

ITEM 4(d)

CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

28 FEBRUARY 2000

RACIAL INCIDENTS STRATEGY

1. Purpose and Background

1.1 This report proposes a method of dealing proactively with racial violence and harassment in Milton Keynes. It distinguishes between major racial incidents that may potentially disrupt the community and more restricted events of racial violence and harassment that require systematic intervention through existing mechanisms. It recommends that the Crime and Community Safety Partnership should oversee the strategy in respect of racial abuse and harassment.

1.2 The proposals have been put together by a working group of three, established following an inter-agency meeting at Milton Keynes police station on 12 January 2000. Members of the group were:

Melinda May	Chair of the Anti-racial harassment group
Inspector Neil Coolman	Thames Valley Police
Richard Solly	Corporate Policy Unit

1.3 As the proposals were developed, the Group consulted as widely as possible with senior representatives of the Council, Police, Racial Equality Council and secondary schools.

2. Protocol for Reporting Potential and Actual Major Incidents

2.1 A major racial incident may be defined as an event or series of connected events that is caused or aggravated by racial prejudice and which is likely to generate disorder within the community. Incidents of this nature have been reported fairly frequently in Milton Keynes in recent years, and have largely occurred in Bletchley and, more recently, in the area around Woughton Campus.

2.2 It is vital that such incidents are reported as rapidly as possible, and that they are dealt with in a way that secures public safety without creating undue disruption within the community. A protocol is suggested in the flow diagram in the **Annex** to this report. Under the protocol initial investigations will be carried out by Thames Valley Police. If the senior police officer decides that a major racial has occurred, the matter will be referred immediately to the Community and Race

Relations Officer, who will then inform the Racial Equality Council and the Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator. The Community and Race Relations Officer will also inform the Racial Equality Council and the Council about any immediate steps taken by the police to safeguard the public.

2.3 The Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator will notify the Council chief officer of the situation. All relevant operational staff should be informed within one working day, and a formal debriefing session should be organised by the Police Partnership Co-ordinator within three days (although the meeting itself may be scheduled to take place later if appropriate). Any information that may help to promote community safety should be conveyed by practitioners to the Community and Race Relations Officer or to the Partnership Co-ordinator without delay. Within 14 days, the Co-ordinator should inform all members of the Crime and Community Safety Partnership of the event and its immediate outcome.

2.4 Information from the Co-ordinator is sent to fulfil the following purposes:

- (a) To provide essential details of the developing situation.
- (b) To check for accuracy.
- (c) To request further relevant information.
- (d) To ensure that all services are co-ordinated.

Feedback is therefore essential if the system is to operate effectively.

2.5 In this way essential communications will be maintained in the event of a major incident, leaving police free to pursue necessary inquiries whilst providing practitioners with the necessary information to carry out their tasks appropriately.

3. A Strategy for Preventing Major Incidents

3.1 It would be preferable to avoid major racial incidents developing in Milton Keynes whenever possible. This would require a strategic approach, allowing for reflection on any information that has been gathered from the community.

3.2 It is suggested that a Strategy Group should be formed, which would be directly accountable to the Crime and Community Safety Partnership. The Group should be small enough to be effective, and inclusive enough to represent all major interests. The following membership is suggested:

- (a) Head of Policy and Communications, Milton Keynes Council (chair, in view of lead role in reducing violence)
- (b) Director of Racial Equality Council

- (c) Chair of Anti-Racial Harassment Group
- (d) Police Superintendent
- (e) Strategic Director, Learning and Development (in view of education and community concerns)

The group shall be assisted by the two partnership co-ordinators.

3.3 One of the first tasks of the Strategy Group will be to determine methods of preventing major incidents by engaging people from within the various localities in Milton Keynes. Any preventative plan will have at least two components:

- (a) preventing incidents from arising by gathering intelligence and by bringing communities together; and
- (b) a longer term educational strategy promoting cultural change and valuing racial diversity.

3.4 Each strand of the strategy requires commitment by individual professionals and residents from within the various localities. This certainly applies to areas with a relatively high concentration of minority ethnic population (Central Bletchley, Wolverton and Central Milton Keynes). However it is also important to secure this commitment in all areas of the borough, including rural communities, in order to ensure equality in the strategy delivery.

4. **Racial Violence and Harassment**

4.1 Most of the reports of racial violence and harassment involve individuals or families who require targeted assistance. Reports of these incidents have doubled during the last year, and in 1999 the Anti-Racial Harassment Group (ARHG) considered 188 referrals. It is probable that referrals will continue to increase as the crime reduction strategy begins to take effect.

4.2 The ARHG has proved to be a useful means of concentrating inter-agency attention on the needs of victims of racial abuse. Its effectiveness has been impaired recently by a number of factors:

- (a) a dramatic increase in referrals (see above);
- (b) a reduction in the number of agencies contributing directly to the casework group;
- (c) a shortage of casework resources. The ARHG consists entirely of representatives from other agencies, and much of the work on cases is carried out by the Police and Victim Support; and

- (d) a shortage of clerical resources. Meetings have been serviced by the Racial Equality Council, and the increase of business in the ARHG has rendered it difficult to maintain the level of support required.
- 4.3 The above factors have reduced the ability of the ARHG to analyse incident information and draw strategic conclusions.
- 4.4 The crime reduction strategy has recognised the central role of the ARHG in dealing with racial violence and harassment. Unless its work is supported by all agencies, however, it is likely to collapse under increased weight of business. It is suggested that strategy group should review the role of the ARHG as a priority, in order to ensure that this work receives all necessary support.

5. **Recommendations**

5.1 It is recommended that:

- (a) The overall direction of strategy for prevention and eradication of racial violence and harassment shall be entrusted to the Crime and Community Safety Partnership.
- (b) A protocol for reporting and dealing with major incidents should be adopted as suggested in Section 2 of this report.
- (c) A Strategy Group should be formed as suggested in Section 3 of the report.
- (d) The Strategy Group should develop and implement a plan of action aimed at preventing major incidents and promoting racial tolerance and harmony throughout Milton Keynes. This plan will recognise the central role of the community as well as professionals in each locality.
- (e) The Anti-Racial Harassment Group should be confirmed and supported as the principal body for dealing with reports of racial violence and harassment, and for collating information obtained from these activities.
- (f) The Strategy Group should invite the Anti-Social Harassment Group to make recommendations as to how the above strategy may be implemented.

Author: Richard Solly