



Overview & Scrutiny

Final Report of the Fear of Crime Task
and Finish Group

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Chair's Foreword

Although crime statistics show a dramatic fall in the Luton area, for a large number of people within the town the fear of crime has impacted on their lives.

The soLUTioNs Partnership, which is the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in Luton, has worked hard in many cases to try to ease the fear of crime. However, the elderly in particular are fearful of going into certain areas of Luton, especially at night. The Task and Finish Group heard evidence from people of all generations that are fearful of going into Luton Town Centre at certain times during the day and night; and into certain areas of the town such as Hockwell Ring and Marsh Farm where perceptions are particularly high as residents are worried about going shopping etc. on their own and prefer to do so in twos and threes.

This report examines the evidence made by the Police, the Council and their partners to determine what the main drivers are for the fear of crime, and to propose ways in which more might be done to reduce public perception that is increasing. The Task and Finish Group have taken note of the concerns raised by all the organisations that have community safety responsibilities, including residents' associations, members of the public, officers of the Council, the Police and members of the Working Group. In total consulting over 200 residents and would like to personally thank them for their hard work and time that they have given.

It has been a very useful experience for all who have been involved with this review, and I hope that this report will be of benefit to the people of Luton.

Cllr Michael J Garrett JP
Chair of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group

1. Recommendations

The recommendations of the Fear of Crime Task and Finish Group:

- 1. That the Community Safety Executive engages with local news editors to discuss the negative impact that results from the way stories are currently being reported and to discuss how more positive stories around falling crime levels can be highlighted in the media to achieve a better balance.**
- 2. That the Community Safety Executive should ensure the 'Communicating for Confidence Strategy' currently out for consultation includes measures of successes for improving public perceptions around the fear of crime.**
- 3. That the Council's Executive and the Community Safety Executive need to ensure that they clearly communicate, in a way that fully engages local residents, the role and purpose of community safety and safer neighbourhood teams, and that this is closely monitored to ensure that there is effective town wide understanding.**
- 4. That the Council's Executive and the Community Safety Executive adopt a single telephone number that is clearly publicised across the town and recognised by the public for reporting incidences of anti social behaviour and vandalism.**
- 5. That the Council's Executive should examine the support available for young people's participation in positive activities.**
- 6. That the work of the Community Safety Executive is integrated with the work of the Community Cohesion Team to ensure that false and negative perceptions of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour is addressed.**
- 7. That the Council's Executive and Community Safety Executive, bring together community safety services, including the Community Safety Partnership Team, the Community Safety Team, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Safer Neighbourhood Teams, into one coordinated and integrated service to ensure that those services are joined up in a way the public can understand and engage with.**
- 8. That the Council's Executive, in conjunction with the Community Safety Executive, should use the neighbourhood governance initiative to assist and encourage local ward councillors to play a more constructive role in communicating the positive aspects of their neighbourhoods across the whole community, thereby improving all residents understanding of their local area to reduce the negative perceptions of those areas by the media and community at large.**

- 9. That the Council's Executive and the Community Safety Executive ensure that in this time of severe public sector finance pressures, the measures required to continue to improve community safety and reduce the fear of crime are prioritised.**

- 10. That the Council's Executive and Community Safety Executive ensure that a zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour is adopted.**

2. Membership of the Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group members were: Councillors Garrett (Chair), Neale, Dolling, Singh, Bullock, Stewart, Timoney, and Kayleigh Deamer, a co-opted member. The lead support officer for the review was Angela Fraser, Overview and Scrutiny Coordinator.

3. Acknowledgements

The Task and Finish Group would like to express its thanks and appreciation to all the organisations and Council officers for their contributions to this review.

4. Introduction

In October 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Board set up a Task and Finish Group to review the fear of crime in Luton, for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the number of people in Luton who said that they fear being a victim of crime is higher than the national average. There has been two recent surveys that have identified this: the Place Survey (2008), a postal survey to which 1,200 responses were received; and the Community Safety Survey (2009) that was a random sample of 1058 people, with 93% of respondents saying that they felt safe outside in their local area during the day, but with 33% respondents saying that they felt unsafe outside after dark. This is against a backdrop of a significant reduction in overall crime levels in Luton. Figures provided by soLUTioNs, Luton's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership show that the total number of recorded offences in Luton reduced from 25,081 in 2006/07 to 22,253 in 2007/08 (a reduction of 11%), and to 18,972 in 2008/09, (a further reduction of 15%).

The Task and Finish Group heard the fear of being a victim of crime is an issue raised in Councillors Ward surgeries and at public meetings such as Area Committees. It is clear that, despite the significant reductions in overall crime levels in Luton, there has not been a change in public perception about the likelihood of being a victim.

The Task and Finish Group also heard that tackling the fear of crime is a priority for the Police, the Council and other public sector partners involved in community safety, and recognise more needs to be done to increase public confidence.

The Task and Finish Group, in order to understand the drivers behind people fearing being a victim of crime in Luton and to gain an understanding of what can be done to address the issue, the group engaged with over two hundred people. Those engaged with include members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and Council officers responsible for community safety.

5. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objectives set by the Task and Finish Group and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in November 2009 are:

- To provide members of the Task and Finish Group with the opportunity to understand the main drivers for the fear of crime in Luton, using quantitative data and reports to identify gaps, and to focus the review on three key issues raised by residents of Luton and found in the Community Safety (2009) and Place (2008) surveys e.g. anti-social behaviour, crime (to include robbery, burglary and violent crime), and avoidance of certain areas in Luton such as Marsh Farm, Bury Park and the Town Centre.

- For the Task and Finish Group to understand the true extent of the fear of crime within the Borough measured against published crime statistics and further qualitative research to be undertaken.
- To review best practice authorities that have reviewed the fear of crime in their Borough and make comparisons with their approach and that of Luton.
- To ascertain whether information in the public domain on fear of crime is adequately publicised, especially in the role and nature of Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs), as the Community Safety (2009) survey found 41% of residents were aware of their local Safer Neighbourhood Team, 18% were unaware of how to contact the team.
- To commission further in-depth qualitative research into the areas of high perception that leads to avoidance during the day and after dark.
- For the Task and Finish Group to produce a final report that identifies the main drivers for the fear of crime in Luton and formulates recommendations to submit to the Council's Executive and Community Safety Executive to help lessen the fear of crime in Luton, especially in areas of high perception.

6. Expected Outcomes

- That the Task and Finish Group fully communicates the underlying causes for the fear of crime to the residents of Luton.
- To ensure the positives of Luton are communicated in order to dispel misconceptions of the town that will help increase public confidence.
- To encourage the continuance and good work of the Community Safety Partnership in the initiatives already in place and for future initiatives that are planned.

7. What happened

The Task and Finish Group held eleven meetings, at which oral evidence was taken from: Bedfordshire Police, the Community Safety Partnership Manager, the Principal Community Safety Officer, the Area Committee Support Manager, the Head of Youth Offending, the General Manager of The Mall Shopping Centre, representatives from the Youth Council, Neighbourhood Watch, Marsh Farm Community Development Trust, Professor John Pitts of the University of Bedfordshire, the Luton Drug and Alcohol Partnership Manager, Neighbourhood Governance, and the Council's Licensing Manager.

Evidence was also received from four members of the public who attended some of the formal meetings of the Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group agreed to commission a joint consultation with the Commission for Community Cohesion, which is currently considering how community cohesion in Luton can be improved even further. The joint consultation was commissioned in order for the Task and Finish Group to gain a better understanding of what is driving the fear of crime in Luton.

BMG is the research company that carried out focus groups in the wards, in which existing data shows that people living in those areas fear being a victim of crime, more so than in other areas of Luton. The focus groups were therefore held in the following wards:

- Saints and Biscot
- Lewsey Farm
- Bramingham
- Stopsley
- Farley Hill

In total a random sample of fifty-nine people, across those wards, attended one of the five focus groups. A full copy of the report by the research company is included at annex B and attached at annex A is a summary of the evidence presented to the Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group members also carried out separate consultations with groups identified as more likely to fear being a victim of crime, including older people, younger people, those with disabilities and with ethnic minority groups. In all Task and Finish Group members spoke to over one hundred and fifty people.

Some of the Task and Finish Group members also visited the London Borough of Merton, which had carried out a best practice review on the fear of crime in 2009. The visit was used as an opportunity to talk with the Lead Member for their review, the portfolio holder for safer and stronger communities and the Leader of the Council.

8. Findings of the Task and Finish Group and recommendations

8a. Media Reporting

Reports of crime related stories in the media, especially those of a violent nature are considered to act as a catalyst increasing people's fear of crime. The media coverage of violent crime stories is often selective, distorted and manipulated to gain a public reaction that creates a false picture of crime and distrust among the public. In the evidence given to the Task and Finish Group, Bedfordshire Police said the local media had a tendency to choose negative news over good

news stories, which negatively affects and influences public perception about the likelihood of being a victim of crime.

This view is further supported in the evidence received by Professor John Pitts, Professor of Criminology and Youth Justice at the University of Bedfordshire, who said there is evidence to support the view that media reporting of crime directly affects people's perception of crime.

"The media have fuelled people's fear of crime nationally. Ironically the people, who feared crime the most, such as the elderly and the more prosperous, were least likely to be the victims of crime".

Professor John Pitts, giving evidence to the group, March 2010.

The joint commissioned research found older people living in areas where the fear of crime is highest said media reporting on crime is 'unfair'. It portrays issues in a negative way that leads to unwarranted perceptions and stereotyping of certain individuals, which usually refers to young people that are seen to be the main cause of the fear and concern by the public. In focus groups held in Biscot and High Town the general consensus was the media exaggerates the problems of Luton, and crime figures in Luton are not dissimilar to other towns in Britain when you take into account socio-economic and demographic factors.

The Bushmead Community Association residents felt that the media 'sensationalise crime and this heightens the public's awareness and fear of it'. They also said 'The newspapers and TV thrive on bad news – it makes money'.

Task and Finish Group member consultation with Bushmead Community Association, May 2010

Recommendation

- 1. That the Community Safety Executive engages with local news editors to discuss the negative impact that results from the way stories are currently being reported and to discuss how more positive stories around falling crime levels can be highlighted in the media to achieve a better balance.**

8b. Communication

The Task and Finish Group heard the communication of information of how to contact various community safety agencies is a key concern raised in the Member consultation, the Community Safety (2009) survey and in the findings from the joint commissioned research. Where it was found some residents were aware of safer neighbourhood teams but unaware of how to contact them, which often led to reports of anti-social behaviour reported to the 999 emergency line. This was despite contact details being widely publicised by the Community Safety Partnership in Lutonline, the local newspapers and on the Bedfordshire Police and Council websites.

"We are aware of safer neighbourhood teams but don't know how to get in touch with them".

Task and Finish Group Member consultation with Young People, June 2010

"We are not aware of safer neighbourhood teams or how to contact them. If I have a problem I contact the Police on 999, and we are not aware of any publicity regarding existence, roles or contact details".

Task and Finish Group Member consultation with Bushmead Community Association, May 2010

The Task and Finish Group heard that the Community Safety Partnership acknowledge further work is needed in this area to effectively communicate community safety information to the public. They informed the Task and Finish Group this is being addressed in the 'Communicating for Confidence Strategy', which aims to improve the perception levels of crime in Luton. The strategy proposes initiatives to promote the positives of Luton through a new post for a Communications Officer to act as the communication link for the Partnership to ensure the public are aware of the various initiatives in place and contact details of the various agencies involved in community safety. The Partnership also intend to build a working relationship with the media to ensure an appropriate balance of positive and negative community safety stories are displayed, in order to help reduce the fear of crime in the Borough. The Police are reviewing the way they engage with the public and are currently piloting newsletters in key areas of the town that contain information on crime statistics by area and contact details of local safer neighbourhood teams to keep the public fully informed about crimes and initiatives in their area. There are also proposals by the Partnership and the Police for a single contact number for members of the public to easily report incidences of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

“To raise public awareness of safer neighbourhood teams, we are currently piloting newsletters for each local area/ward in Luton to inform residents on the achievements of safer neighbourhood teams, which are distributed on a quarterly basis through Lutonline”.

Superintendent Mark Turner, Bedfordshire Police giving evidence to the Task and Finish Group, on 12 March 2010

Recommendations

- 2. That the Community Safety Executive should ensure the ‘Communicating for Confidence Strategy’ currently out for consultation includes measures of successes for improving public perceptions around the fear of crime.**
 - 3. That the Council’s Executive and the Community Safety Executive need to ensure that they clearly communicate, in a way that fully engages local residents, the role and purpose of community safety and safer neighbourhood teams, and that this is closely monitored to ensure that there is effective town wide understanding.**
 - 4. That the Council’s Executive and Community Safety Executive adopt a single telephone number that is clearly publicised across the town and recognised by the public for reporting incidences of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.**
- 8c. Intergenerational issues and tackling anti-social behaviour**

The Task and Finish Group found a lack of understanding between younger people and older people. Younger people in the main are perceived by focus group participants and by people consulted with by Task and Finish Group members, as responsible for anti-social behaviour. The respondents felt younger people were more likely to be involved with anti social behaviour due to factors such as social deprivation, boredom and lack of aspiration. This view was most strongly put forward in the focus group held in Farley Hill, which has a high percentage of young people not in full time education or employment.

In the evidence from the Youth Council representatives it was made clear that not all young people should be stigmatised or demonised for incidences of anti-social behaviour; and although young people are often feared by the older generation, most young people’s biggest fear is from the activities of other young people who carry weapons.

“People who are scared, or if they feel vulnerable, refer to a group of young people aged 10,13, 14 or 15 year olds standing on a street corner as “anti-social behaviour’. But all these youngsters are doing is having a chat.”

Comment made by a focus group participant in Lewsey Farm, April 2010

The Task and Finish Group recognised a need to change perceptions towards young people and heard that there is an initiative led by the Youth Offending Service in Luton, called ‘Improving Public Confidence’, which is aimed at publishing positive news about young people in the youth justice system and will also provide information on initiatives by the youth offending service to prevent reoffending.

Positive images such as these are to be presented in a newsletter and distributed in the Lutonline, which is received by most households in Luton, and is a way of ensuring positive images of young people are reported to dispel the misconceptions among the older generation. The Luton scheme is to be run on a similar basis to the ‘*kids are alright*’ scheme run in Peterborough and Cambridge that promotes positive stories about young people and proven to be successful in changing perceptions among the older generation.

The Task and Finish Group heard in the evidence from the Council’s neighbourhood governance team, that they had conducted research in the West area of Luton on the fear of crime. From this research, they had found that in the Challney Ward the young people wanted more community and sport facilities to be made available as a way of ensuring that they had positive activities to engage in. The consultation in Lewsey Farm that took place in St Dominic’s Square, attracted over 100 young people with a similar response found in the Leagrave Ward where young people prioritised improving leisure facilities and for tighter regulations on the selling of alcohol, as way of improving community safety. The research by neighbourhood governance also found young people’s priorities are different to those of the older generation, for example, the fear of being a victim of crime did not feature as a main concern for young people.

Recommendations

- 5. That the Council’s Executive should examine the support available for young people’s participation in positive activities.**

6. **That the work of the Community Safety Executive is integrated in the work of Community Cohesion to ensure that false and negative perceptions of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour is addressed.**

8d. Working arrangements within the Council and between partners

The Task and Finish Group consultation and the BMG focus group consultation with local residents found confusion in the different roles of the various agencies with responsibility for community safety. Many respondents were unclear about who does what, and where to report incidents of anti-social behaviour. Lines of responsibility and accountability for taking action on reporting anti-social behaviour were unclear. This was supported in the evidence received by the Council's Principal Community Safety Officer who acknowledged confusion still remains among the public especially in the role of community safety teams and safer neighbourhood teams. The Community Safety Partnership is addressing this through a project called, BEST (business engineering safer and stronger together), where the remit is to integrate the work of community safety teams and safer neighbourhood teams into one area in order to lessen confusion among the public and to ensure a consistent level of service is provided to local the community for reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

The Task and Finish Group heard in the evidence from the Borough Commander that the Police are shortly to introduce an appointment system where the public can contact their area Beat Officer directly, who will call at their address to discuss issues of concern, which will also help raise public confidence in the Police.

"The BEST project is looking to bring the Community Safety and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams together to reduce confusion that members of the public have about who to report issues to."

**Luton Borough Council's Principal Community Safety Officer,
giving evidence to the Task and Finish group, on 16th April 2010**

Recommendation

7. **That the Council's Executive and Community Safety Executive, bring together community safety services, including the Community Safety Partnership Team, the Community Safety Team, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Safer Neighbourhood Teams, into one coordinated and integrated service to ensure that those services are joined up in a way the public can understand and engage with.**

8e. Area Based Perceptions

Task and Finish Group consultation found that people in certain areas of Luton are more fearful of crime than others; this was also found in the Place Survey (2008) and the Community Safety Survey (2009). Consultee's expressed particular concern about other areas of the town that is perceived to have high levels of crime e.g. Marsh Farm, Bury Park and the Town Centre, which in their view, were to be avoided during the day and after dark.

Marsh Farm

Some 42% of respondents in the Community Safety Survey (2009) said they avoided Marsh Farm and 100% of respondents in the BMG focus group also said that they avoided that area. The reason given was the reputation of Marsh Farm relating to the riots that took place in 1995, which still remains a talking point in Luton today. It was also said that the flats in Marsh Farm are unsafe to go into as they are believed to be havens for drug dealing and gangs congregating.

On the other hand, the Task and Finish Group also heard from the Marsh Farm Development Trust that associated the stigma of Marsh Farm to a distortion of facts and negative reporting in the media.

The area has received significant investment to improve people's lives and help dispel misconceptions, which has led to a 50% reduction in the fear of crime over the last eight years. Initiatives such as a £1.7m investment in remote controlled street lighting that also convert to CCTV cameras, have had a positive impact on reducing crime in Marsh Farm. However, a community warden scheme jointly funded by the Council and the Marsh Farm Development Trust that supported six wardens has been discontinued.

"Marsh Farm is where all sorts of things happen such as drugs, stabbings and car theft".

Focus Group feedback held in Lewsey Farm, April 2010

"The high rise flats become a wall in which young people hang out behind. It's a place to drink, smoke and be noisy and because it's secluded and not an open area, it's closed"

Focus Group feedback held in Bramingham, April 2010

Town Centre/Luton Mall

The town centre is reported as an area that many residents choose to avoid during the day and after dark. The BMG consultation revealed people's main concern for the fear of crime is anti-social behaviour. That is regarded as young people hanging around, and the fear of being assaulted. These issues were also raised in the Place Survey (2008).

The Task and Finish Group found that although young people are in the main seen as the causes for the fear of crime; young people themselves sometimes also fear being a victim of crime in the town centre. In the consultation held with young people they said they were particularly fearful of being victims of date rape; drug dealing and disreputable taxi drivers mentioned mainly by women respondents. The Task and Finish Group also found the night time economy contributes to the fear of crime in Luton and is supported in the evidence received from the Licensing Manager at the Council who said there are community safety initiatives in place in the town centre to help lessen people's fear such as the SOS Bus, which is a visible taxi parcelling service for vulnerable people available on Fridays and Saturdays and also acts as a medical and advice centre for drug and alcohol abuse.

"Most people feel safe in the town in the day time. The most unsafe area of town is off the side streets when people have been drinking because that's where most of the stabbings happen. You've just got to be careful."

Focus Group feedback in Lewsey Farm, held in April 2010

"I'd get a taxi into town on my own or going home from town. Just common sense, you make sure it's a reputable taxi firm. On a night out I wouldn't walk around town on my own".

Focus Group feedback in Bramingham, held in April 2010

Bury Park

Some of the respondents consulted said they would avoid the Bury Park area during the day and after dark. People consulted in the focus groups suggested that they avoid going into certain 'back streets' in Bury Park that have become associated with prostitution. Other reasons given for avoiding Bury Park was a perception that there is a small minority of people in the area, perceived as being young Muslim extremists, who make visitors to the area feel unwelcome.

'I went to walk up the road to the taxi rank and by the time I got there, I had been asked about five times if I wanted some business. That's the reason I would feel unsafe in Bury Park, because of the prostitution'

Focus group feedback in Bramingham, held in April 2010

'Bury park is a no go area at night, because of intimidating groups of young people'

Task and Finish Group member consultation with Bushmead Community Association, May 2010

Recommendations

- 8. That the Council's Executive, in conjunction with the Community Safety Executive, should use the neighbourhood governance initiative to assist and encourage local ward councillors to play a more constructive role in communicating the positive aspects of their neighbourhoods across the whole community, thereby improving all residents understanding of their local areas to reduce the negative perceptions of those areas by the media and community at large.**
- 9. That the Council's Executive and the Community Safety Executive ensure that in this time of severe public sector finance pressures, the measures required to continue to improve community safety and reduce the fear of crime are prioritised.**
- 10. That the Council's Executive and Community Safety Executive ensure that a zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour is adopted.**

Annex A

Summary of the key issues from the evidence received:-

Professor John Pitts – Leading Criminologist and Youth Justice Lecturer at the University of Bedfordshire on 11th March 2010

Professor John Pitts is a leading academic lecturer at the University of Bedfordshire with expertise and knowledge that spans into teaching modules in criminology, youth justice, comparative youth justice and child care policy, community safety, organised and corporate crime. The Task and Finish Group invited Professor Pitts to give evidence on the fear of crime from an academic perspective.

Professor Pitts said research conducted in certain areas in Luton found some areas are worse than others resulting in high crime levels. Crime levels in Hockwell Ring has increased over the last decade, and is coupled with continuing tensions between black Afro-Caribbean and young south Asian youths that escalate into gangs and youth crime that has spread into other areas of Luton. The occurrences in Luton are on a similar scale to the pattern of behaviour found in inner London city areas such as Waltham Forest, Lambeth and Brixton, where drugs and violent crime are commonplace. The gang culture is diversifying out of the periphery of London and into areas such as Luton, Peterborough and High Wycombe perceived to be soft touches and easier to recruit people for drug dealing, but the problem in Luton is not as widespread as it is in London.

Media Reporting

Bad news sells newspapers, which in turn makes people more anxious than presenting the reality. The media often over dramatises and presents a particular picture of an ethnic group more than others, which leads to rampant behaviour (page 4). The fear of crime results from perceptions that are often seen in affluent areas that are more likely to be fearful. Research conducted on three types of groups: young people who are victimised and often end up in the youth offending service; people in affluent areas that are more likely to be targeted and those that are perceived to be heavily victimised but least likely to be fearful but believed their behaviour to be normal and an everyday occurrence, which makes them immune to it. **(Recommendation 1, page 11).**

Anti-social behaviour is usually linked to people's fears, which is targeted at young people as a result of boredom and lack of aspiration, which can be addressed through youth work. Programmes that have been effective are multi agency intensive programmes that have proved to be successful. The programmes work with nuisance families to change their behaviour and to help reduce reoffending **(Recommendations 5 and 6, page 4).**

Superintendent Mark Turner from Bedfordshire Police – 12 March 2010

The Task and Finish Group invited the Police to give evidence on community safety initiatives and on how they are tackling public perception that continues to increase despite statistics showing levels of crime falling.

Anti-social behaviour is perceived as the main driver for fear of crime. The public regard anti-social behaviour as; teenagers hanging around the streets, graffiti, alcohol abuse and violent crime. The public are also concerned about other crimes particularly burglary, and robbery after dark, although these are viewed as major issues, the Police consider Luton to be a relatively safe place to live when compared to the national average.

The Police work in partnership with soLUTioNs in developing a number of initiatives to tackle community safety within the town to reduce the fear of crime and to ensure public safety. The Partnership identified a number of priorities that cause concern to the public e.g. burglary, robbery, drug abuse, violence and theft of motor vehicles. The Police believe if these priorities are correctly tackled should result in a reduction in fear of crime in the town. A recent initiative introduced is the SOS Bus in the Town Centre at weekends that acts as a safe haven for vulnerable people. The bus is equipped with a rest area, medical facilities and is manned by a Police Officer and drug and alcohol abuse advisors.

Communication

Communication is an area that is recognised where more work is needed and is highlighted in the Community Safety survey (2009) that found the public are still unsure how to contact community safety teams and safer neighbourhood teams. The Police have placed a lot of information into the public domain through: the Lutonline; the Bedfordshire Police and the Council's websites; local community centres and in the reception areas of the Luton and Dunstable Hospital (**see Recommendation 2, page 12**).

The policing pledge commits the Police to ensure all areas in Luton are assigned with neighbourhood police and community support officers. The pledge includes response targets for certain crimes and the publicising of crime statistics. The Police are currently piloting a newsletter containing information on area-based crimes in key areas of the town that will be distributed through Lutonline.

Media Reporting

The reporting of 'bad' news is good news to the media that sells papers. The media should ensure an equal balance of good and bad news is covered. The national media does not always portray Luton in a positive way and two recent examples are: 'the Royal Anglian Regiment march through the town earlier in the year that caused tension among certain minority ethnic groups; and the demonstration by the British National Party scheduled to go through Bury Park. Both stories were reported in a negative way that gave rise to increased

levels of tension within the town. The local media's reporting of violent crime in Luton is exaggerated to gain public attention and therefore increases public perception of crime levels (**see Recommendation 1 page 11**).

In December 2009 a community safety summit found residents of Luton wanting more visible policing on the streets. This could be a problem for the Police due to lack of resources. However, recently no budget cuts to the Police force are planned, which would allow for more frontline staff, and Officers spending 80% of their time on the beat, rather than on back office functions. Visible policing is a way to increase public confidence in community safety and is a national priority. Bedfordshire Police has invested in more resources in neighbourhood policing and in Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) that now work evening shifts, and there are plans to review the working arrangements between the Police and neighbourhood watch (**see Recommendation 10 page 17**).

The police are aware of hotspot areas and streets around the town that cause public concern. However, the Police focus resources on all areas in the town to ensure a level of consistency is maintained.

The Police and the Council are working together to tackle anti-social behaviour throughout the town. Safer neighbourhood teams are being trained in restorative justice practices, which is an alternative measure to reduce the number of people going through the criminal justice system. Anti-social behaviour by young people is often due to a lack of parenting skills and the Police recognise that they alone cannot tackle this area and need involvement of the community.

Visit to the London Borough of Merton – 30th March 2010

Some members of the Task and Finish Group visited the London Borough of Merton, who carried out a scrutiny review on the fear of crime in 2009. Members of the Task and Finish Group met with Councillor Peter Southgate who led on the Fear of Crime, the portfolio holder for stronger and safer communities and the Leader of the Council.

Merton's review included:-

- The disparity between actual crime levels and increasing public concern as the fear of crime had been identified in their Annual Resident Survey 2008 as the highest concern by the public.
- Concern on crime and disorder within the borough was discussed by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- Proposals for setting of a single performance target for the police forces to deliver improved levels of public confidence to address local crime and community safety priorities as a solution
- Concern raised on the lack of public confidence in crime statistics

The review examined and evaluated the level of fear of crime measured against the Home Office matrix to determine whether Merton is a low or high crime borough. The review group found Merton to be the 4th safest borough in London. The review also evaluated the disparity between fear of crime and actual crime levels and recommended simple actions to reduce fear within the Borough that would help residents to live their lives freely as they wished.

The review group received evidence from: Merton Borough Police; Safer Merton (CDRP); Older people (Merton Seniors Forum); Young People (Merton College Student Parliament) and Merton Park Ward Safer Neighbourhood Team.

The Merton review also used relevant legislation relating to the fear of crime such as the Police and Justice Act, 2006 that focuses on police performance, operational police support and powers that deals with anti-social behaviour and low level crime. Information was also obtained from the British Crime Survey, an annual report published on behalf of the Home Office that includes questions on the fear of crime.

The Merton review group analysed local crime statistics and made comparisons between the number of reported crimes in ward groupings measured against the proportion of survey respondents that were 'very or fairly worried' about crime, and found levels of concern higher in high deprivation areas.

The review group recommendations covered four categories:

- (i) Bridging the gap and community cohesion within the borough - relates to three specific recommendations for work to be undertaken to engage directly with residents to identify actions that can help reduce crime and provide reassurance locally; such as security measures for entry phone systems and support of neighbourhood wardens; for effective channels of communications with minority ethnic groups on crime and anti-social behaviour to be developed to provide reassurance among ethnic minority residents, and for that the borough of Merton to support community initiatives aimed at tackling local crime and disorder issues. The final recommendation under this category relates to ensuring residents involvement in community safety through Ward councillors exercising their role as local champions and work in partnership with local organisations to increase public confidence.
- (ii) Communication and collaboration - the review group found more work was needed to improve police communication in a positive way in terms of information published on police arrests and solving of crime; promoting safer neighbourhood teams to gain reassurance and public confidence through avenues such as 'My Merton' and newsletters, and to promote the benefits of CCTV.

- (iii) Enforcement for dispersing crowds in certain areas in the borough – the review group found the need for more no cold-calling zones to be introduced within the borough and for safer neighbourhood teams to be more proactive in taking action against anti-social behaviour. Also included in the recommendation was provision to increase funding to improve street lighting in public areas.
- (iv) Long term remedial action – the reviews final recommendation involves data sharing between members of Merton Partnership with other agencies that have community safety responsibilities to ensure a coordinated approach to tackling fear of crime continues to be delivered, which is a core element of Merton's local development framework, particularly when designing new housing estates. The review group also outlined provisions for an inter-generational centre and a new facilities library to actively promote a better understanding between the older and younger generations, and to look at regeneration funding in certain areas within the Borough such as the town centre to be a welcoming environment for all ages and classes with pedestrian friendly zones that create perceptions of safety and well being.

The review group concluded the need for more to be communication to local people on initiatives to reduce fear of crime within the borough to increase public confidence. There was also a need to break down entrenched perceptions of crime and disorder within the borough that is at odds with reality.

Principal Community Safety Officer (LBC) – 16th April 2010

The Principal Community Safety Officer responsible for organising projects relating to fear of crime initiatives and issuing anti-social behaviour orders was invited the task and finish group to give evidence on the role of the community safety team.

The community safety team only pursue anti-social behaviour cases where an order is due to be issued, which is normally as a result of numerous complaints, reported by phone, email or written correspondence. Reports are filtered and directed to the service area responsible to action. For instance noise nuisance reports are directed to trading standards; criminal damage to the Police and neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour to the housing enforcement team at the Council.

Members of the public that register a complaint are sent diary sheets to record all incidences of anti-social behaviour and a leaflet that contains information of other support services such as victim support.

Mediation is the first course of action used by the community safety teams who visit complainants to collect the diary sheet. If the perpetrators are known to the community safety team then a warning letter is sent that outlines action to be taken if the behaviour persists.

Warning letters usually work and therefore no further action is taken. However, in some cases where warning letters are insufficient and those cases are referred to the Council's legal section with a request for an anti-social behaviour order to be made that can result in a curfew or tag imposed on the person or family.

In the last twelve months two anti-social behaviour orders have been issued by the Council that involved young people across the whole of the town. There are around 20/25 anti-social behaviour orders generally issued in the town, which in the main are issued by the Police.

Luton has around 600/700 street champions whose primary focus is the street scene. Champions are anonymous and are the eyes and ears for the community and are not visible on the streets.

The public are confused with the different roles of Community Safety teams and that of safer neighbourhood teams in terms of how/who to make contact. This is an area being currently being addressed by the Partnership who commissioned BEST (business engineering strong and safer together) project to look at bringing together the work of both teams into one area that should make it easier for the public to contact with a single phone number for reporting incidences of anti-social behaviour (**see Recommendation 7, page 15**).

Peter Timms, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator – 16th April 2010

Peter Timms is the neighbourhood watch coordinator for the west area of Luton. There are around 350 neighbourhood coordinators that share information with the local authority and the Police on what's happening within their area. Residents can register complaints about crime directly to their coordinator or contact victim support directly if they feel threatened.

Are there any areas in the town where there are no coordinators?

There is an assumption neighbourhood watch is for owner occupiers and there are areas in Luton that are predominately social housing such as South and North Luton where no coordinators are based. We are trying to get more schemes up and running in these areas and have received a grant that will help make streets safer. The Bobby van visits the South of the town installing security equipment in homes for people to feel safe.

How do people arrange a Bobby van visit?

They need to send an email to Brian Pickett, who is the person that is responsible for the Bobby Van service or they can contact their neighbourhood watch coordinator who will arrange the visit on their behalf.

Do you work closely with community safety teams?

No, I have never been invited to any of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership meetings.

What if there is a problem, who do you contact?

I usually email the local sergeant or the police community safety officers requesting them to make immediate contact. Every month I send the Police a list of all the issues raised through area coordinators.

How do you ensure the people are informed of what's going on in their community?

There is a database of all members of neighbourhood watch and my phone number is advertised in the Lutonline.

Do street coordinators get invited to area committee meetings?

The Area Community Support Manager said anyone who attends area committee meeting are placed on a database and invited to area committee meetings in their area, and these are well publicised in the local press.

Area Committee Support Manager – 16 April 2010

The Area Committee Support Manager has supported the area committees since 2001 and is responsible for taking democracy out into the community. The Council has five area committees within the town that hold ward forum meetings where the public can meet with their councillors to discuss local issues before the main area committee meeting.

The Louise Casey report (2009) brought an additional role for safer neighbourhood teams that affect every local area. Luton has 40 additional crime fighters at no expense to the Council who work closely with victims and also provide support.

Why are the outcomes of court cases not feed back to victims?

This point was raised in the Louise Casey report that found a number of outcomes had failed to be reported back. Since then the Home Office has issued guidance on this that is now the responsibility of the Police with assistance from the local authority to publish outcomes of court cases. The Police should inform all victims, but we are aware that is not happening, we need to comply with statute and be clear about the information that needs to be released. We are currently making available sentencing outcomes being run as a pilot, but the difficulty is finding a balance on the level of detail to release in the public domain.

The fear of crime is a national and local priority. Is it an issue that comes up regularly at area committee and ward forum meetings?

We have found people want action and are fed up with being consulted. The issues raised at area committees are usually focused on anti-social behaviour. The Area Committees do have a small initiatives funding budget for small projects around the town such as alley-gating that have been successful in some areas of the town. In High Town we have had reports of kerb crawling, which the police are dealing with.

Community Safety Partnership Manager

The Community Safety Partnership Manager was invited to the 29th April Task and Finish Group meeting to give an outline of the community safety initiatives and the role of the partnership. The Partnership every year carries out a strategic assessment plan that tackles crime and disorder in Luton. The Partnership has taken account of points raised at the community safety summit held in December last year:-

- Visible policing – a majority of the people that attended considered that Police Community Safety Officers should engage more effectively with communities in more positive way. This would provide security and reassurance among the public especially in and around subways during school times.
- Better communications is needed in publicising information on how perpetrators are dealt with by the courts and how they repair the damage done to the community, and there is a need to be clear about the different roles of agencies involved in community safety.
- The need to tackle the causes of crime, especially in the areas of high perceptions of drug and alcohol abuse, which could mean more educational programmes that enable people to spot signs of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Community empowerment/ ownership - the Council should provide better facilities and more community projects to engage young people to stop reoffending, and ensure better links are made between neighbourhood watch and safer neighbourhood teams.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager informed the Task and Finish Group that the BEST (business engineering safer and stronger together) Project is commissioned to identify and implement lean processes that will introduce a consistent level of service to local communities especially in areas reporting anti-social behaviour. The projects mission is to identify victims, including vulnerable and repeat victims of anti-social behaviour to provide them with support to improve their quality of life and challenge the behaviour of individuals, groups and families who are the perpetrators. An action plan has been developed for the BEST Project to focus on a number of themes:

- Communications, engagement and public confidence
- Partnership processes and information
- Young people

- Litter, rubbish and fly tipping
- Noise nuisance
- People using and dealing drugs
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Being drunk and rowdy in public
- Abandoned and burned out vehicles
- supporting victims of anti-social behaviour

The BEST project main focus is anti-social behaviour, which is hard to define and covers a wide range of issues. The Police use an operational incident system (OIS) to determine incidences of anti-social behaviour. Whereas, the Council categorise it as: noise nuisance, rowdy behaviour and neighbourhood complaints. Luton is considered to be a town with low level reporting area for anti-social behaviour when compared to our statistical neighbours. The larger local authorities tend to use the definition by the Home Office that tends to be more appropriate for authorities that experience higher reporting levels for anti-social behaviour.

From the number of complaints received by the Council, it is hard to determine those that specifically relates to anti-social behaviour as no one service has responsibility. For instance, criminal damage complaints are directed to the Police; Trading Standards handles complaints on noise nuisance and neighbourhood disputes referred to the Council's housing enforcement team. Most departments have access to the FLARE system that logs complaints on fly tipping and abandoned vehicles but the system is unable to monitor outcomes of complaints, which is also being addressed in the BEST Project.

The Partnership does recognise the public are still unaware of how to contact safer neighbourhood teams and their role within communities and are working on more innovative ways to communicate their work. However, a lot of publicity is already provided about the services in Lutonline, which is an issue as not all households receive this and we are in the process of looking at other ways to engage the public, possibly through outlets such as newsletters or formal letters that can help to reduce fear of crime and build public confidence (**Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 page 4**).

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Inspector Jim Goldsmith and Sergeant Kiff from Bedfordshire Police attended the Task and Finish Group on 29th April 2010. They were invited to explain the role of safer neighbourhood teams. The Police recently launched a Stop Hate Crime UK campaign that enables third party reporting of anti-social behaviour to be collected and monitored centrally. The campaign allows anyone to report a hate crime and be contacted immediately. The helpline is a 24 hour service with operators that speak the diverse languages of Luton. Information about the service is available on the Bedfordshire Police website.

The Police are working with schools to tackle issues and concerns about anti-social behaviour through the 'Proper Safer Schools Partnerships'. These are run by safer neighbourhood teams who talk to pupils in schools about the dangers and consequences of anti-social behaviour, and also raise awareness on issues of drugs and alcohol abuse. Later in the year a more comprehensive programme will be launched in Luton schools from September onwards to cover issues such as; kids leaving and hanging around schools at the end of the school day and truanting, which are a major concern to the public. The Police are to increase their presence around schools at particular times of the day to discourage anti-social behaviour and to rebuild public confidence in high perception areas, which is to be resourced by Police Community Safety Officers whose responsibilities will include managing schools more vigorously than before.

The Police also work with the Youth Offending Service to gain a better understanding as why children offend and are in also discussing with the Healthy Schools Co-ordinator at the Council ways of tackling illegal parking around schools particularly at certain times during the day.

The Police have created a new post specifically aimed at working with hard to reach groups. So far the work has proven to be a success with regular meetings now held in the community to capture issues of concerns especially from residents that would not often come forward to report problems to the Police. However, more work is needed with registered social landlords (RSLs) to encourage more proactive in handling and dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour.

The perception of crime in Luton has increased, which is evident in the studies undertaken but the public are still unwilling to accept overall crime has reduced.

What level of communication is made between the police and neighbourhood watch?

The relationship between the Police and neighbourhood watch teams across the borough has improved significantly since Mr Tilbury took over that has led to more people becoming members. The police and neighbourhood watch meet on a weekly basis to exchange information and ideas on how issues can be resolved.

Are you aware of crime fighters that are scattered across Luton that are trained volunteers who act as the eyes and ears of Luton for reporting crime?

The Police are not aware of crime fighters or what their role represents.

Would you say publicity by the Partnership has failed to lessen people fear of crime even though there are a lot of people involved in reducing crime in Luton?

Low level anti-social behaviour complaints are soon to be monitored by the Council's Housing section and Community Safety Teams that will merge into one unit and is a proposal by the BEST project to bring a level of consistency in one area that will lessen confusion among residents. We also recognise better communications is needed between the various agencies to avoid duplication in service delivery.

Can you give the panel two solutions that can be used to combat the fear of crime in Luton?

- (1) Communication is the main area that the Police are struggling to get right. There is a definite need for more positive news to be reported in the press, as their main focus is on bad news that works in their favour. Some good initiatives are already in place, which are never reported in the media. The Crown Court often attracts the media's attention in the high profile cases that are often not connected to Luton, which adds to increase perceptions that crime in the town is increasing (**see recommendation 1**).
- (2) Raising the profile of the reporting of hate crime reporting that is low. More people need to come forward and report incidences to the Police rather than wait until the third and fourth time before reporting. If the Police are involved from the start we can respond and not been seen as a reactive service. However, there are some cases where priority is given i.e. domestic violence. The reporting of issues by the public is usually on the 999 emergency number. All non emergency concerns should be reported to the local Police Station on 01582 401212, which needs to be widely publicised (**see recommendation 4, page 4**).

Luton Borough Council's Licensing Services Manager

The role and responsibilities of the Licensing Services Manager includes working with other agencies that have responsibility for community safety issues. There is a public perception of the fear of crime that is a national concern that is often fuelled by media reports of binge drinking that is often linked with the introduction of the 2003 Licensing Act that allows pubs and restaurants to be open for longer. The licensing team work in Partnership in Luton on initiatives such as SOS Bus, which is a taxi parcelling service for vulnerable people in Luton and is based in the Town Centre at weekends.

Has the 2003 Licensing Act added or eased the burden to the Council?

The 2003 legislation placed more pressure on the Council that was previously a task undertaken by the Magistrates Court, and is now the responsibility of the Council to impose more control and constraints over pubs and restaurants.

How does the licensing service fit in with the partnership?

We give advice to businesses and act as facilitators with the big stores and small businesses that operate in the town centre to ensure their businesses comply with the requirements in the Act.

Complaints of noise nuisance is often linked to excessive drinking and we are involved in 'Operation Butler, which is a joint operation run with the Police that successfully disrupts parties and closes down licensed premises who fail to comply.

Are there many complaints about the taxi service in the town centre?

Most taxi drivers refuse to take anyone under the influence of drink.

The licensing service is currently working with soLUTioNs to change the demographic behaviour during the day and at night. A majority of the businesses in the town centre have been affected by the recession resulting in most of them only opening on a Saturday night, which is considered the most viable. More businesses are adapting their premises and extending their licences to include families appealing to the wider public rather than just offering nightclub entertainment. We have also seen the same problems reoccurring over a longer period and there is a definite need to change the town centre's priorities to cater for this, which may involve being tougher on traders as pubs changing to restaurants that are becoming more popular in the town. The flexibility in the Licensing Act 2003 allows for the Council to have more options and are no longer constrained under the original mandate first introduced.

Are the small off-licenses monitored for selling alcohol on a 24hr basis?

No, we don't monitor the commodity bought but have noticed the affect it has on people living in the surrounding areas where licences have been granted. We receive more complaints about anti-social behaviour i.e. slamming doors, and people talking loudly which is an issue for trading standards. There are precautions that the council can take before granting a licence although each case is looked at separately and the Council does have the option to revoke or amend a licence at a later date.

Do you think happy hours increases people's fear of crime in the town?

We have looked at these promotions and found they do not necessarily add to the problems that people experience but there is a need to change their behaviour. We have also seen an increase in the 24-30 age groups in Luton, which is the largest demographic group, and landlords need to direct their attention to encourage more of this age group in to the town centre rather than target the lower age groups.

There are a number of agencies involved in tackling community safety.. Do you think communications is a problem?

More work needs to be done on bringing together the work of all the agencies involved in delivering community safety in the town but things have got better over the years.

Head of Youth Offending Service – 14th May 2010

The Youth Offending Service caters for young people under the age of 18. There are two national indicators that are monitored by the service: NI 111 is a priority indicator that monitors first time offenders into youth justice. Luton is considered to be a high performance council in the area of services offered by the youth offending team that is rated as good and been replicated over the years. In 2008/09 the youth offending service saw a 22% reduction in young people coming into youth justice aged between 10 and 18 years. In 2009-10 the reduction had reduced slightly to 18% but this figure may change after we receive finalisation figures from the Police national data. On which Beds Police data is compared and holds the same data information as we do in the youth offending service the figure of 18% follows the national trend.

The second indicator is a local indicator that measures offending of young people aged between 10 and 17 years old in the youth justice system and monitors a cohort of children over a three month period that are tracked on the level of frequency of re-offending. Luton has shown positive outcomes in this indicator with figures that show a decline nationally and Luton fairing better than the national average and when compared to the family group. The rate of measure is on per offence per 100,000 population. In 2008/09 the target outcome was 1.35 offences per young person the actual was 1.87 which is less than 0.8 per persons re-offending. In 2009 the latest outturn is 0.52 which is a provisional figure as data is still being collected and needs to be analysed.

There are also performance targets that monitor the deterrence of young people from becoming prolific and priority offenders that looks at adults and young people under 17 and is referred to as the deter group that is most likely to reoffend. Figures in relation to this target for Luton in 2008/09 seen a reduction in reoffending of 68.1% compared 62.3% nationally and 43.7% compared with the family group.

There is a need to portray positive news of young people and the youth offending service at Luton has been awarded the best performing service over the last 5/6 years nationally, and is highly commended by Courts in the service offered to young people who breach their orders.

The youth offending service is also involved in prevention programmes and work with the multi agency partnership and community safety teams on initiatives for young people from the age of 8 to 17 that are considered to be at risk of anti-social behaviour or likely to re-offend. The initiatives in place work with problem families and covers truancy issues and schools exclusions.

Two family intervention officers (FIOs) employed by the youth offending service support these families on a 24 hour basis, to overcome problems such as eviction notices and where officers will contact the housing section to try and resolve the issue.

Close links are maintained with the Police and led to training delivered by the youth offending service on restorative justice practices as an alternative tool to use to prevent young people from going through the formal criminal justice system.

The youth offending services recognise that young people are in the main perceived as the problem, which has led to low public confidence in the town, and this is assisted by stories reported in the media. To dispel these negative images the youth justice board are piloting raising the profile of young people via a newsletter that promotes the work of the youth offending service and initiatives in place to help young people in the Lutonline. Pilots of similar initiatives are shown to be a success in Cambridge where positive images of young people have increased public confidence (**see recommendation 1**).

Brian McFarland, General Manager of Luton Mall giving evidence to the Task and Finish Group

Brian McFarland informed the Group that a customer survey carried out in 2007 established reasons why people did not visit Luton Arndale Centre for shopping in which some of the following reasons were given:

- The perception of Luton as a viable place to shop is poor as it cannot compete with shopping centres like Milton Keynes
- Luton's Architecture is old and out of date e.g. the railway and car parks are prime examples. There was a genuine need to update and revamp the buildings surrounding the town centre to make them more appealing to the public and to encourage people to come to Luton to shop. Hopefully completing the new frontage to the Mall is a step in the right direction
- The behaviour of Young People is perceived as threatening and a barrier that prevents people from coming to Luton town centre to shop.
- Media reports of Gangs and young people in hoods also prevent people from coming into the centre
- Congestion – the build-up of traffic around the town centre and the length of time it takes people to get in and out of the Mall and is a problem faced by all towns.

We work in partnership with the Council and its external agencies to explore and address some of the issues highlighted.

- Image Programme: a need to publish good and coherent stories about Luton to help people's perception.
- The need for the Council to tackle car park difficulties in and around the town centre
- More presence of PCSO's in the streets

- More Security Officers presence in The Mall
- To develop a strategic transport plan for Luton to ease congestion around the town centre

Do you record all types of crime committed in The Mall or do you only record those connected with anti-social behaviour?

A Home Office Scheme called “Luton Against Crime” funded a part time coordinator who recorded all crimes and the police were kept informed accordingly. This scheme allowed the Mall an exclusion order to ban certain individuals from the town centre and had resulted in a reduced amount of incidents reported last month. Our records show that overall crime has reduced, including car theft which was the biggest problem. This is not the case for anti-social behaviour that has increased. Crimes committed during the day has reduced although the night time economy has suffered the most as people feel unsafe with the parking in the town centre.

Lyles Osborne and Marie Bacon, Marsh Farm Development Trust

Representatives from the Marsh Farm Development Trust were invited by the Task and Finish Group to give evidence relating to public perception of the area. The fear of crime in Marsh Farm has reduced over time with the biggest fear being burglary and the Purley Centre is considered a high-risk area. Marsh farm has gained a reputation through a distortion of facts and negative reports by the media. People are still referring to the riots that took place in 1995 and the tower blocks act as a stigma that prevents people from coming into the area. The social mix is mainly working class and this causes people to have negative perceptions of the area increases fear. Marsh Farm has a higher concentration of younger people that are NEET (not in education or employment training) and the area suffers from high support needs that include drug related crimes.

Crime perception in Marsh Farm has reduced by 50% over the last 8 years, due mainly to:-

- £1.7M investment: on street lighting that also covert to CCTV cameras on the estate. The system achieved a very positive impact and made a huge difference in reducing crime in the Marsh Farm area;
- Community Warden Scheme: Under this scheme, 6 community wardens were employed. They worked closely with residents and local people and supported them where issues had been identified. The scheme is now discontinued due to lack of funding.
- Alert Boxes for Local People: Are given to residents in high-risk areas and can be activated to alert other people about crime. The boxes are linked to safety neighbourhood teams who responded immediately. The alert boxes created a common spirit amongst the community.
- New Lock on Doors that provide to some residents to ensure safety and security.

Youth Council Representative – Nadine Madi

The Task and Finish Group invited Nadine Madi, Youth Council Representative to give evidence on the findings of a survey on crime in Luton on young people aged 15-17 years.

The young people that participated were encouraged to recruit their friends and to make a commitment to encourage good behaviour and condemn bad behaviour.

The survey found young people felt there are lots of good things in Luton and many were not involved in criminal activities.

Divisional Police Commander for Luton, Mike Colbourne – 4th June 2010

Mike Colbourne the Divisional Police Commander for Luton was invited by the Task and Finish Group to comment on the evidence received so far. He reiterated the work carried out by the Police in different areas of Luton and acknowledged more needed to be done in the following areas:

- Provision of services
- Investment on anti-social behaviour
- Good staff motivation but not very good at making people aware of activities
- Appointment system – commenced in April 2010.
- In terms of people satisfaction 90-95% in some areas and very high level of satisfaction round individual contacts
- Trying to expand the appointment system in neighbourhood terms
- Command and control centre – centralised function, huge investment by the police
- Lacking on the seriousness of the perception of crime

Is domestic violence a major fear of crime in Luton?

Domestic violence forms 30% of serious crime in Luton. In terms of fear, there is a need to look at the causes, concerns and the consequences of domestic violence as a crime and the way it is perceived. Levels of domestic violence tend to increase during football tournaments; the Police encourage victims and members of the community to report it. There are plans in place to tackle and improve issues of crime however; domestic violence is a difficult and complicated area to combat completely. Incidents of domestic violence could be included in your final report as the Police have achieved good outcomes in relation to penalty notices and it is vital that the offender understands the impact of the crime committed.

What robust role can Councillors play in order to make a difference with regards to fear of crime and if they were a member of the community safety partnership would it make a positive impact to lessen perceptions of the fear of crime?

Councillors could make a difference in the fear of crime if they are effectively involved in community safety **(see recommendation 8, page 17)**.

What is the input of the police at ward level in relation to community safety partnership?

The police could explore the area of community level and councillors may also wish to work together in a community safety group to consider and explore options.

Sandra Hayes explained that the west area neighbourhood board pilot is considering some changes and a new way of working to ensure that area committee meetings became more effective. However there was a need to encourage members of the community to be more engaged at ward and community levels.

Gylnis Allen, Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Manager

The Task and Finish Group the drugs and alcohol partnership manager was invited to give evidence on the perceptions of the public and the reality of drugs and alcohol in Luton, which is found to be a major area of concern raised in the consultation with the public.

There is a need to be cautious about surveys that ask questions on drug dealing and usage of alcohol as two main factors need to be taken into consideration; the age of the person being asked and the misconception of situations being observed.

From a partnership perspective, drug dealing of class A drugs such as heroin and crack normally takes place in private and very rarely takes place on the streets.

This is not the case for cannabis that is a social drug used or smoked on the streets by young and more mature people.

The Police have prioritised tackling the supply and drug dealing activities in the town. Vulnerable people are mostly affected by heroin and crack and the dealers of drugs could take over the lives of the vulnerable. In these circumstances, the work of the community or support worker is vital to the rehabilitation of the user. There is still a substantial market for drugs in the community.

In terms of alcohol this attracts different perceptions that are usually associated with rowdy behaviour at night, which can lead to anti-social behaviour. Younger people tend to be the main target whose behaviour attracts public attention especially at night in Luton town centre. A new initiative of the SOS Bus operates in the town centre at weekends to help vulnerable people in issues with drugs and alcohol. The usage of alcohol nationally has reduced.

How are public service agreement transmitted into Local Area Agreement to reduce drugs and alcohol?

Alcohol was expected to increase by 25% over the next period. The target for 2009/10 was to reduce the rate of increase by 10%.

How is this measured in terms of the Council as a partner?

There are approximately 890 in effective treatment programmes reduced to 815. A report recently published on drug trends found that police drug testing had fallen due to good policing, treatment programmes and the social care.

Has the Council and National Health Service done enough to tackle the issue of drugs and alcohol in the town?

The available services are anorexic and there is a need for more resources, but the national defence budget supports several measures, which would ensure that drugs and alcohol issues are tackled. The National Health Service received £2.2M two years ago to support activities to rehabilitate people out of drug and alcohol dependency.

To what extent could the voluntary sector contribute and what resources are available?

The voluntary sector does provide intervention programmes but it is essential for the National Health Service support the work of voluntary agencies in tackling problems of drug and alcohol abuse.

Neighbourhood Governance

Conducted surveys with young people in the West area of Luton on the fear of crime, which is a priority theme of the local area agreement and community strategy. In the Challney ward the young people consulted wanted more community and sport centres. Lewsey the survey was conducted in St Dominics Square and were surprised at the amount of young people who showed an interest, around 100+ people or more attended that session. In Leagrave the responses received wanted improved leisure facilities and more laws on drinking. People's priorities change according to the situation and the fear of crime didn't feature in the survey of people's priority. The recent event that took place in Cumbria has dominated the news headlines that could be said lead to increase figures in the fear of crime. Community centres in Luton receive over 250,000 visitors per year Hockwell Ring Community Centre is the

most representative.

Mike Colbourne, Divisional Commander for Bedfordshire Police

The Task and Finish Group invited the Divisional Commander for Bedfordshire Police to comment on the information received.

The police achieve good outcomes in the issuing of penalty notices, which is vital that offenders understand the impact of crimes committed. The police are looking at different methods of delivering outcomes and plans to train Officers in restorative justice practices as an alternative to the criminal justice

Mike Colbourne further explained that there was need to ensure that the punishment was proportionate and that it fitted the circumstances. He stated that it was not uncommon for people to feel uncomfortable about the consequences of police penalty notices.

Does membership of the Community Safety Partnership include Council Elected Members?

The Local Public Service Board (LPSB) had the statutory partnership, which fits into the theme group of Local Area Agreement (LAA), of which one of the themes is Stronger and Safer Communities Board (SSCB) and Community Safety Executive (CSE) on which elected members are represented on those bodies.

What robust role can Councillors play in order to make a difference with regards to fear of crime?

Councillors can make a difference in the fear of crime if they are effectively involved in community safety issues at Ward level and work with the Police to encourage the public to report concerns and in communicating the positives of Luton. Currently neighbourhood governance is piloting a new working arrangement in the West area of the town that links in with the work of area committee meetings to become more effective and is an area where Members of the community to be more engaged at ward and community levels.

Consultation Analysis

An analysis of the various consultations by the Task and Finish Group of the Community Safety Survey 2009; the BMG Community Cohesion & Fear of Crime Report 2010 and the Place Survey 2008, and a separate Member consultation with the public to explore perceptions on the fear of crime with specific groups.

The Task and Finish Group found there are particular drives for the fear of crime in Luton that increases public perception:

- 'Hot spots' perceived to be high crime areas in Luton
- Anti-social behaviour
- Media Reporting
- Public confidence in local services and the Police.

Areas with high fear of crime levels

The BMG Fear of Crime report, the Place (2008) and the Community Safety (2009) surveys highlight areas in Luton with a particularly high level fear of crime. The top three are Marsh Farm, Bury Park and the Town centre.

Marsh Farm

The Community Safety (2009) telephone survey of 1058 randomly selected respondents across Luton, and one question asked what areas in Luton residents tried to avoid. 57% stated that there are particular areas in Luton that they avoided. A significant 42% reported said Marsh Farm as an area to be particularly avoided.

The BMG Fear of Crime Report showed responses from 59 participants also included questions on concerns and fears of particular areas in Luton. Respondents that participated in the focus groups range said the worst areas of Luton were Marsh Farm, Lewsey Farm and Farley Hill. People were particular fearful of the flats in Marsh Farm due to drug users and gangs, would not go into this area during the day. The report illustrated views that respondents feel that *'all sorts of things happen'* and commented on the bad behaviour from groups of youths. The report also highlights the bad reputation that Marsh Farm that stems back to the 1995 riots and the media coverage. It also illustrates the opinions stated by most of the respondents of the area are due to *'word of mouth'*.

The Task and Finish Group consultation respondents highlight Marsh Farm as a high crime area. The consultation with young people found approximately 62% avoided Marsh Farm as an area who claimed it had 'gotten worse'. Consultations that took place with the Bushmead Community Association for

the disabled, many said they would not enter Marsh Farm. However, it was admitted that this was due to the reputation of Marsh Farm.

The Task and Finish Group heard evidence from representatives of Marsh Farm Development Trust on the perception of crime in the area. Who said the fear of crime had reduced over time, but there are still areas where crime levels are still high i.e. the Purley Centre. The representatives confirmed that Marsh Farm is still stigmatised for the riots that took place over 10 years ago.

Town Centre/Luton Mall

The Place Survey (2008) reported the most feared areas in Luton as Central Luton as stated by a significant 49% of respondents, which also includes the Town Centre where respondents said they feel unsafe, particularly after dark. The reasons for the fear of crime in local areas were also given. 32% claimed their fear was due to young people hanging around, 14% claimed that it was down to perceived levels of crime in the area and 12% feared being assaulted.

The BMG Community Cohesion and Fear of Crime report found the Town Centre is an area that is perceived to have a significant level of fear of crime. Respondents were asked if there was a particular time that they did not feel safe to go into the Town Centre. The majority reported that they "*felt that it was OK to be in the Town Centre during the day, but not at night*". Some respondents mentioned the frequency of 'large brawls' in the Town Centre, particularly by the Namco station and the Galaxy. It was also reported that people feel the centre is bad at 'weekends and on student nights', because of the amount of drinking that takes place. The report highlights four main issues that cause public concern; large groups of people (mainly young people who try to start fights), date rapes, disreputable taxi drivers and drug users. Other areas within the town centre that cause concern are the side streets that are said to be renowned for stabbings and the underpasses that are unsafe at night.

The Community Safety (2009) Survey found the Town Centre is an area that residents try to avoid, approximately 20% of respondents over 25 avoided the Town Centre, which was either the Luton Mall or the night life i.e. pubs and clubs.

The Task & Finish Group found residents living in Hockwell Ring said they also avoided the Town Centre. Such feelings are replicated consultation with the Bushmead Community Association for the Disabled where several residents said they avoided the Town Centre because of 'rowdy groups of young people' and their intimidating behaviour. Participants also said they feared particular areas around the railway station. In the young people consultation approximately 20% of them avoided the Town Centre due to the perceptions of other young people causing disruption. The Riddy Lane District Residents' Association consultation also reported that several people avoided the town centre during the day and considered it a no go area at night.

Bury Park

Bury Park is also a high perception area this is avoided by the public during the day or night.

The Community Safety Survey (2009) found Bury Park was high on the agenda of areas avoided in Luton, closely followed by Marsh Farm. A significant 39% of residents said the avoidance of Bury Park is due to the fear of crime. The same percentage of residents felt totally unsafe after dark in the South of Luton in general.

The BMG Community Cohesion and Fear of Crime report found residents naming Bury Park as one of the worst areas in Luton. Fears seemed to be particularly based around night time activities in the back roads that are perceived to be areas known for prostitution. The report illustrated a respondent who was asked approximately five times for 'business'.

The BMG Place (2008) survey found 45% of residents felt unsafe at night. The highest at 53% recalled the South of Luton as being the place that they felt most unsafe.

Members' consultations further reported Bury Park as an avoided area in Luton due to perceived high crime levels. The young people consultation highlights Bury Park as an avoided area. One resident from Bury Park claimed that the area has 'too many junkies'. The older people consulted reported that they avoid Bury Park as they felt unsafe. The Bushmead Community Association for the Disabled described Bury Park as a 'no-go area', particularly at night and residents in the High Town area noted said they try to avoid visiting Bury Park, especially at night because of a 'minority of Muslim youths harassing anybody who is not Muslim'.

Other areas within the town

The Task and Finish Group noted other areas reported in the consultations as being avoided and feared areas in Luton. BMG Fear of Crime Report found respondents said Farley Hill and Lewsey Farm to be one of the worst areas in Luton. They claimed that they would even avoid these areas during the day due to drug users and gangs. The Community Safety (2009) survey reported a significant 43% of respondents felt unsafe in the Farley Hill Area and 27% in the Lewsey area after dark. The Member consultation and in the young people consultation Farley Hill and Lewsey Farm were reported as being areas that is avoided. Approximately 37% noted that Lewsey Farm is an area that they would avoid going, and 20% noted Farley Hill.

Perceptions of ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)

Anti-Social behaviour is another subject that was explored in the surveys and in the Member consultation, which was to get an understanding of public perception of the concept:

The public define anti-social behaviour as: people being rowdy in public places, vandalism, graffiti and litter lying around. The BMG Place 2008 survey 53% of respondents viewed young people hanging around on the streets to be a fairly or very big problem. 45% viewed people using or dealing drugs as a fairly or very big problem. 47% viewed burglary and 44% viewed vehicle crime to be a fairly or very big problem.

Consultations with young people showed the term 'Anti-Social Behaviour' is used to refer to the actions of young people. A survey conducted by LYTE (Luton's Youth Council) shows a significant 38% of young people thought that ASB was used to 'describe and identify young people'. Members of LYTE also noted that they were able to identify that adult and young people's perceptions of ASB weren't that different from each other. Consultations by the Task & Finish group with young people seem to show that young people recognise that ASB is generalised towards most young people, but it is mainly violent or nuisance behaviour that harasses local people.

The Community Safety (2009) survey asked residents about their views regarding anti-social behaviour in their local area. Residents regarded speeding as a big problem (45%) and teenagers hanging around on the streets being also a big problem (40%). In regards to teenagers being on the streets, it was reported in the Dallow area as being the largest amount who viewed it as a big problem (58%), and secondly in the South area (54%).

The Riddy Lane District report found that residents feel levels of anti-social behaviour had increased in their area but did not feel the need to explore the definition. Residents in the High Town area understood anti-social behaviour to be 'youths standing on street corners abusing passers by'. The Bushmead Association for the Disabled noted that they were intimidated by groups of youths in public places. They also considered anti-social behaviour to be litter and graffiti on the streets, bad language used in public and drug-related issues. Residents consulted in the Hockwell Ring area feel that anti-social behaviour orders do not work that have been used to curb behaviour on vandalism of bus shelters and phone boxes. Consultations with other people found that they were intimidated by large groups of youths, and they viewed anti-social behaviour in their local area as high school pupils littering the streets.

It would seem that the majority of respondents feel anti-social behaviour is generally associated with young people and their behaviour. The phrase 'teenagers just hanging around' is used by a significant amount respondents consulted, and is not considered a crime. The BMG Fear of Crime report also shows that the majority of respondents referred to anti-social behaviour as

mainly by young people and 'travellers'. However, most respondents also noted that they feel parents and the authorities are the 'guilty parties'.

Media Coverage

Consultations by the Task & Finish group members found some significant findings in the views of residents in regards to media coverage of Luton:

What do you think about the media reportage of crime in Luton? Does this impact on your level of fear of crime and why?

Older people generally thought that the media is 'unfair' in its reports. They also feel it has a negative impact on people's view of crime in Luton and believe it to be very 'one-sided'. Some also admitted to having a fear of going into banks where there are women wearing a Hijab (head covering), which could be down to recent media coverage. Residents in the Biscot area feel that the media tends to exaggerate the problems in Luton. They also feel that the statistical crime figures are similar to all towns in Britain considering the condition of the economy; 'figures are high-it's not surprising'. High Town residents feel that the media almost always exaggerate coverage in Luton, but it does not impact on their fear of crime. Residents of the Riddy Lane district are distrustful of the published crime figures in Luton, as they believe them to be 'manipulated for political motives'. They also know that reports of more serious crimes have significantly increased in the last 10 years (murder, gun and knife crime). The Bushmead Association residents feel that the media 'sensationalise crime and this heightens the public's awareness and fear of it'. They also quoted 'The newspapers and TV thrive on bad news – it makes money'. Consultations with young people from a range of areas show that young people seem to view the media coverage of Luton as nearly always negative, 'the media never covers anything good in Luton'. They also noted that they did not feel that this impacted their fear of crime because they 'know what it's like to live in Luton', so they have a more direct experience of living here and they also said 'Luton's not that bad.' The survey by LYTE also supported this as the young people that completed the survey admitted that they avoided certain areas because of media perception or word of mouth (46%).

The respondents from the Community Safety Survey show some of the reasons for feeling unsafe after dark. 6% of respondents claimed it was from information from the media in Luton. The BMG Fear of Crime report noted that areas in Luton are particularly feared due to negative media coverage, for example Marsh Farm. Marsh Farm had extremely negative media coverage over 10 years ago but still seems to be highly feared as it's still remembered. The representatives from the Marsh Farm Development Project presented that one of Marsh Farm's difficulties is a 'distortion of facts and negative publication'; one being that it is still remembered for the riots.

Public Confidence in Local Authorities and the Police

The Task & Finish group were interested in whether or not the public did have satisfactory levels of confidence within Local Authorities and in the Police, particularly of their awareness of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. They were asked:

Are you aware of SNTs (safer neighbourhood teams), their role and how to contact them?

The Bushmead Association noted that none of them knew of the SNTs or how to contact them. They admitted if there was a problem that they'd call the police on 999. When consulting young people, 87% claimed that they knew about the SNTs but either did not think that they were effective or did not know how to contact them. Some young people claimed that there were not any teams in their area when in fact they were. The majority of Riddly Lane District residents noted that they are aware of the PCSOs but not the SNTs. Even then it was also noted that they do not trust their 'effectiveness'. Residents in High Town said that they were aware of the teams and their roles but believed that there was not a team in their area and so would not know how to contact them. However, residents of the Biscot area were aware of the SNTs and have contact numbers for their officers. When consulting older people's views it was found that 40% were aware of the SNTs, 20% know how to contact them and 30% know their role. So, it would seem that there is a communication problem as to getting the word out there of the SNTs.

The Community Safety Survey also asked of the awareness of the SNTs in the local area. They found that 40% were not aware of their SNTs and 18% were aware but not sure how to contact them. It was also found a high 61% of Bramingham and High Town residents were not aware of their SNTs.

A further question was asked:

Explore what would make you feel safer? (How can the council and its partners make you feel safer?)

In the majority of consultations across specific groups, there were a few main answers:

- **More police on the streets:** Many residents felt that more police patrols were needed to make them feel safer, especially during the evening or night. Just the presence would be a move to boost their confidence. Unfortunately there were a few notes of residents 'police don't do their job properly', 'police are more focused on the easy crimes such as traffic offences and not the street crime'.
- **More CCTV surveillance/lighting:** Many residents also felt that more CCTV is needed in areas of there being high levels of crime. They also felt that the public needed to be more aware of where the CCTV is.

There were also comments on better lighting in some areas to deter criminals.

- Better engagement: Better engagement with the police and council was thought to be a good idea, particularly from young people. A lot of residents want to feel included in what's going on in their local area and have a better relationship with the police and their local council.
- Better control on ASB: Further, more residents feel that more needs to be done on the subject of ASB. There were also comments of making places for youths to go so that they're not just on the streets but are actually doing something. Some residents feel that the police overlook ASB.

The BMG Fear of Crime report also received similar responses in what would make residents feel safer in their area: More visible police/PCSOs, Better use of police time, Greater use of CCTV/lighting, Regenerating areas and improving community cohesion.

It would seem that there needs to be more of a relationship between the council and the public, and the police and the public, as it would seem that the confidence is low.