Cotton (Richmond Synagogue)
Frederick Cox (Queens Road and London Probation Service)
Richard Eason (Richmond LGBT Forum)
Gary Flynn (Richmond Street Pastors)
Katy Knox (Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, representing Bunny Farnell-Watson,
Richmond Hill Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator)
Barry May (Grosvenor Road)
Adam McWhinnie (Richmond PubWatch)
David Ross Martin (Secretary, Alberts Community Association, and representing Cambrian
Centre)
David Shaw (Chairman, Alberts Community Association and executive committee member of
the Richmond Society)
Malgorata Smolinska (Gap Stores)
Peter Willan (Chairman, Richmond Society)
Alan Simcock (note-taker)

2. Apologies were received from Councillor Frances Bouchier, Liz Dewson and Bunny Farnell-Watson.

Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

3. The PLG approved the minutes of the meeting on 30 March 2011.

4. Gary Flynn reported that the Richmond Street Pastors would commence work after a commissioning service at the Parish Church on Friday 15 July. To begin with they would be covering Friday nights; by September, more members would have completed training and they would be covering both Friday and Saturday nights.

5. The Chairman drew attention to the note on the CCTV cameras that she had circulated: the problem was that the network of cameras hinged on an aerial on Monsoon at 40 George Street – progress did not seem to be being made with its installation. Without it, 6 of the 11 cameras already installed were not operational. Councillor Fleming said that she would chase what progress was being made, and Richard Eason suggested that the issue could be raised again at the CPP “Meet the People” session in September.

Agenda Item 4 – Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project

6. Acting Chief Inspector Hannah Wheeler gave a presentation on Richmond’s participation as one of the four London boroughs in the Home Office pilot project on anti-social behaviour (ASB), along

with Hackney, Harrow and Lambeth. The aim was to establish best practice in handling ASB, following the inquiry into the Pilkington case where a series of reports of ASB had not been properly followed up, and the victim had committed suicide. She is chair of the Borough ASB Panel, which brought together the police and the statutory agencies. The pilot project is trying to ensure that incidents are considered from the victim's point of view. The police use a questionnaire to examine the incident systematically and score the victim's concerns; if the score is high enough, the incident is treated as a crime report, and agreement is sought to take the issues up with the other statutory agencies. The reports feed into the daily police management meeting. The original intention had been that the pilot project would run for six months, but because of a slow start, it had now been extended for a further six months.

7. In discussion, the following were the main points that emerged:

- (a) participation in the pilot project had not brought any additional resources;
- (b) it was not desirable to have a restrictive definition of ASB – but a working definition could be any behaviour that adversely affects the quality of life for individuals or the community;
- (c) it was important to try to establish confidence and satisfaction in the local community in Richmond. The pilot project showed how much less the problem was than elsewhere in London: the Lambeth pilot project had over 1000 ASB reports to handle; the Richmond one 20 to 30. An important part of establishing confidence was reporting back, which the police were tackling, among other things, through the work of the volunteer media officer;
- (d) some present felt that ASB was massively under-recorded – perhaps only 5% of incidents were reported. Others felt that the situation was not that bad. In any event, the approach had to be to encourage everyone to report all incidents that disturbed them;
- (e) a large proportion of ASB took the form of behaviour by neighbours that caused problems. The Borough Council was ready to arrange mediation to address this kind of problem;
- (f) urination in public was cited as a frequent form of ASB in Richmond town centre. It was reported that the Borough Council were investigating techniques used elsewhere in London to provide proper facilities (such as Westminster's pop-up urinals) and would also be reviewing the working of the community toilets scheme, where it was reported that some participants in the scheme had dropped out (because of e.g. a change of manager), leaving significant areas without any facilities).

8. In conclusion, the Chairman invited Acting Chief Inspector Wheeler to report further when the pilot project had progressed more.

Agenda Item 5 – Dealing with Burglary Offences

9. Detective Chief Inspector Martin Ward was not able to be present, and so this agenda item was postponed.

Agenda Item 6 – Safer Neighbourhood Team report

10. Sgt Allan presented a report on the work of the SNT over the last quarter (1 April to 30 June 2011). The picture shown by figures on reported offences continued the positive picture from last year: total notifiable offences in South Richmond had reduced by 4% in the last quarter compared with the same period in 2010. In particular, there had been a drop of 56% in disorder offences compared with the same quarter in 2010; the number of assaults had also reduced (except for common assaults – where there is no injury). Although reductions had also been achieved in the theft of pedal cycles, shoplifting and robbery (down 10%, 11% and 33% respectively from the same quarter in 2010), there had been increases in thefts of personal property in pubs, cafés etc, burglary and thefts from motor vehicles, resulting in an overall 7% increase in offences involving theft. A substantial proportion of the cases of robbery and burglary involved concentrations of cases in short periods in April and May respectively: steps had been taken, and the concentrations had ceased. Nevertheless, the absolute numbers remained small in relation to other parts of London, and had to be considered against the

large reductions of offences in most of these categories achieved in 2010/11. In a number of fields, prosecutions were pending which (if successful) could deter some repeat offenders.

11. In discussion, the main points were:

- (a) the problem of graffiti in the passage from the railway station to Church Road was arising again. Sgt Allan said that he would take this up with British Transport Police, who were responsible for that area as part of the station;
- (b) theft of personal property in pubs, restaurants and cafés was a continuing problem: there would be further efforts to alert managers to the need for staff to warn customers about this. The arrest of a group of 12 offenders from the Balkans should send a message that would deter similar operations, at least temporarily.

12. The PLG reviewed the priorities for the safer neighbourhood team and, on the recommendation of Sgt Allan, agreed that the priorities for the next three months should include theft of pedal bicycles, since this was more prevalent in the summer months. The three priorities were therefore confirmed as antisocial behaviour, retail theft and theft of bicycles. As indicated, efforts would also continue to deal with the causes of theft of personal property in pubs, cafés and restaurants.

Agenda Item 7: Neighbourhood Watch

13. Katy Knox presented a report on behalf of Bunny Farnell-Watson. The new arrangements for the Richmond Green area were working well – coordinators were being identified for Pembroke Villas, Queensberry House and Little Green. Progress was being made on setting up a scheme for Friars Style Road and Lancaster Mews. Concern was expressed about the apparent lack of interest by the police in reports of suspicious incidents.

14. Responding to the expression of concern about lack of police interest, Sgt Allan said that possibly the problem was that calls were handled by a call-centre at Hendon. The Safer Neighbourhood Team was always concerned to ensure that people reporting incidents felt that they were welcome. He reminded the meeting of the SNT telephone numbers – 020 8721 2006 and 07843 291 152. He also reported that the more general non-emergency number would be replaced from 28 July by 101. There would be no change in the emergency number – 999.

Agenda Item 8: Report on key meetings

15. The Chairman presented a report:

- (a) at the Community and Police Partnership (CPP) meeting on 24 May, the end-of-year report on crime in the Borough showed that there had been increases in many categories – the reports on crime reductions in South Richmond showed that it was doing better than the Borough as a whole;
- (b) the Richmond Business and Retail Association meeting on 7 June showed that a new manager for Richmond town centre had been appointed, and that there were plans to have a Victorian evening this December;
- (c) a meeting between the Borough Commander and PLG Chairmen on 22 June had shown that there would have to be some changes to SN teams, and that more flexibility in the use of SN teams would be allowed: for Richmond, this represented no more than a confirmation of what was already being done.

16. Updating the meeting on the last point, Acting Chief Inspector Wheeler confirmed that there would continue to be a Safer Neighbourhood Team for each ward, but that for some quieter wards the SNTs would be brigaded together under a single sergeant: eight of the 16 wards in Richmond would be brigaded in this way under 4 sergeants. It was clear that South Richmond would not be one of the eight.

Agenda Item 9: Counter-Terrorism

17. Sgt Allan confirmed the continuing need to report things that looked out of place: the telephone number for such reports was 0800 789 321.

Agenda Item 10: Election of Chairman

18. Since this was the PLG's annual general meeting, on the proposal of Richard Eason, seconded by Councillor Pamela Fleming, the PLG re-elected Lisette Simcock as chairman for the following year.

Agenda Item 11: 2010/2011 Meetings

19. The PLG confirmed that the next meeting would be on Thursday 6 October at Meadows Hall, Church Road, and that the meetings in 2012 should be on Thursday 26 January, Tuesday 24 April (NB now postponed to Thursday 26 April), Wednesday 11 July and Wednesday 10 October.

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

20. There was discussion of the potential impact of the road closures for the cycle road race – although this could present problems, the police were planning to distribute resources so as to mitigate them.

21. Fred Cox raised the question of the impact of the closure of the Kingston Magistrates' Court. Sgt Allan said that he understood that the plan was that the four south-western boroughs would be brought together, with the remaining magistrates' courts specialising: Richmond in traffic and family cases, Wimbledon in custodial cases, and others at the South-Western (Lavender Hill) court.