



## **Main policy issues from the 2nd Free –Discussion in Peterborough on Stop and Search held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at Jack Hunt School**

### **1. Context of stop and search**

The presentation highlighted how any stop and search (s&s) is conducted; it was argued that since the majority of Police operations locally are conducted/done on the basis of specific local issues, in specific local areas, any ethnic profiling will be skewed towards any group 'causing concern' be they White, Asian, European or young men/women. Often the local s&s are done on the basis of issues such as anti social behaviour (asb), trafficking, crime, drugs, etc. It was argued that the local Police did not conduct s&s on any other basis, except on counter terrorism.

Under Section 44, any s&s would be done on broadly the same basis, except that security issues were paramount - the enforcement would be precautionary or preventative. It was argued therefore, that certain communities could and were targeted and this caused resentment. The meeting was encouraged to put forward any alternatives to this and to suggest what lessons could be learnt. Peterborough's location meant that a Section 44 operation was likely at any time.

### **2. Information and publicity on s&s on website(s)**

Some people felt that s&s information should be available on the web and that this was done before. It was also argued that whilst this could be done, the context, as explained in point 1 above, was also crucial, in order to minimise any misunderstanding about such a sensitive subject.

The Police were urged to publish s&s information on the Police, as well as partner websites, at least every 6 months.

### **3. It isn't what is being done (s&s) but how it is done by the Police, including attitudes as well as 'misusing' the laws**

Some people expressed concern about the behaviour and attitude of Police Officers when conducting s&s exercises. It was argued that such behaviour caused serious offence and created an impression that the Police were not even-handed.

Once such opinions have been formed, they are hard to dispel, so they cause long-term grievances.

One example of this misuse of powers, was by the Metropolitan Police who misused anti terrorism legislation against people who were undertaking lawful protests.

#### **4. Statutory agencies need to connect the dots and keep each other and the communities in the loop on s&s**

A s&s exercise conducted by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the British Transport Police at Peterborough railway station on the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 had allegedly been targeting “black people”. The ‘officious and overbearing attitude’ of the officers had caused offence and anger.

The Police confirmed that they were unaware of the s&s at the station and yet people had drawn the conclusion that the Police were involved. The meeting sought assurances that there would be better communications between statutory ‘enforcement’ services and asked that the anger and resentment caused by the attitude of Officers on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 be communicated to the BTP and UKBA by the Police.

#### **5. Effectiveness of s&s, both locally and nationally**

There was little agreement about how effective s&s are, mainly because this was judged from different perspectives. The audience felt that s&s often caused resentment and anger that went beyond the value/worth of the outcome, whilst the Police argued it was an effective deterrent to concerns and trends that caused or had the potential to cause crime.

There was a general consensus that when it came to anti-terrorist activity, s&s was a necessary tool, although any mistakes in operational matters caused anger and created the feeling that certain communities were targeted. Such grievances were long-lasting and poisonous to community relations. It was generally felt this had been avoided in Peterborough.

#### **6. Stop and search numbers locally are small**

Just over 700 people had been stopped and searched locally in the last quarter – it was argued that these numbers were low when compared to other cities in which, at times, thousand of people had been stopped and searched during a single operation.

The Police were asked to publish and publicise the figures every quarter or at least once every 6 months. It was also argued that if the information was not publicised, it had the potential of creating an impression that the Police had something to hide.

#### **7. The legislation enabling stop and search is huge and varied**

An outline of the UK legislation other than the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which enabled s&s, caused surprise amongst the audience. It showed that the Police were not the only instigators of s&s, as shown on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at the Peterborough Railway Station.

## **8. Concerns remain – how will this be addressed locally?**

It was agreed that the Police should respond to the issues raised in the meeting, particularly on the effectiveness of s&s exercises in the city.

## **9. Police to explain Section 44 in more detail and what needs to be done by the people of the city in response to severe security threats in the UK**

This would be acted upon in due course.

### **Conclusions**

1. The Police were commended for speaking frankly and honestly about s&s in the city during the presentation
2. The audience's awareness of s&s had been raised significantly
3. The Police were asked to publicise s&s information and to raise the importance of conducting any s&s exercise 'properly, by making sure that staff involved were sensitive to the anger and resentment these could cause and to reassure the public through evidence, that no ethnic or religious groups were being targeted
4. The Police would provide further information on s&s on counter-terrorist matters

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