



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

FOI Reference number: FOI 19/2014

Date: 4 June 2014

Request:

Could you provide me with the following information?

All documents relating to Racist attacks in Belfast within the last 5 months – i.e. letters / minutes of meetings / emails etc.

Answer:

In response to your request - please find the following documents attached:

Questions to Chief Constable

- Annex 1 Online hate crime – response from the Chief Constable to question asked by Board Member.
- Annex 2.1 Partnership Committee - Hate Crime Questions for the Chief Constable (We expect answers in respect of these questions to be available on Friday 6 June 2014).
- Annex 2.2 Extract from **Draft** Partnership Committee Meeting Minutes from 8 May 2014 – (We expect updates in respect of the 'agreed actions' to be available for the next Partnership Committee meeting on the 12 June 2014)

Emails /Letters:

(Where redactions have been made this is to protect personal information under section 40 (2) of FOI.

- Annex 3 Race crime / Anna Lo
- Annex 4 Letter from ACC Urban Region to Board's Director of Partnership dated 18 April 2014.

Transcript:

(Where redactions have been made this is to protect personal information under section 40 (2) of FOI).

- Annex 5 Transcript of handwritten note re meeting at Belfast City Hall on 6 May 2014 to discuss hate crime.

If you have queries about this request or the decision, please contact the Board quoting the reference number above. If you are unhappy with the service you have received and wish to make a complaint or request a review you should write to the Board's Chief Executive at the following address:

Northern Ireland Policing Board
Waterside Tower
31 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG

Email: foi@nipolicingboard.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner. Generally, the Information Commissioner's Office cannot investigate or make a decision on a case unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Board.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:-

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
12 Cromac Place
Gasworks
Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JB.

Telephone: - 0303 1231114
Email: - ni@ico.org.uk

Please be advised that all Policing Board replies under Freedom of Information will be released into the public domain via our website @ www.nipolicingboard.org.uk.

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
3rd APRIL 2014

QUESTION 4 – On-Line Hate Crime (Chris Lyttle)

To ask the Chief Constable to:

- I. *assess the extent and nature of online hate crime and racial and sectarian abuse in Northern Ireland*
- II. *explain the current PSNI approach to detecting and pursuing conviction of online hate crime, and;*
- III. *detail the number of prosecutions and convictions for online hate crime in Northern Ireland in the last three years.*

RESPONSE

I. There is no singular offence that deals with crimes committed via Social Media, so unfortunately the PSNI is unable to provide the information requested. Whilst there may be specific instances where an offence under the Telecommunications Act has been committed, other offences are also often committed such as harassment and assault to name but two.

In addition, to extrapolate information for those offences committed contrary to the telecommunications act it would require a physical check of each record held to establish if it did in fact relate to the use of social media.

II. The PSNI will investigate all incidents of online abuse that are reported. However' given the enormity of the task involved in any attempt to police this medium, we are unable to continually monitor websites to detect online hate crimes. As such we rely on the community to make us aware of any such incidents when they occur.

In recognition of the complexity of Social Media-based criminality, the former Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for England and Wales, Keir Starmer,

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
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QC has issued interim guidance via the CPS. This guidance forms part of an ongoing consultation process on the future approach to tackling Social Media-based criminality. The DPP is recognised as a leading authority in Human Rights Law and was previously a Human Rights Advisor to the Policing Board. Within Northern Ireland the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) has not yet adopted formal guidance of their own, however they are content for the PSNI to work to that issued by the DPP.

III. At this moment in time, PSNI are unable to definitively confirm the number of successful prosecutions relating to On-Line Hate Crime. Incidents / Crimes involving Social Media are relatively new. The current records management system used by the PSNI (NICHE) was updated in September 2013 to record the new classification of "Cyber-Crime" i.e. instances of offences carried out over computer networks. As previously stated the offences committed in the process of an On-line Hate Crime could be so varied (e.g. Harassment, Malicious Communications, Sexual Offences, Public Order etc) that more time would be required for an analysis of all these offences to determine if they constituted an "On-line Hate Crime".

Once sufficient evidence is gathered, we will continue to work closely with the Public Prosecution Service and refer individual cases as and when all investigative strands are complete.

Additionally, discussions are proactively taking place internally around identifying steps to enable us to easily identify social media offences so to allow for details to be more easily captured and prosecutions instigated.

In respect of prosecution/conviction data, the PSNI does not record such information, however we will ask the questions of NICTS and hopefully provide a future update once this information can be gleaned.

PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS FOR THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Hate Crime

- The Partnership Committee received a briefing at its meeting on 8 May on the actions taken by PSNI in response to recent incidents of hate crime in Belfast. The Committee welcome the steps taken by PSNI around robust enforcement and the efforts to engage others in collectively addressing this in Belfast in recent weeks. Can the Chief Constable update the Board on action taken to arrest and charge those behind hate crime attacks and how those who promote messages of hatred through online media are dealt with?

- What in the Chief Constable's view can be done to support victims of hate crime? What are the barriers for communities in reporting hate incidents and crimes and what is PSNI doing to address these?

- Following the introduction of the Hate and Signal Crime Officers in PSNI in 2013, can the Chief Constable update the Board on PSNI's strategy for tackling hate crime which sets out their role and which outlines the targets they are set to ensure consistency in service delivery for victims of all hate crime and in particular victims of homophobic/transphobic hate crime?

- Since the start of the year how many race / hate crimes have been recorded by the PSNI in East & South Belfast - how many arrests have been made in relation to those crimes & how many convictions have there been?

- What additional resource has the PSNI put into East and South Belfast to give reassurance to families living in fear?

5.2 Race Hate Crime

Assistant Chief Constable, Urban Region briefed the Committee on a meeting which had been held in Belfast on 6 May 2014 with Belfast City councillors and community representatives regarding a recent spate of racist hate crime incidents in Belfast. He outlined the actions being taken by PSNI in response to the crime.

During discussion the following issues were discussed:-

- The 'Unite Against Hate Crime' campaign.
- Holding a round table meeting with ethnic minority communities to discuss incidents of hate crime.
- Tangible measures which could be put in place to give support to victims of hate crime.
- Work which would be ongoing between PSNI and Belfast City Council regarding incidents of hate crime.

During discussion Members:-

AGREED:

- That a letter should be sent to OFMDFM regarding the Good Relations Strategy.
- That Officials should provide the Committee with a copy of indicators and measurements to tackle hate crime which had been produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in England and Wales.
- A round table meeting should be set up with the Ethnic Minority Communities and key stakeholders to discuss incidents of hate crime.

The Chairperson thanked ACC Urban Region for attending the meeting and he left.

From: Caitriona Ruane [redacted]
Sent: 03 April 2014 17:29
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: FW: Racist Hate Crime on 8th March

Thanks sam why is it an informal complaint

On 3 Apr 2014 16:10, [redacted] wrote:
Caitriona

The correspondence from [redacted] is essential an informal complaint of failure of duty by PSNI officers at the City Council event. I will ask that it is referred to the Ombudsman by Peter Gilleece. I will also copy to ACC Mark Hamilton for information.

SAM POLLOCK
Chief Executive

6 [handwritten signature] x

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]
Sent: 25 March 2014 13:47
To: Information
Subject: Racist Hate Crime on 8th March

Dear Policing Board,

I was present at a City Council sponsored event outside Belfast City Hall to mark International Women's Day on the 8th March. I was deeply shocked by the racist abuse delivered to Anna Lo MLA by people sporting union jacks who were conducting an illegal protest at the same time and place. I witnessed Ms Lo being called a "Chinese bastard" and other abusive terms by these protestors. My understanding is that this constitutes a Hate Crime.

I drew the attention of 2 PSNI officers to the abuse and threatening behaviour and they refused to take any action saying they "would only make things worse" - worse for whom I ask myself. Ms Lo was given no protection to leave the platform despite items being thrown at her.

I wish to make a formal complaint to the Policing Board and would be grateful for your advice on how best to proceed with this action

Your sincerely

[redacted signature]

Suggest [redacted] prepare
correspondence passing to Ombudsman
as formal complaint.

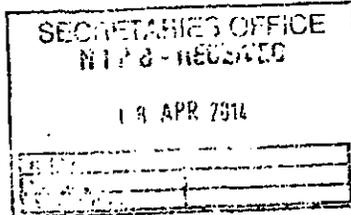
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**WILL KERR BA (Hons) MSc LLM
ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE, URBAN REGION**

18 April 2014

Amanda Stewart
NIPB Waterside Tower
Clarendon Dock
31 Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 3BG



Dear Amanda Stewart

The issue of hate crime, and in particular racist hate crime, has been of growing concern to the PSNI over the past year, with a significant rise in crime and incidents across Northern Ireland. The majority of these rises, worryingly, have been in Belfast and the nature of many of these attacks have shown an ingrained intolerance of people from different lifestyles and cultural backgrounds.

Belfast is a city growing in local confidence and international reputation and exposure. However, it's important that it feels like a welcoming city to the growing numbers of individuals and families who come to live or work here from different countries and who add so much value to the local economy and cultural life. To that end, I am extending an invitation to a variety of people, from voluntary, statutory, civic and church life across the city to attend a meeting in Belfast City Hall on Tuesday, 6 May 2014 at 4.00 pm, to discuss what steps could be taken to both reassure and protect workers and families who chose to come to Belfast to live and work. I have spoken to both the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor and both will join us at the meeting to discuss this issue of significant concern to both of them.

I hope you will be able to join me and look forward to discussing how we could address this issue in a constructive and supportive way.

Yours sincerely

WILL KERR
Assistant Chief Constable

RSVP to:-

[Redacted contact information]

Assistant Chief Constable Will Kerr
PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT5 6LE



The following is the transcript of hand written notes taken by Director of Partnership. (Typed for clarification).

Notes of Meeting with PSNI, Belfast City Council Hate Crime on 6 May 14

[REDACTED]

Belfast as a welcoming city; across world; how it is viewed.

[REDACTED]

Belfast has a problem with racism. Figures go up and down; massive under-reporting; don't tell true story. True nature of attacks insidious; affecting all of city. Lots of motivations involving various people across city. City wide solution; don't tar communities with the same brush.

It is a minority; need to remember that. Responsibility to have a measured voice. Challenge for policing – focus on traditional problems over last few years. Legitimate challenge to policing – more arrests; more robust response/enforcement special unit set up in last couple of weeks.

Objectives

1. Messaging – collective voice framing it in a more positive way. Valuing people from various communities.
Economy and Social capital investment and criminality and thuggish behaviour.
2. Co-ordination – co-ordinate platform to showcase what work is being done; sharing good practice; at community level: need a platform to do this.
 - Messaging/humanise problem
 - Co-ordination – work being done.

[REDACTED] **Diversity and good relations and community safety.**

Good examples; need to learn from these; grant programme to communities; good practice.

How to take a more pro-active joined-up approach.

Councils new power of community planning.

What can be done in shorter; medium term as well.

Election period; Castlereagh and Lisburn.
Cross party support within council.

Need to change the narrative around this; need a welcoming city for new communities moving into the city.

- Council
- Good relations partnership Chair – [REDACTED] reviewing to ensure fit for purpose.
 - Campaigns 'Don't Turn Your Back on Hate Crime through Social Media'
 - Support Hate Crime Advocates – multi-agency
 - CSPs awareness raising training.

Community Advocates [REDACTED]

How do we help to signpost people who don't know how to engage with the system to gain support?

[REDACTED] >

Local knowledge; follow on process; how to get local community support in the aftermath of attacks?

Street by street – providing reassurance; working closely with ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities' forum booklet with contacts; who to go to for help.

Media reporting – not always helpful; not all loyalists; small minority; should be labelled for what they are – racists.

[REDACTED]

Creating cohesive communities
Supporting community cohesion advisory group.
Networking forum meeting monthly

Three strategies:

Early intervention and engagement
Emergency response
Housing

Early Intervention

Training programme for active citizens in lower Ormeau; Botanic.
Active citizen programme – work to sign-post; support; good neighbours.
Tension monitoring

[REDACTED] > not pro-active; reactive. Horror stories; lived here all my life not welcoming.

[REDACTED] > need for co-ordination

Advocacy Scheme developed across city. Only two workers regionally. DOJ to fund.

Tension Monitoring Group – Hate crime begins with fear; need to engage and build connections at a community level.

Unite Against Hate

[REDACTED] Need to think about short term response. Immediacy of needs in terms of support.

Reflect on what those needs are?

Policing pro-active.

Changing attitudes; resourced medium/long term

Unite Against Hate

Civic Responsibility

Challenge agencies responsibility – DOJ; Equality Commission, OFMDFM

People from community required to do more.

Funding more long term; 5-7 years allows long term response
acknowledge that it's a social policy issue requiring support/resourcing.

[REDACTED]
Concerns since last year; racist attacks on polish communities.

Need solutions from today; why sudden upsurge on attacks worst time; similar in 2009 Unite Against Hate originated from that.

International messaging not good negative image created from attacks.
No one agency can solve this on their own.

[REDACTED]
Communication/campaigns need to reinforce that hate crime is everyone's business.
Resourcing; sign-posting.

[REDACTED]
Need Police to answer questions investigation
Support for victims
Re-assure to wider community
Contact with Polish community – showing support

Role of media

[REDACTED]
Challenge for policing; re-calibrate policing onto this issue away from traditional 'Belfast' problems.

'Operation Reiner' – started 5th May/ around robust enforcement

Re-assurance and protective blanket around victims and wider community.

What else can be done to support victims; need to have that dialogue?

- Enforcement
- Supporting victims
- Re-assurance – greater visibility; community engagement and support for victims.

[REDACTED]
What is happening in Protestant working class communities is scandalous. Police, Board and other agencies – issue hasn't received prominence.

Board on Thursday

- Work with PSNI on under-reporting, evidence gathering, support for victims
- *Unite Against hate re-energised.*
- Ethnic minority ref group re-energised.
- PCSPs across city – joined up co-ordinated approach involving stat; community, civic leaders.
- Is Hate Crime a strategic objective for PCSPs – resourcing, supporting victims?

Maybe need to look at this for PCSPs; need to bring community focus to that.

[REDACTED]
Challenges a few years ago around Travellers. Need to be more pro-active; council good at pulling people together. Messaging and facts around value added.

[REDACTED]
Not representative of wider community.

[REDACTED]
Crucial that politicians across Belfast unite against this. Practical solutions – Unite Against Hate. Mayor/Deputy Mayor to take forward? Is there an agreed, co-ordinated, immediate response in all parts of the city?

[REDACTED]

NI wide approach need re: Unite Against Hate. Advocates work reviewed, also some PR around that. Funding for advocates on a more long term basis: Housing, Victim Support, Police.

Willing to be part of any future initiatives.

[REDACTED]

Needs a collective effort. Need to lay blame where it is – small groups, criminal - Unrepresentative of wide community. It can't wait until someone is killed before we make united, collective condemnation. Strong political leadership.

- [REDACTED]
- People feel vulnerable.
 - Want to see response from police and civic leadership.
 - Want support in aftermath
 - Need short, med, long term action.
 - Elected political will have to Unite Against Hate.

Councils aligning in Community Planning.

- [REDACTED]
- Improving access to support/advice.
 - Support for victims.
 - Engaging active citizens in prevention.
 - Co-ordinating response.
 - Sustainable funding streams beyond 3 years to support initiatives.

- [REDACTED]
- Strong statement of intent to collectively address this across city –
 - Messaging, value people bring to Belfast economy, social life, disadvantaged need to re-frame discussion.
 - Long term support for long term resolution.

Actions:

- Process to increase reporting.
- Signposting support
- Consistency of support
- Good Relations Partnership with Board and PCSPs – plan to address this,
- Unite Against Hate equivalency.



- Rally at city Hall led by Churches.
- Greatest confidence we give communities is to charge, arrest and convict people.