

Notes of the **PUBLIC MEETING** held in the Island Hall, Toplis Room on **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014** at 5.30pm

- Present: Richard Dewe (RD) Chairman; Christine Audrain (CA) Deputy Chairman  
 David Melling (DM); Paul Williams (PW); Andrew Cook (AC)  
 Lucy Belfield (Con) Constable; Glyn Williams (Vin) Vingtenier  
 Brian Garrard (Sec) Committee Secretary
- By invitation: Superintendent Nigel Taylor (NT) Head of Uniform Operations, Guernsey Police  
 Sergeant Joanne Reynolds (JR) First Line Manager on Neighbourhood Policing Team, Gsy Police

Approximately 40 members of the public were present.

**1 Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 Conseiller Richard Dewe took the chair, introducing the Members of the Policing Review Committee, the Constable and Vingtenier and giving apologies for the non-Chief Pleas Member of the Committee, Adrian Guille, who was off-Island and unable to attend. He then introduced the two representatives from the Guernsey Police (see above).
- 1.2 RD went on to explain why this ad-hoc Committee was formed. In recent years it has been increasingly hard to find volunteers to take on the onerous task of Vingtenier and Constable. What happens if nobody is willing to take on the role in the future? In such an event, there has to be a policy in place and the questionnaire and this meeting are part of the contingency process; he thanked all those who had returned the questionnaire and copies of the results are available here and have already been posted on the Government website. You will note that the majority of those responding want to keep the traditional system in some form if possible.
- 1.3 The Committee invited members of the Guernsey Police to attend this evening to listen to the public's views and not to dictate in any way as to how Sark should be policed. They have the experience of Neighbourhood Policing and are better able to answer some of the questions which may arise, than this Committee. The Guernsey Police are able to assist Sark at any level is thought to be appropriate.
- 1.4 The Committee wishes to look at the three main themes that emerge from the survey and the response from those surveyed and attending here this evening.
- 1) **Keep policing as now** – to weigh up the pros & cons – hear comments from the Sark Constables, from the Guernsey Police and take questions from the floor.
  - 2) **Employ a retired Police Officer to be stationed permanently on Sark.**  
 The Island could advertise this position, but the questions arise of housing, pay and under whose responsibility such a position should operate. Specialist Units of the Guernsey Police may still have to be called in if a situation warrants it.
  - 3) **For the Guernsey Police to take overall responsibility for policing in Sark.**
- 1.5 The Committee is looking for a conclusion as to what happens next. If Options 2 or 3 are adopted there will be an additional cost element and that would lead to an increase in taxation. Weighing up the pros & cons of these options would lead to the question as to whether Sark needs that level of policing and whether it would be cost effective to change from the status-quo. It all hinges on the willingness of local people to come forward and be prepared to volunteer as Vingtenier and then Constable – a two year period of commitment of service to their Island.

**2 Questions and Comments from the floor**

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2.1	Question	Asked why the role of Sark Constable had become more complex?
	Answer	Con replied that there was a greater expectation of policing levels by those now coming to the Island. NT confirmed that there was more technology used now and therefore an increased liaison with the Guernsey Police. Increase training was required. (In Guernsey officers were given two years full-time training before being considered qualified to be a competent officer on the beat).

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2.2	Comment	Sark is one of the safest places in the world – a paradise for children. Keep policing as low profile as possible.
2.3	Comment	Over the years, Sark has been well served by its Constables.
2.4	Comment from a former Constable	Stressed the amazing support she received from the Guernsey Police during her two years as Constable. What a wonderful Island we have with so much support from the residents too.
2.5	Question	Picked up on the two years to train a Police Constable; are we not confused by the need to handle criminal activity, not necessarily a prerequisite for Sark.
	Answer	NT responded pointing out that two years was the baseline Constable training programme which produces a competent beat officer. It can take even longer for a Constable to be deployed within a specialised department such as Community Policing.
2.6	Comment from a former Constable	He found it a great experience being Constable for the two years of service. He thought the survey that went out would have benefitted from consultation with former Constables.
2.7	Comment	Had understood from Paul Williams that during his period as Constable (1992/3) his commitment was about 8hrs a week although more on occasions.
2.8	Comment	The Constable once had a much wider role in the community but is now focussing solely on policing.
	Responses	Con accepted that the job had become time consuming because of the paperwork required. RD drew attention to the uncertainty of the role and the longer commitment now required.
2.9	Comment Response	Considered that we were more comparable with Alderney. NT said that a Sergeant and two Constables (deployed) was being reduced to just the two Constables supported by Border Agency officers to recognise the reducing population and changing demographics in Alderney.
2.10	Question	Could we not recruit more Assistant and Special Constables?
	Answer	JR accepted that much of the increased paperwork was due to human rights and the need to accurately record incidents.
2.11	Comment	Sark now has two custody officers.
2.12	Question	Asked if the Guernsey Police was spending more hours on Sark matters?
	Answer	NT confirmed there was now a much stronger relationship but he did not have any statistics. Con confirmed that there was regular advice given on request but during her time infrequent visits.
2.13	Question	With whom does the buck stop? There is a need to formalise and develop the relationship.
	Answer	NT there needs to be appropriate lines of accountability; a non-political line management structure for the Sark Constables needs to be established. In Guernsey the Chief of Police is free of political interference. NT also mentioned the potential problems and delays surrounding the need to obtain the authority of The Seigneur before Guernsey Police could come to Sark.
2.14	Constable Lucy Belfield	Many people were excluded from becoming Constable because of their circumstances, needing to work and unable to combine the two functions.
2.15	Comment	Are we living on the same Island; she could not understand the problem.
2.16	Richard Dewe	Confirmed The Seigneur did not want that clause retained in the Reform Law.
2.17	Comment	Under the Service Level Agreement the request comes from the Constable.
2.18	Andrew Cook Response	Asked if the consultation could move onto the options listed earlier. NT referred to the second option; skills fade for someone who is here and policing full time. The basic tenet of policing is that it must be "policing by consent". Any form of policing cannot be risk averse but the critical function of police management structure is to mitigate, reduce and remove the risk wherever possible.
2.19	Comment	A single person employed full time on the Island wouldn't be effective and provides a bigger risk. Constable/Vingtenier system has many advantages.
2.20	Andrew Cook Response	Clearly Option 2 is a non-starter. NT considered Option 3 which would demand a greater commitment with officers working on a two week rotation during the summer months. Guernsey Police are willing and able to look at any option Sark may request but he was aware that financial costs may have an impact on the ultimate policing model provided. RD said it was a last resort if Sark could not find volunteers.
2.21	Andrew Cook Response	A permutation of the options might be to retain the present system of volunteers but also having a permanent officer who could reduce the responsibilities and liabilities placed on the volunteers. NT warned of the need to retain checks and balances for such an arrangement.
2.22	Comment from a former Constable Response	Special Constables do get special training and will back the Sark Constables. Con remarked that there were presently fewer than 12 who are cuff-trained.
2.23	Comment	The survey shows that 75% of the people want to keep the existing system.
2.24	Andrew Cook Answer	Asked what responsibilities or liabilities fall on Guernsey Policemen. NT stated that the actions of a Guernsey Constable is challenged more and expectations are higher than ever before. In Guernsey support is given by the Police Association of which all police officers are paying members. Who would support in Sark? JR confirmed that Special Constables in Guernsey had the same problems in securing lawful back-up, paid insurance and no commitment on the individual.

2.25	Comment	Suggested the physical facilities on Sark for detention and interviews seemed to be lacking.
2.26	Seneschal Question Response	Confirmed that improvements were in train. <b>What is the perception by the Guernsey Police of how policing on Sark works?</b> NT believed the current custody facilities are a concern. The relationship between the Guernsey Police and Sark Constables will continue to develop providing volunteers can be found. He mentioned the golden hour between incident and the arrival of Guernsey Police during which time the Sark Constable has to contain the situation. He reminded the meeting of the modern day professionalism expected of police officers.
2.27	Question Answer	<b>Is there a restriction on the number of Special Constables?</b> Con – none but committing time to training and turn-outs has meant a fall-off over time. RD stressed the introduction of custody supervision.
2.28	Comment	The Seigneur's role will be resolved with the drafting of a revised Reform Law; Chief Pleas will review. Seemingly, a majority of the Island people want as few changes to the present system as possible.
2.29	Comment Response	Clarified that summoning the Guernsey Police to Sark was not down to a private individual but at the request of the Constable. NT confirmed that Guernsey Police could not come to Sark without the permission of the Sark Constables.
2.30	Paul Williams	There is a pool of Special Constables. Each has been asked whether they would volunteer for service as Vingtenier from October 2014 but without success.
2.31	Comment	Guernsey Police cannot attend an incident on Sark without authorisation. Only HM Procureur or His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor can override that lack of authorisation.
2.32	Christine Audrain	It has been an interesting and useful meeting but the Committee's greatest concern is the lack of volunteers to take over the role of Vingtenier in October 2014. That has not been resolved.
2.33	Question	Have we asked the young people?
2.34	Comment	It is fear of litigation and not lack of community spirit which puts off volunteers but the greatest concern of all is the amount of commitment and the need to balance it with earning a living.
2.35	Question	Should we increase the support facility?
2.36	Fiona Hamon	As Assistant Constable, her only involvement is to issue licences and carry out the supporting administrative work required.
2.37	Comment from a former Constable	The Assistant Constable cannot write up the Constables' paperwork and that is a huge commitment.
2.38	Question Response	<b>Was there any scope for introducing a part-time policeman, combining the role with the needs of the Border Agency and a customs post.</b> NT confirmed that (especially in Alderney) there was an increase in linking the police and border agency roles. There are training implications but the combination is increasing. Customs can come to Sark at any time to pursue investigations under their Bailiwick legislation.
2.39	Question	Is the remoteness of the port from the centre of population a deterrent to combining both together?
2.40	Andrew Cook	Should we seek volunteers in a different way? What happens next?
2.41	Question Answers	<b>Suggested a recruitment drive; approaching individuals. What was the problem with the traditional method of the Vingtenier finding the next person as a replacement?</b> NT expressed some caution about the involvement of Chief Pleas as a political body selecting an individual to fill the Law enforcement positions within Sark. AC there needed to be a better definition of the role and a positive recruitment campaign.
2.42	Question	Can a past Constable come back to serve the community again? If the post is advertised there should be no restriction on past Constables.
2.43	Question Answer	<b>Questioned whether the role could be shared.</b> PW - that's what Assistant Constables are for; they job share.
2.44	Comment	If we want younger people we might need to pay more to cover loss of earnings.
2.45	Comment from a former Constable	She only left work if there was an incident. She did all her paperwork in her own time in the evenings and at weekends.
2.46	Comment	The recent tradition of alternating male and female Constables is not set in stone so either will be suitable for nomination in October 2014.
2.47	Comment	Put the information out into the public arena and advertise.
2.48	Comment	It should be remembered that 28 individuals are excluded because they are Conseillers and ineligible to serve.

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2.49	Comment	Similarly, those who are already on Fire and Rescue Services cannot become Constable which again reduces the numbers available.
2.50	Comment from a former Constable	Thanked the Guernsey Police for their continued assistance.
2.51	Comment	Invited ideas from the public on how to create a system removing the power of Chief Pleas from the appointment of the Constables.

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### **3 Conclusion**

- 3.1 The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and contributing to the debate. In particular, he thanked the officers from the Guernsey Police for their support.
- 3.2 The Committee will now consider all the information and opinions gathered this evening and the results of the survey and see what options it can realistically bring forward for further discussion. Anyone who wishes to make further comment after reflection tonight please do so preferably by Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June before the next meeting of the Committee.

### **11 Next Meeting of the Committee**

**THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2014 in the Assembly Room.**

This meeting closed at 6.53pm

Minutes prepared by Brian Garrard 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014