**DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF FEAR OF CRIME AND PUBLIC
REASSURENCE TASK AND FINSH GROUP**

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   In June 2009, the Regeneration and Community Review Committee set
        up a cross party Task and Finish Group to consider the approach of the
        Safer Sunderland Partnership Board (SSP) in relation to fear of crime
        and public reassurance.

1.2   The Committee appointed Councillor Rosalind Copeland, Councillor
        Peter Maddison and Councillor Richard Vardy to sit on the Group.

1.3   The terms of reference of the Group was to:-

        • Develop an understanding of the drivers of fear of crime in Sunderland;
        • Review evidence of the action being taken by Safer Sunderland
          Partnership (SSP) to reduce fear of crime and increase public
          reassurance;
        • Review evidence of local measures and performance in relation to fear
          of crime and public reassurance by Safer Sunderland Partnership;
        • Report its findings with recommendations to the Regeneration and
          Community Review Committee.

1.4   During the year, we have gathered evidence through a variety of
        means including meetings with Council officers and representatives
        from our partner organisation. We have also undertaken a number of
        visits to view at first hand the work going on in the community.

1.5   As a starting point, the Group examined the current position in
        Sunderland and the key issues that make people feel unsafe. We then
        went on to look at the measures being taken by our SSP partners to
        tackle fear of crime, focusing on a number of themes we felt of
        particular importance:- confidence in the criminal justice system,
        alcohol and young people, the impact of the local environment, public
        transport and marketing.

1.6   We would like to thank everyone who assisted the Group in its work
        and particularly Stuart Douglass, Alan Mitchell, Julie Smith and Kelly
        Henderson from the Council's Safer Communities Team.

2 BACKGROUND TO FEAR OF CRIME AND PUBLIC REASSURANCE – THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL SITUATION

National Position

2.1 Over the last decade, improving community safety has been a major priority for the Government. This has been reflected in the raft of new legislation introduced since 1998 including the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Police Reform Act 2002, Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Police and Justice Act 2006.

2.2 However, while the overall level of crime in the UK has fallen, there has nevertheless been an increase in the fear of crime.

2.3 Surveys show that the UK is the 17th most fearful country – above for example the United States.

Position in Sunderland

2.4 In April 2008 the Safer Sunderland Partnership published a fifteen year strategy 2008-2023. The aim of the Strategy is that everyone in Sunderland will be and feel safe and secure.

2.5 Sunderland is one of the safest cities in the North with a crime rate that has been below the national average since 2005/06. In the last 5 years, Sunderland has seen recorded crime reduce by 37% which is over 14,000 fewer victims. The table below provides more detailed statistics on some of the key crime types:-

Crime type	Percentage reduction 2002/03 to 2007/08	Volume reduction 2002/03 to 2007/08
House burglaries	-66% reduction	1,955 fewer victims
Vehicle crime	-53% reduction	2,995 fewer victims
Violent crime	-24% reduction	1,603 fewer victims
Robbery	-46% reduction	150 fewer victims
Criminal damage	-26% reduction	2,378 fewer victims
Total recorded crime	-37% reduction	14,157 fewer victims

2.6 However, despite these significant improvements and, in line with the national situation, there has been a growing perception gap between actual recorded crime levels and how safe people say they feel.

2.7 Over the last four years, the Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) has been carrying out research through the Fear of Crime of Survey into feelings of safety and worry about crime . The Council also carries out research on people's perceptions of crime through its annual MORI survey.

2.8 A good deal of interesting information has been highlighted by the surveys. Some of the key messages include:-

- There has been a steady decline in feelings of safety from 69% feeling safe in March 2006 to 51% in March 2008. However, the majority of the shift in perceptions has been from people feeling safe to feeling neither safe nor unsafe (as opposed to feeling unsafe). The newest survey was sent out in April and results will be available around June/July 2009.
- Figures from the Mori survey 2008 show that residents perceive Sunderland to be a safe place. Four out of five people say they generally feel safe in Sunderland as a whole (81%) and only one in six feel unsafe (17%).
- There has been a significant drop in residents' worry about crime – down from 47% in March 2004 to 37% in March 2008 (Fear of Crime Survey)
- while minority ethnic residents tended to feel less safe than other residents in Sunderland in 2007, there are no differences in perception of general safety between white and minority residents in 2008.
- minority ethnic residents continue to feel less safe walking alone in the city centre at night (56% feel unsafe, compared with 41% overall)
- Residents with a disability do not feel any less safe in the city centre or in Sunderland generally than residents as a whole.
- In the city centre, women are far more likely to feel unsafe walking alone after dark. One in three say they would never go out alone at night (32%).
- Residents aged between 16 and 24- the group most likely to go out after dark- are the group most likely to say they feel safe (47% compares with 30%)
- Awareness of the Council's efforts to tackle anti social behaviour in the local level is at a similar level to 2007 with 2/5ths of residents saying they are well informed (39%). However, over half say they are not well informed (55%)
- People who are dissatisfied with the local area tend to feel less informed about work to tackle anti social behaviour than those who are satisfied.
- The General Household Survey has shown a significant improvement on residents' perceptions of anti social behaviour as a problem in Sunderland. This has improved from 51% in 2003/04 to 30% in 2006/07. This will now be measured through the new Place Survey and is an LAA target;
- Those with a higher social grade tend to feel more fully informed.
- Since 2006, feelings of safety have deteriorated more than average for more affluent residents (e.g. those living in detached homes, and those with three cars) and deteriorated less for those with no car, those living in bungalows and those living in terraced housing.

2.9   While improvements are being made in people's perceptions of crime and disorder and worry about crime there is still a considerable amount of work left to do in making people actually feel safe. It is pleasing that the latest figures show that ethnic residents and disabled people in the city do not appear to feel less safe than other residents. Hopefully, this trend will continue.

2.10   Clearly the indicators for fear of crime tell us a lot about perceptions of crime and fear of crime among different groups within the city. **We feel that it is important to look to refine and develop the questions being asked of the public in order to be clearer as to why people feel as they do and the factors affecting fear of crime at the neighbourhood level.**

3   DRIVERS FOR FEAR OF CRIME IN SUNDERLAND

Understanding Fear of Crime

3.1   Fear of crime is a complex issue which is affected by a wide range of social, economic, environmental and demographic factors. It can also be highly subjective and therefore difficult to measure.

3.2   A good deal of research has been undertaken into the factors underpinning fear of crime and the issues that contribute to feeling unsafe. Research has identified that some of the factors include:

- Living in an area of high crime or the reputation of an area;
- Having already been a victim of crime or knowing someone who has;
- Being or feeling vulnerable because of age, gender, race, sexuality, disability etc;
- Being or feeling powerless and isolated;
- Being subjected to persistent anti-social behaviour;
- National and local media coverage;
- The physical appearance of the local environment and how people travel to and from it e.g. poor street lighting or lack of natural surveillance;
- Confidence and satisfaction in the ability of local services to tackle crime, disorder and substance misuse;
- The visibility of services that contribute to tackling fear of crime.

3.3   'Information' type factors[1] can also affect fear of crime including:

- People being poorly informed;
- People feeling vulnerable if they don't know what is being done in their local area to tackle these problems;
- Victims not knowing what local support is available to help them;
- False perceptions of their actual risk, especially amongst vulnerable groups;
- People feeling powerless to change things

3.4   The MORI survey has consistently found that the following three issues appear to make people feel less safe than they otherwise would:

- Young people hanging around
- People drinking or being drunk
- People using or dealing drugs

3.5   Some of the key issues that appear to be impacting on feeling of safety include:-

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[1] As identified by the Home Office Fear of Crime Strategy Group

- Confidence in the Criminal Justice System;
- Aspects of service of the agencies tackling these problems with the need to focus on speed of response, attitude, feedback and outcomes;
- Young people hanging around causing anti-social behaviour and especially underage drinking;
- People drinking or being drunk in the street or public place;
- A lack of a visible police presence;
- People having experienced crime and disorder before, or knowing someone who has or hearing stories of it happening to other people;
- People feeling vulnerable because of their age;
- Local media reports

3.6 Based on the information gathered, the Committee went on to look at the action being taken by our SSP partners to tackle fear of crime.

4   REVIEW OF ACTION BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE SAFER SUNDERLAND PARTNERSHIP TO REDUCE FEAR OF CRIME

4.1   At the outset of our study, the Group wrote to our key partner on the Sunderland Strategic Partnership in order to find out more about the action being taken to tackle fear of crime.

We received a thorough and detailed response setting out the wide range of initiatives being pursued by the SSP partners. While, there were too many initiatives to list in full, we would like to highlight the following:-

- o Public campaign activity such as the "Not In My City Campaign", Domestic Violence Campaign and Tackling Racism campaign;
- o Safer Homes Initiative which provides security upgrades for victims of burglary and domestic violence. Feedback has indicated that 97% of the victims supported said they felt safer as a result of the support;
- o the Drug Interventions Programme and Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme designed to get individuals into treatment and away from crime;
- o the National Drug Strategy 2008, Drugs: Protecting Families and Communities reducing drug misuse and the harm it causes, including drug related crime and disorder;
- o development of the SSP Sunderland Alcohol Strategy to tackle alcohol misuse across the City;
- o The Best Bar None Scheme was launched in September to promote socially responsible licensing of alcohol;
- o The establishment of Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups across the City to problem solve instances of anti-social behaviour (and other issues);
- o establishment of a case conferencing system to protect high risk domestic violence victims;
- o Inside Justice Week which aims to provide the public with an inside view of the criminal justice system;
- o Crown Court Open day to provided schools and members of the public with an opportunity to understand more about the workings of the court system.

4.2   The response of our SSP partners demonstrates the considerable amount of work being directed at the issue of crime and fear of crime. A common theme of the responses and one we feel is of particular importance is the value of partnership working. **If we are to make a significant and long lasting impact on fear of crime it is vital that the work of all of the partners is coordinated and focused. It is ` also important that the partners and the public should be clear on their respective roles and duties.**

4.3   Based on the information received from our SSP partners, the Group decided to look in greater detail at a number of key themes highlighted in the responses including:-

- ❑ Confidence in the Judicial System
- ❑ Alcohol and Young People
- ❑ Environmental Issues
- ❑ Public Transport and Fear of Crime
- ❑ Marketing

5   CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

5.1   Confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) has a major impact on how safe residents feel. People with low faith in the judicial system tend to have higher levels of fear of crime.

5.2   In March 2008, only 29% of residents said they were confident in the CJS in the Sunderland area and only 24% for the UK as a whole. This is a slight improvement on the Sept 2007 figures of 23% and 17% respectively but still low.

5.3   When asked about the reasons for low confidence in the CJS, the most frequent comments related to sentencing and prisons. This included: punishments not fitting the crime; repeat offenders not getting sent to prison; sentences being erratic, too lenient or reduced on appeal; prisons being too full, too 'soft' or perceived as a 'university of crime'; and prisoners being treated too well. Bureaucracy, red tape and too much paperwork was also seen to be a problem in the CJS.

5.4   In order to find out more about the measures being taken to improve confidence in the judicial system, the Group visited the Magistrates Court in Sunderland and also met with David Rees from the Probation Services.

Magistrates Court

5.5   The Magistrates Court have an important role in helping to shape people's perspective of the criminal justice system.

5.6   During our visit, we were highly impressed by the hard work and professionalism of all of the staff working at the courts. However, they are clearly not helped by the condition of the existing premises. Conditions are cramped and the building is now clearly unsuitable for its role. While every effort has been made to improve the conditions for people attending as witnesses, it was still felt that witnesses could suffer a negative experience from attending the courts.

5.7   The Group was informed of plans for a new Magistrate's and Crown Court in the city. This should be able to handle more cases more speedily and in a modern environment. **The Group strongly support the proposals for new Magistrates and Crown Court in the city and would urge the Council to take whatever action it can to speed up its development.**

5.8   Staff at the Court also referred to the wide range of initiatives being taken to better publicise their work. These include a variety of events and open days to provide the general public with a better

understanding of the work of the court and issues such as sentencing and rehabilitation.

5.9 **We feel that it is important that the Court continues to actively communicate their work to the general public. Providing information and feedback on issues such as sentencing and rehabilitation should help to build confidence in the criminal justice system.**

Law Enforcement

5.10 The Police are the foundation of the criminal justice system. We feel that it is important that the police are visible and approachable to their local communities.

5.11 Neighbourhood Policing Teams also have an important role in providing a very visible police presence in the local community.

5.12 We feel that it is important for there to be a regular flow of information from the Police and other SSP partners to the local community and residents in order to keep them informed of action being taken to combat crime. This can be in the form of leaflets, street briefings or newsletters. **We therefore stress the importance of keeping people informed of the action being taken to combat crime in the local community and providing feedback in order to keep people better informed.**

5.13 a We support the announcement of the Policing Pledge which promotes clearer understanding of what people can expect from the criminal justice system.

5.14 We feel that it is important that the criminal justice system is seen to be dealing firmly with anti social behaviour and low level crime. This should help to instil greater faith in the criminal justice system and reduce fear of crime. We feel that such low level crime has an accumulative affect on people's perceptions of fear of crime.

5.15 We feel that people value the Emergency 101 number as a means of combating anti social behaviour. It is important that the existence of the service is advertised through the local press and media, providing an opportunity for the public to report and help combat crime.

Environmental Issues

5.16 We also feel that environmental issues are an important contributory factor in promoting fear of crime. The presence of graffiti and litter, damaged bus shelters and phone boxes contribute to an environment where people feel less safe. Likewise estate management and the conditions of streets all contribute to an impression of an area.

5.17 It is important that the design and upkeep of our streets seek to" design out" crime, creating an environment that feels safe and secure. We welcome the introduction of the new Environmental Wardens who we hope will take firm enforcement action against litter and flytipping.

5.18 **We feel that tackling low level crime and anti social behaviour is a key factor in improving feelings of safety within local communities and we would welcome the expansion of initiatives such as the use of Neighbourhood Wardens.**

5.19 **We feel that there is potential for the new Area Committees arrangements to have a greater role in finding solutions to local crime related issues. Tackling crime and fear of crime successfully depends on working with and listening to the views of local residents**.

Community Payback

5.20 Under the Community Payback Scheme unpaid work is completed by offenders in the community as part of a court order.

5.21 By undertaking this work, offenders pay back the community for some of the damage done through their reoffending. Not only that, they gain skills to improve employability which in the longer term helps to promote rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

5.22 The benefits to the community are:-

   ❑ Improvements to the environment
   ❑ Addressing priorities identified by the local community
   ❑ Positive contribution to community safety
   ❑ Residents better able to enjoy their environment
   ❑ Victims seeing reparation and others seeing criminal justice and restorative justice in action

5.23 This can contribute towards:-

   ❑ A reduction in fear of crime
   ❑ Increased community confidence in the criminal justice system
   ❑ A reduction in reoffending
   ❑ Addressing priorities identified by the local community

5.24 We feel that one of the strengths of the community payback scheme is providing communities with the opportunity to put forward suggestions for suitable projects they would like to see offenders complete as part of a community sentence. It also represents a visible demonstration of restorative justice.

5.25 The Group as heard from the National Probation Service Northumbria about the range of work currently being undertaken as part of the

scheme for example the removal of litter, fly tipping and other environmental improvements. So far done there has been about 33,000 hrs of unpaid work to a value of around £168,000.

5.26 **We feel that community payback scheme has great value in helping to raise the visibility of and confidence in the criminal justice system. We also feel that the scheme has the potential for dealing with local environmental concerns - itself a major factor in fear of crime. We would support the promotion of unpaid environmental work and people having say in what work should be undertaken**.

6   **ALCOHOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

6.1   The Issue of alcohol and young people is a key contributor to fear of crime in the city. This fear is particularly prevalent among older and more vulnerable people. Alcohol is also a major factor associated with anti social behaviour.

6.2   The Group was aware that the Children's and Young People Review Committee had set up its own Task and Finish Group on this issue. In order to avoid any duplication in our work, members joined a meeting of that Group that was focusing on alcohol and young people. The Group has also met with Chief Inspector Clark to discuss the key messages from the "Not in My Neighbourhood Week" held in Southwick and to discuss some of the diversionary schemes developed for young people.

6.3   From our discussions, it is clear that there is a good deal of preventative work being undertaken at Children's Centres to raise awareness and provide support and guidance. We feel that parents have an important role in helping young people to understand the dangers of alcohol misuse.

6.4   We were impressed by the success of the Challenge 21 scheme which reminds customers that it is against the law to purchase alcohol if under the age of 18 or to purchase alcohol on behalf of someone less than 18yrs. We feel the scheme is an excellent way of not only preventing underage sales but also raising awareness among traders and their staff of the need to be vigilant in preventing such sales.

6.5   In the North area we heard of the development of a bottle watch scheme which can 'smart mark' individual beverages and link them to a specific premises which may have sold   the alcohol illegally.

6.6   However, as well as preventative work we do feel that it is important to offer to young people a range of alternative activities.

6.7   The mobile youth village brings activities to young people to prevent them congregating on streets and being tempted into antisocial behaviour. The pioneering 13-week pilot programme was introduced in the Grindon and Farringdon area. The project ran from 5.30pm to 8.30pm on Fridays and Saturdays and operated a strict no-alcohol and drugs policy, and proved extremely popular with 13 to 19-year-olds and had been welcomed by the community.

6.8   We feel it is important that appropriate facilities are available for young people to socialise on an evening and would like to see the further development of the mobile youth village.

7   MARKETING

7.1   It has already been highlighted that people who feel more informed also feel more confident and suffer less from fear of crime. It also appears that a relatively high proportion of people in the city feel they are not well informed of the Council and its partner's efforts to tackle anti social behaviour.

7.2   Marketing and Communications work is therefore vital in tackling the issue of fear of crime through the promotion of key messages around schemes and projects as well as feeding back to local communities on what has been achieved.

7.3   This can help counter the danger that people are depending on the media and word of mouth for information rather than the main players.

7.4   Julie Smith and Kelly Henderson outlined the main themes of the Safer Sunderland Partnership Marketing and Communications Plan 2009/10 which aims to address fear of crime and narrow the gap between the perceptions and the reality of youth crime.

7.5   The Plan should help to tackle perceptions of anti social behaviour and improve the public's confidence and satisfaction in the local public services, providing an opportunity to myth bust and present facts in a clear and unambiguous way.

7.6   Examples of good work includes:-

- ❑ posters, leaflets and media articles in neighbourhood and regional press, bus advertising on initiatives
- ❑ Tolerating Domestic Violence
- ❑ Not in Our City campaign
- ❑ Taxi martial Scheme
- ❑ Safer Homes Initiative
- ❑ Policing Matters
- ❑ Articles in Sunrise magazine
- ❑ Fixed plasma screens
- ❑ Not in my Neighbourhood week

7.8   Done well, marketing is crime prevention tool in its own right allowing us to reinforce the action being taken and promote the services available to the public.

7.9   We feel that leaflets and feedback on sentencing can have a very positive impact – particularly if backed up by newsletters and personal explanation.

7.10   We feel that for marketing to be effective, it needs to be targeted and there may be scope in other SSP partners making greater use of marketing budgets.

7.11   **We feel that a lot of good work is going on in marketing and communicating the key message regarding fear of crime. We feel that we need to make full use of the Council website and publications such as Sunrise to publicise the work. We also need to try to build a sound relationship with the local press.**

8   PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FEAR OF CRIME

8.1   Public transport is vital to the economic and social well being of Sunderland providing access to employment, leisure and education opportunities.

8.2   There were 35,491,718 public transport journeys are made in 2007/08 in Sunderland. (32,887,986 by bus and 2,603,732 by Metro), representing 127 public transport journeys per head of population.

8.3   In Sunderland, there were 219 bus incidences recorded by operators in the 12 months period October 2007 to September 2008. These figures included 149 missile attacks which often resulted in broken windows.

8.4   While crime is relatively rare there is a relatively high fear of crime. Ken Wilson from Nexus suggested that this could be the result of people experiencing highly visible exposure to lower level disorder and antisocial behaviour in bus stations and on public transport. It is felt that this can have an important cumulative effect on perceptions of fear of crime. Other factors contributing to fear of crime include inadequate lighting, a neglected environment, a perceived lack of potential assistance or protection and the presence of gangs of young people.

8.5   To combat these problems, Nexus has introduced a range of measures to improve perceptions of public safety. These include:-

- ❑ The use of CCTV on buses and at bus stations. All metro station and metro cars also have 24 hr digital CCTV cameras
- ❑ Environmental improvements such as the removal of dark places and the promotion of well lit paths and public spaces through street lighting improvements;
- ❑ The speedy removal of graffiti.
- ❑ The rapid repair and maintenance policy for bus shelters
- ❑ The appointment of a Nexus Bus Station manager who is responsible for safety and security at Park Lane, Concord and the Galleries Bus Stations.
- ❑ The funding of support from the British Transport Police
- ❑ Police Officers are encouraged and can travel free on buses and the metro
- ❑ Close cooperation and support from the Police to deal with instances of anti social behaviour and joint working with the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Team.
- ❑ working with schools to tackle issues of anti social behaviour on school buses.

8.6   While the statistics in relation to crime on public transport are relatively low, a lot of the real fear of crime is associated with people going to bus stops or at bus stops. We feel that there should be more research into levels of fear of crime for this aspect.

8.7 Again, there is clearly a lot of good work going on to tackle fear of crime on public transport. **We feel that the visible presence of security staff and the police is a key element in making people feels safer. We need to encourage people that public transport is safe. The more people who use public transport, the safer people will feel and the safer it will become.**

8.8 We were concerned that figures provided by Nexus showed that levels of fear of crime were higher in Sunderland than in other parts of the region and that there were variations between area of Sunderland itself. **We would suggest that more research should undertaken to find the reasons for these anomalies.**

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 We feel that it is important to refine and develop the questions being asked of the public in our surveys in order to be clearer as to why people feel as they do and the factors affecting fear of crime at the neighbourhood level;

9.2 If we are to make a significant and long lasting impact on crime and fear of crime it is important that the work of all of the partners is coordinated and focused. It is also important that the partners and the public should be clear on their respective roles and duties;

9.3 The Group support the proposals for a new Magistrates and Crown Court in the city and would urge the Council to do what it can to accelerate its development;

9.4 We feel that it is important that the Court continues to actively communicate their work to the general public. Providing information and feedback on issues such as sentencing and rehabilitation should help to build confidence in the criminal justice system. It is important that SSP partners are involved in the use made of resources for marketing;

9.5 We feel that tackling low level crime and anti social behaviour is a key factor in improving feelings of safety within local communities and we recommend the expansion of initiatives such as the use of Neighbourhood Wardens;

9.6 We more closely monitor low level anti social behaviour indicators such as litter, graffiti and noise disturbance and the role it plays in promoting fear of crime;

9.7 We feel that the Community Payback scheme has great value in helping to raise the visibility of a confidence in the criminal justice system. We feel that the scheme has the potential for dealing with local environmental concerns – itself a major factor in fear of crime. We support the promotion of unpaid environmental work and people having a say in what work should be undertaken;

9.8 We feel that it is important that appropriate facilities are available for young people to socialise on an evening and would like to see the further development of the Mobile Youth Village Scheme;

9.9 We feel that a lot of good work is going on in marketing and communicating the key messages regarding fear of crime. We feel that we need to make full use of the Council website and publications such as Sunrise to publicise the work;

9.10   We feel that the visible presence of security staff and the police is a key element in making people feel safer. We need to encourage people that public transport is safe. The more people who us e public transport, the safer people will feel and the safer it will become;

9.11   It is important that respect is maintained in the criminal justice system and that low level crime such as a lack of respect for enforcement officers or the vandalising of public property does not undermine its effectiveness;

9.12   We would suggest that more research is undertaken into the reasons behind the higher than average levels of fear of crime on public transport in Sunderland.