

# **SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2012**

PRESENT:- Councillors Brian Ford (Chair), Robert Wright (Vice-Chair), Abdul Amin, Alan Bishop, Mary Friend, John Haines, Colin Lovell, Nick Martin, Ann Richards and Joe Tray

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Ballman, Toby Elliott and Julie Wright.

## **73. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012 be confirmed and signed.

## **74. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **75. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

## **76. Review of Wiltshire Special Constabulary**

Richard Palusinski, Head of Community Safety and the Chief Officer, Wiltshire Special Constabulary, and Keith Ewart from Wiltshire Police attended the meeting, answering the following questions put to them by the Committee.

Who are and what is the purpose of the Special Constabulary?  
How do their arrest powers operate and how are they funded?  
How many Special Constables are able to patrol Independently in Swindon?  
What is the capability of the Special Constabulary to provide resources at peak demand times?  
What are the current recruitment plans for Wiltshire Special Constabulary?  
How many days do Special Constables work per month?  
How are the Specials distributed across the Borough?  
How has the current budget changed in the past 5 years?  
What is the retention rate for Specials over the past 5 years?  
Why did the number of arrests by Specials rise sharply between 2010/11 and 2011/12? and other questions.

They advised the Committee that:

Special Constables are volunteers and receive no payments other than out of pocket expenses to travel to and from their place of duty.  
Special Constables are attested as a Constable before a Magistrate and have the full powers of a Police Officer. They are required to undertake a minimum of 16

hours per month duty time.

In 2009 a strategy to rebuild and develop the Special Constabulary was agreed by the Chief Officer Group of Wiltshire Police. This strategy addressed 41 recommendations of an independent review that was undertaken by Ian Miller MBE, Special Constabulary Commandant for the City of London Police. In June 2009 a Chief Officer of the Special Constabulary was appointed and a programme of work to address the agreed recommendations was established.

The Special Constabulary now provides support across a wide range of policing function throughout the Wiltshire Police area. These duties include Neighbourhood Police Teams, General Police Duties, Response Policing, Road Traffic Policing and events.

Some examples of the roles and duties of the Special Constabulary include providing home and away specialist football spotters, carrying out local speed checks, providing resources for major operations including Operation Herald (targeting scrap dealers), Operation Atlantic (tackling major drug networks), Operation Distil (tackling drunkenness) and local events including Pride, Swindon Half Marathon and the Queen's visit to Salisbury. Additionally Special Constables provided a major resource backfill during the Olympic Games.

The number of hours delivered by Special Constables in Swindon in the 2011/12 operational year was 20,612 of which 1,535 were training hours, 1,322 were administration hours and 17,755 were operational hours. During these operational hours they carried out 81 arrests, undertook 28 stop/searches, issued 12 endorsable fixed penalty notices and 21 non-endorsable fixed penalties.

Special Constables are deployed in accordance with intelligence led tasking and will therefore be involved in every aspect of policing in Swindon. They were present during the recent raids on scrap yards and disruption activities against organised crime groups and provided full police cover for the recent Pride event in Old Town.

Recruitment continues for the Special Constabulary and there are three planned intakes in the current operational year. Recruitments are sought generally through good news stories in the press and targeted recruitment in locations identified as having low numbers of Special Constables.

Coming from a starting point of 8 Special Constables in Swindon, there were 110 at the end of the last operational year. Current numbers have dropped to 91. The losses have been largely attributable to Specials Securing post as Regular Officers in Wiltshire, Thames Valley and Avon & Somerset Police as well as with the military.

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Richard Palusinski, and Keith Ewart for a useful and informative presentation.

## **77. Work Programme**

The Committee briefly discussed its work programme for the forthcoming year