

Dorset Police Meeting with ACRA 4th March 2015

Present: Mike Collard ACRA; Jim Biggin ACRA; Nick Cloke Head of Communications & Engagement Dorset Police (NC)

This is an edited version of a report produced by NC

NC outlined his personal background, explaining that engagement is one of a small number of areas being invested in by the PCC, as it had been cut heavily in the last five years. His department and Dorset Alert were two areas that had warranted such investment.

ACRA gave their views on local policing approach

Agreed and understood that 'Dixon of Dock Green' approach has gone, although some local people still perceive 'bobby on the beat' as more obvious sign of policing

The future for local policing – particularly engagement and information sharing – needs to be online

Dorset Police need to be more honest about problems they are facing, particularly budget cuts, what they mean for local policing and the impact it has had on systems such as Dorset Alert

ACRA gave their views on local Safer Neighbourhood Teams (local PC's & PCSO's)

There used to be a quarterly community action group – set-up by local neighbourhood inspectors – this no longer operates in most areas. *(ACRA note: The quarterly meeting of the Community Safety Action Group for Christchurch, which was chaired by the Section Police Inspector, was attended by representatives of CBC, Trading Standards, Fire Service, Home Watch, etc. was discontinued in August 2014. This has deprived us of access to a valuable forum)*

The community is still not fully aware of changes being made to Christchurch police station and SNT – e.g. no updates on team changes or where new Contact Point will be.

NC explained that in future his department will communicate on future changes to police station when decisions are made and agreed that there'd been limited updates on SNT changes lately.

ACRA gave their views on the police use of Dorset Alert

The police need to start using it for two-way communications with residents

There is a need for consistency using templates and for prioritisation of messages

Needs to be clearer information on subject and sender in email header

Business-focused crimes don't get sent to resident groups

Incidents appear on media and police website, but not on Dorset Alert

Needs to be easier for interested people to opt-in for all the alerts they want

Needs to be better segmentation of interest groups

Some groups (such as schools) require special treatment

People need to understand that their details are secure and they decide what they receive

NC explained the Dorset Alert system and outlined its limitations

Dorset Police have limited access to customisation, although we can submit suggestions

Dorset Alert CAN do what we need it to when properly set-up

NC explained plans for clearer templates and rules for use

NC explained the Department's 'Traffic Light system' for involving senior management

In the future, same info will be sent to social media, local media and DA simultaneously

ACRA confirmed

They will promote Dorset Alert once the issues have been resolved

They also want to help with making improvements

Future ideas to improve Dorset Alert include:

A facility to put out messages about suspicious behaviour – this would need to follow guidelines and be relevant and proportionate

The ability to send out messages about meetings and other community issues that aren't necessarily police-related safety-related issues

Need to set up the processes for key people to access the system – approved 'super users' who are trusted to send local messages

Resources

ACRA can help identify volunteers to help improve the system – JB willing to put requests out to local community, but needs advice from NC on what they will do

To facilitate this NC needs to provide training and templates concerning user data – how it should be stored and what is needed

Wider Distribution of Messages

During a discussion of how Neighbourhood Watches, RAs and other Community groups can work with Dorset Alert to achieve a wider distribution of messages to people with disability needs; those that do not use computers; etc. it was suggested that:

Groups can find out which people don't receive messages and also any people that may be more vulnerable

They can also identify 'key contacts' who can distribute messages to others (i.e. coordinators who will help with 'door-knocking' and printing information for neighbours)