



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

REQUEST NUMBER: F-2011-00577

REQUEST DETAILS:

“Is there any information available as a freedom of information request that would cover how the police handled the fears of the public in Ipswich and the prostitutes themselves at the time?”

RESPONSE:

Suffolk Constabulary has considered your request for information and our response is below.

During and after the investigation into the murders of 5 prostitutes in Ipswich, Suffolk Constabulary issued extensive media coverage and supported local campaigns such as Nightsafe, to help with the impact of the murders in Ipswich and raise awareness of issues, including community safety reassurance work and a Prostitution Strategy.

In addition, Suffolk Constabulary devised a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) prior to the trial of Steven Wright, which looked at the concerns of people entering Ipswich, the heightened media coverage of events, the heightened Police presence on the streets and concerns of future impact. The CIA was intended to judge how communities felt, what this meant and what might happen.

Within the appendices of the minutes of a committee meeting of the Police Authority, is an annual report of the Suffolk Independent Advisory Group 2007/2008, which is available via the link below.

http://suffolk.testurl.co.uk/publicdocuments/committee_meetings/pdfs/meeting_268/Independent%20Advisory%20Group%20-%20Annual%20Report%202007%202008%20-%20Appendix%20A.pdf

Within this report the Chair of the Police Authority advised the following in relation to a Community Impact Assessment and arrangements to work more closely with the Prostitutes and Community, as follows:

‘The Group received a presentation in relation to Operation SUMAC, and the impact upon the Constabulary, prior to the Trial commencing on 14 January at Ipswich Crown Court. An overview of the arrangements for the media and public was included.

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Members were advised of the work that had been ongoing since March 2007 with partners to develop a Prostitution Strategy aimed at removing street prostitution from Ipswich.

Members were thanked for their involvement in the Community Impact Assessment and were advised that, depending on how the trial developed they may have been used as a sounding board and used for a further Community Impact Assessment'.

Exerts from the Community Impact Assessment, which are suitable for disclosure, are provided below:

- ***Concerns that following charging of suspect Wright there had been an increase in number of sex workers returning to area***

Regular covert and overt (high visibility) patrols of the affected area have deterred a significant number of kerb crawlers, reduced the number of sex workers engaged in street prostitution and provided reassurance to the local community.

Regular intelligence updates are prepared by local NHW members and forwarded to police for processing within the National Intelligence Model (NIM). These reports are also discussed at residents meetings.

Intensive, ongoing multi agency work is proving successful in supporting those sex workers who wish to exit their current chaotic lifestyles. Management plans have been developed at monthly "Professionals" meetings.

This area of activity ... has proved particularly successful. Historically, there has been increased activity over the Xmas period due to financial pressures (presents for families etc) on sex workers. Attached police officers to monitor closely and ensure phone hotline properly staffed over this period. Monies have recently been applied for through FHQ (Community Fund) to enable food/travel etc support to be provided to sex workers to prevent a return to former lifestyles.

The wider Ipswich community has been very supportive of work in this area through charitable donations to the housing activities outlined above.

- ***Concerns amongst communities living in or visiting Ipswich, particularly young women, regarding their safety.***

Initial work in Ipswich town centre at the time of the murders resulted in significant numbers of personal attack alarms being sold. These transactions also provided valuable reassurance/advice opportunities.



Community based messages regarding public safety have been regularly communicated to a variety of target audiences. More specifically, local (and other) residents have been updated via a series of residents meetings chaired by senior members of the strategic team. The third of these events, which have been widely publicised with the assistance of NHW and other community groups, will take place on December 5th.

Specific safety messages to those attending Ipswich's nighttime economy ("Friends stick together", "Don't overdo it"; and "Get home safely"), are regularly communicated via local media, particularly around Lock 'em Inn and other campaigns linked to Nightsafe.

Work continues via Police Direct to further communicate these safety messages- all such messages will be forwarded to FHQ Press Office prior to circulation.

- ***Concerns around media carrying out own investigative journalism and potential impact on judicial process.***

Media have been well briefed in this regard around an existing media strategy.

- ***Concerns expressed by partner agencies around sometimes "adversarial" nature of relations between sex workers and police officers/staff.***

Historic "challenges" faced by those meeting demand for enforcement and those providing support and outreach facilities for sex workers have been more easily resolved within the partnership based approach of the CDRP Street Prostitution Strategy which has significantly increased multi agency understanding of this complex area. The PSIG meetings and fortnightly vice tasking meet at Ipswich both provide good opportunities for close monitoring of this topic. Finally, positive working relationships have been further developed within multi agency case conferencing networks.

This situation is subject to local monitoring and review, the outcomes of which are communicated to the centre.

- ***Concerns that police activity in the affected area would displace sex workers to other areas of the county or country.***

There is little evidence to suggest that significant displacement is occurring ... Of those ... who continued to work in the area after the initial investigation commenced, some ... are working less in the area and engaging more with support agencies. Some concerns have been expressed throughout the year by other organisations ... this situation is subject to monitoring by covert/overt patrols.

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Liaison has taken place ... regarding sites ... There is no evidence of activity relating to sex workers linked to the affected area. Most of the activity in these areas appears linked to gay/heterosexual “dogging” and other activity.

- **Concerns that incidents and subsequent investigation may impact negatively on: (1) Business community confidence; (2) Tourism and (3) “take up” rates for developing education opportunities e.g. University College Suffolk (UCS) and Suffolk New College**

(1) No evidence of negative impact. Significant external investment in Ipswich. Recent media reports of “top ten” Ipswich employers having annual turnover in excess of £1billion.

(2) Linked to (1) above. No evidence of significant impact although potential for public interest in trial could attract “undesirable” tourists. Extensive hotel development on Waterfront/Mint Quarter will add to accommodation for commercial sector.

(3) No evidence of above. Ongoing crime reduction work at Ipswich around Freshers Week and with Student Union has provided good opportunities for reassurance etc.

Other recommendations of the original CIA have been responded to as follows:

- **Maximise use of wider police family in response-** a variety of groups are actively involved in street and other activity.
- **Engage Watch and other Community Groups-** as above. More work to do with BME communities and Independent Advisory Group (IAG).
- **Develop specific IAG to represent views of sex workers-** It is hoped ... will progress “role model” work and link with education strand of strategy, particularly that related to vulnerable young people.
- **Understand why victims selected-** some insight may come out of investigation and trial.
- **Develop “good news” stories to reassure etc-** Ipswich/FHQ have provided extensive material to local press and growth of SNTs has assisted in this respect.

In addition to the Community Impact assessment, summarised above, the Constabulary also made numerous media releases and appeals during the course of the Investigations, which are summarised below for reference.

- Just prior to the murders, the force was running its Staysafe campaign which was aimed at all women in the run-up to the darker nights and the festive season. The campaign messages offered advice on staying

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together while out, telling someone where you were going and ensuring transport home was arranged prior to going out. The murders then began to take place and the advice was slightly modified to include prostitutes, but with similar advice.

- The murders then became more regular and the force advised prostitutes to leave the streets for their own safety.
- The female assistant chief constable, at the time, stood up during a live news conference and urged prostitutes to contact her on her personal mobile if they felt they were vulnerable, had any fears or had information in connection with the murders.
- Suffolk Police continued to work with its partner agencies, including the ICENI Project, in a bid to convey its safety message further afield.
- High-visibility patrols in the town centre were stepped up throughout the murder period to offer reassurance to the general public as well as to the remaining prostitutes.
- The mobile police station (POD) was located in the town centre to offer reassurance, face-to-face contact with concerned members of the public and offered free rape alarms to women and prostitutes.