

## **BUSINESS CRIME CONSULTATION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report identifies the issues of business crime throughout the district following consultation with the Chambers of Trade and Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, in response to a consultation being carried out by the Home Office.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Home Office invited comments on business crime and how government should manage their interaction with business and include businesses in their plans such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies.
- 2.2 Rochford District Council invited business representatives in the district to comment on the Home Office proposals at a regular Chamber of Trade and Commerce liaison meeting in January 2003
- 2.3 A response was required to the consultation by the 28<sup>th</sup> February, but the Chambers were offered the opportunity to comment on the draft response. Their comments have now been received and have been sent to the Home Office, as attached in appendix 1. Additional Member comments will be forwarded to the Home Office following the meeting.

### **3 BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES COMMENTS**

- 3.1 The comments made by the business representatives are included in appendix 1.

### **4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The comments made by the business community will be taken forward to the Rochford Crime and Disorder Partnership, where members of the business community are represented.

### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Rochford District Council staff are already in discussions with the business community to include business crime reduction initiatives in the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy

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- 5.2 Initiatives such as the business watch scheme may have resource implications to be considered as part of the Crime and Disorder Reserve, or Home Office funding for Community safety initiatives.

**6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the comments made by the business community to the Home Office consultation on business crime as identified in appendix 1 be endorsed.
  - (2) That a copy of the comments be forwarded to the Rayleigh Police Division Community Safety Inspector. (CE)

Paul Warren  
Chief Executive

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**Background Papers:**

The Home Office consultation can be found in the Members lounge.

For further information please contact Helen Drye on:-

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**Appendix 1**

**Business Crime Consultation**

The comments enclosed in this response are based on the comments from the following agencies in Rochford district.

- **South Essex Chamber of Commerce**
- **Federation of Small Businesses**
- **Rochford Chamber of Trade**
- **Rayleigh Chamber of Trade**
- **Hockley Chamber of Trade**

**Q. What are the main areas of work the partnerships should concentrate on**

Theft featured highly in the concerns of businesses in the Rochford District, this included:

- Theft from buildings
- Theft from vehicles
- Theft of vehicles
- Theft of fuel from vehicles
- Vandalism to property and vehicles

The group were concerned about the lack of police response to reports of burglary in their premises, where only victim numbers were given and little follow up undertaken. Concerns were raised at the redirection of calls to the police to call centres, which led to a reduction in confidence of businesses in the police and their ability to respond.

Business representatives reported that less than 40% of crimes affecting business are reported, due to two reasons – the lack of police response and impact on business insurance rates.

There were concerns that fires and arson were already on the increase which may be made worse should we experience a recession.

The lack of adequate lighting in some industrial areas and lack of police patrols in both industrial and commercial areas was considered an issue for partnerships to focus on.

Lighting was felt to be more effective in deterring crime than CCTV, however this needs to be balanced with the problems of light pollution, and members still felt that CCTV had a role in making businesses and their customers feel safe.

‘Environmental crime’ was of concern to businesses – this included

- Fly tipping
- Provision of civic amenity sites
- Abandoned cars – on both public and private land
- Travellers – and their frustration at they appeared to be ‘beyond the law’

**Q. What structures are needed to facilitate the best results**

The group felt that locally structures were already in place and that they simply needed to work better in dealing with the needs of business.

Business representatives commented that it would be useful to have a police officer dedicated to liaising with business on business related crime. That person should then take the lead in co-ordinating crime issues across industrial and commercial areas. The business representatives also felt that the police should acknowledge the different types of crime in commercial and industrial areas.

**Q. Who should be the key stakeholders**

The group felt that the list provided in the consultation document was extensive, with the potential danger that it might be too long.

**Q. Partnership Resourcing**

Whilst the group were aware of the different funding streams, nationally and locally for community safety initiatives, it was felt that if there was no funding or resources for specific business initiatives then the structures were irrelevant. Concerns were expressed that the diverse funding streams for initiatives was reducing the potential for impact and value for money in the community by requiring partnerships to develop additional plans and strategies, and deal with administration, rather than delivering initiatives or direct funding support for effective policing. NB since this consultation took place the Home Office has issued a further consultation regarding a ‘single pot’ of funding for community safety. These comments should be considered as part of that consultation by the Home Office.

Whilst businesses in the main do not want to pay more for their crime and disorder issues – feeling that they already make a significant contribution through the NNDR, some did feel that they would be prepared to pay for a visible police presence.

Whilst the representatives of the business community were complimentary about the role of RDC staff in developing the crime and disorder reduction strategy for the area, they felt further work was required to recognise the

issues of the business community, and promote the reality of crime issues in the area (which are low compared with other areas).