

HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

MEETING	Hertfordshire Police Authority/ Scrutiny Committee
DATE	30 th March 2011
TITLE	Report on the review of the effects on reduced street lighting
SUBMITTED By	Assistant Chief Constable Alison Roome-Gifford

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to explain the outcome of a review conducted in relation to the reduced street lighting in certain areas of the County and whether there is any evidence to suggest that this has had an impact on criminality.

2. BACKGROUND

Concern has been expressed that the county strategy to reduce street lighting between midnight and 6am (the relevant time) may affect public safety and increase crime. This analysis has been conducted to determine whether there is any evidence to suggest that there has been a rise in crime in the areas where the street lighting has been reduced. The reduced street lighting programme is not widespread, so this analysis has focused on those CSPs that have been affected up until February 2012, which includes the following CSP:

- Broxbourne
- Watford,
- Three Rivers
- Welwyn/Hatfield – confined to Welham Green

Included in the data are those crimes that had a start and end time within the midnight to 6am as they definitely took place within the reduced street lighting time frame.

Crimes that had a start and end time outside of these times so definitely did not take place during the relevant time have been excluded from the data.

Those crimes where the timescale overlapped the relevant time (including those which may have taken place at any time over a number of days, such as a weekend) have been included in the “possibly between midnight and 6am” category.

For assaults, the time of the offence is generally very accurate, and so we can be sure which crimes took place within the relevant time. However, for burglaries and thefts, the timescales are often less precise, and so the vast majority of these will have fallen within the “possible” category.

For the purposes of comparison, we have compared the same locations with the same months for 2011/12 and 2010/11, so as to account for seasonality. It has not been practicable to include/exclude specific streets from the analysis, and so some offences which have been included in the analysis may relate to streets that have not been subject of the reduced street lighting.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Impact on Broxbourne CSP

De-illumination works took place between July and August 2011 across the whole CSP. Therefore, we have compared the September-February period.

Broxbourne: All Recorded Crime		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	49	65	46	49	55	47	311
	2011/12	34	38	33	43	49	38	235
	Change	-15	-27	-13	-6	-6	-9	-76
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	140	157	194	177	152	158	978
	2011/12	113	155	152	137	117	84	758
	Change	-27	-2	-42	-40	-35	-74	-220

The top table above, shows that crimes that definitely took place between midnight and 6am have decreased by 76 (24%) across this period. The lower table shows that crimes which may have occurred between midnight and 6am have also decreased, by 22 crimes or 22%.

Looking at crime types, assaults have reduced by 30 crimes, from 81 to 51 across the whole period, with most months having seen a decrease. Robberies have fallen from 12 to 1.

Burglaries definitely committed between midnight and 6am have fallen from 52 to 21; those possibly committed during these times have fallen from 307 to 141.

Thefts definitely committed between midnight and 6am have increased from 36 to 38; those possibly committed during these times have decreased from 395 to 388. However, within the theft category, there has been an increase in Theft from Vehicle.

The monthly breakdown of Theft from Vehicle is as follows:

Broxbourne: Theft From Vehicle		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	2	2		3	1	1	9
	2011/12	1	3	1	4	2	1	12
	Change	-1	1	1	1	1	0	3
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	30	14	29	33	24	33	163
	2011/12	27	58	53	33	33	24	228
	Change	-3	44	24	0	9	-9	65

Although the increase in thefts from vehicle definitely committed during the relevant time is small, it is likely that much of the increase relating to those possibly committed during this period also occurred during this time¹. The CSP did encounter a rise in a particular type of theft from vehicle during October/November, which, on the face of it, is unlikely to have been motivated by the reduced street lighting, although this cannot be ruled out. It should be noted that this type of crime has subsided since November, so even if motivated by the lack of street lighting, it has not continued. Levels during December to February are within (even slightly lower than) the monthly range of thefts from vehicle we have seen in previous years.

3.2 Impact on Watford CSP

The reduced street lighting programme was completed during November 2011 across the whole CSP. Therefore, we have compared the December-February period. The top two tables show crimes that were recorded in the whole of Watford CSP. The lower two tables exclude crimes that took place within C1A Town Centre beat.²

¹ Statistically, more vehicle crime takes place during the hours of darkness.

² We know that the street lighting in Watford town centre has not been reduced.

Watford: All Recorded Crime		Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	128	126	133	387
	2011/12	105	97	92	294
	Change	-23	-29	-41	-93
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	123	157	134	414
	2011/12	136	104	75	315
	Change	13	-53	-59	-99
Watford exc Town Centre: All Recorded Crime		Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	33	21	33	87
	2011/12	33	25	32	90
	Change	0	4	-1	3
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	84	112	102	298
	2011/12	100	86	55	241
	16 Change	16	-26	-47	-57

The tables show that crimes that definitely took place between midnight and 6am have decreased by 93 (24%) across this period and that crimes outside of the town centre have increased by 3 (3%). The tables also show that crimes which may have occurred between midnight and 6am have also decreased, by 99 (24%) and that crimes which may have occurred during those times outside of the town centre have reduced by 57 (19%).

Looking at crime types, assaults between midnight and 6am within the town centre have reduced by one, from 50 to 49. Assaults outside of the town centre have increased from 17 to 32. However, a review of the 32 assaults that took place outside of the town centre revealed that the vast majority took place within buildings/ dwellings, with only four taking place on the street. Of these four, two were on main roads which were likely to be illuminated; one involved the throwing of an egg at a pedestrian and the other was a stranger assault of a person outside her own property.

Burglaries definitely committed between midnight and 6am outside of the town centre have increased from 5 to 11; those possibly committed during these times have fallen from 79 to 53.

Thefts definitely committed between midnight and 6am outside of the town centre have increased from 8 to 18; those possibly committed during these times have decreased from 128 to 95. A review of the 18 thefts revealed only three that occurred in outdoor locations that may have been de-illuminated. However, there was no indication that this would have facilitated/encouraged the commission of those crimes, as the crimes appear to have taken place in business locations in the

early hours, when it is likely that even if there had been street illumination, there would not have been any witnesses. There has been a decrease in Thefts From Vehicles during this period from 68 to 47 (30%).

Impact on Hertsmere CSP

3.3 Impact on Hertsmere CSP

The reduced street lighting programme was completed during November 2011 across the whole CSP. Therefore, we have compared the December-February period. The below tables show crimes that were recorded in the whole of Hertsmere CSP.

Hertsmere: All Recorded Crime		Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	32	57	36	125
	2011/12	53	43	31	127
	Change	21	-14	-5	2
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	117	134	166	417
	2011/12	133	116	92	341
	Change	16	-18	-74	-76

The tables above show that crimes that definitely took place between midnight and 6am have increased by 2 (2%) across this period and which may have occurred between midnight and 6am have decreased, by 76 (18%).

Looking at crime types, assaults between midnight and 6am have increased by 10 from 20 to 30. However, a review of these assaults revealed that the vast majority took place within buildings/ dwellings, three taking place on the street, of which one was on a main street that was likely to be illuminated. Of the two other street offences involving strangers, one took place in Borehamwood and one in Bushey and both involved offenders under the influence of alcohol.

Burglaries definitely committed between midnight and 6am decreased from 15 to 13; those possibly committed during these times have fallen from 100 to 78.

Thefts definitely committed between midnight and 6am decreased from 24 to 14; those possibly committed during these times have decreased from 177 to 167. There has been a small decrease in Thefts From Vehicles from 94 to 92.

3.4 Impact on Three Rivers CSP

The reduced street lighting programme was completed during December 2011, therefore, we have compared the January-February period. The below tables show crimes that were recorded in the whole of Three Rivers CSP.

Three Rivers: All Recorded Crime		Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	20	27	47
	2011/12	27	7	34
	Change	7	-20	-13
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	86	125	211
	2011/12	90	60	150
	Change	4	-65	-61

The tables above show that crimes that definitely took place between midnight and 6am have decreased by 13 (28%) across this period, and those which may have occurred between midnight and 6am have decreased, by 61 (29%).

Looking at crime types, assaults between midnight and 6am have decreased from 7 to 6.

Burglaries definitely committed between midnight and 6am decreased from 12 to 3; those possibly committed during these times have fallen from 60 to 36.

Thefts (all types) which definitely committed between midnight and 6am increased from 2 to 5; those possibly committed during these times have decreased from 81 to 66. A review of the five “definite” crimes revealed that four were in street/driveway locations which may have been de-illuminated. Within the theft category, of those which possibly were committed between midnight and 6am, there has been a small increase in Thefts From Vehicles from 42 to 45.

3.5 Impact on Welwyn Hatfield CSP: Welham Green

The reduced street lighting programme was completed in Welham Green during July 2011, therefore, we have compared the August-February period. The below tables show crimes that were recorded in the beat of Welham Green (B2H).

Welham Green: All Recorded Crime		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Between midnight and 6am	2010/11	1	1	1	3	2	2	0	10
	2011/12	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	12
	Change	0	0	1	-2	1	0	2	2
Possibly between midnight and 6am	2010/11	8	4	5	17	8	5	7	54
	2011/12	14	7	6	5	2	5	7	46
	Change	6	3	1	-12	-6	0	0	-8

The tables above show that crimes that definitely took place between midnight and 6am have increased by two across this period, and those which may have occurred between midnight and 6am have decreased by eight.

Looking at crime types, assaults between midnight and 6am have increased from none to four. A review of these four crimes indicates that one was a minor assault committed in the street by a stranger following a conversation.

Burglaries definitely committed between midnight and 6am decreased from 3 to 2; those possibly committed during these times have fallen from 17 to 7.

Thefts (all types) which definitely committed between midnight and 6am saw no change from 1 to 1; those possibly committed during these times have increased from 22 to 26, owing to an increase in Thefts from Vehicles from 11 to 18. A review of Thefts from Vehicles in Welham Green shows that there was a “spike” of eleven offences in August 2011, but subsequently there have been very few thefts from vehicles, with only one in December, one in January and one in February (fewer than the previous year).

4. PROPOSALS

That the conclusion of this review is noted and used to influence any further discussions on this matter.

That should there be a significant rise in crime or a particular crime type, the reduced street lighting strategy is taken into consideration in any analysis to determine the causes.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There is no apparent diversity, human rights or equality implications arising from the proposals set out in this report

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no apparent financial implications arising from the proposal set out in this report

7. RISK ASSESSMENT INCLUDING A SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no apparent risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

8. CONCLUSIONS

There is no discernible evidence that crime has increased by the strategy to reduce street lighting between midnight and 0600hrs. Where there has been an increase of crime during the relevant times in some particular months, this has immediately subsided. The assumption is that if this was motivated by the reduced street lighting then the increases would have continued.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Scrutiny committee note and support the findings of this review.

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