



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The National Security Council for the British Virgin Islands has proposed a Crime Reduction/Community Safety Strategy for the entire Territory.
- 1.2 Government, elected representatives and citizens all recognise that the prevention of crime is a national priority. The rights and freedoms in our Constitution are compromised every time a citizen becomes a victim of crime.
- 1.3 Not only does crime affect individuals and businesses residing in the Territory, it also impacts upon the reputation of these Islands as the safest Territory in the Caribbean.
- 1.4 The Royal Virgin Islands Police Force cannot prevent crime on their own; tackling crime requires a partnership with the various stakeholders and the community at large.
- 1.5 In particular, more needs to be done to prevent people committing crimes in the first place and to reduce repeat offending.
- 1.6 The National Security Council have agreed that a Crime Reduction/Community Safety Strategy Group should be established to set key priorities for the criminal justice system and to facilitate a more

coordinated way within and beyond Government to ensure that the widest range of interests, (from voluntary, civic, business and community groups to the wider community and individual citizens) have a say in shaping and delivering a safer, shared community for all.

- 1.7 It was agreed that – through proper consultation with all interested parties and stakeholders - this body would recommend actions and suggest priorities for reducing crime at a strategic level, identify the agencies that would be accountable for the implementation of the various programmes; and set targets and timelines.

2.0 Strategy Background

- 2.1 Despite the Virgin Islands being rightfully regarded as one of the safest Territories in the Caribbean, there has been a relatively recent increase in the perception, and fear of, crime.
- 2.2 A number of specific areas have been identified, including anti-social behaviour, domestic burglary, youth offending, business and retail crime, domestic violence, firearms and drug abuse.
- 2.3 There is no doubt that, as recording techniques and Police responses become more sophisticated, the levels of recorded crime have, in turn, risen. In addition, as the population of the Territory has risen, so too, has the incidence of reported crime.
- 2.4 It has become clear that the Police Force, as in other jurisdictions, cannot be solely responsible for crime reduction. A directed approach from central Government, supported by a comprehensive consultation process involving stakeholders, is needed to bring structure to tackling Community Safety on a broader basis.

3.0 Proposed Community Safety Strategy

- 3.1 It is proposed that a Community Safety Strategy “Drafting Team” will engage with stakeholders from across the entire community, seeking views on how to best address community safety issues over the next five years. This initial consultation shall be completed before September 2012, with a view to a subsequent report being submitted to the NSC in that period.
- 3.2 Should the Strategy be accepted by the NSC, it is further proposed that a Monitoring and Oversight Group shall be set up to advance the strategy across stakeholder groups, facilitate cross-Ministry activity and generally act as a single point of contact for holding agencies, Ministries and individuals to account.

3.3 Four cross-cutting themes are suggested:

Four Elements of Successful Community Safety Strategies

(possible outcomes/detail/areas of focus shown below)

1. Creating a safer environment;

- a. CCTV
- b. Improved/properly maintained lighting in highlighted locations
- c. Stronger and more engaged community/police relations
- d. Broader crime prevention support (reduced taxes on security equipment importation, "Safer by Design" strategy, IMEI registration, loss prevention technology etc.)

2. Focus on families and young people;

- a. Maintaining modern approaches to Domestic Violence
- b. Schools involvement/student engagement
- c. Segregation of juvenile offenders
- d. The use of alternative sentencing (tagging, curfew, semi-secure juvenile accommodation etc.)

3. Building strong, confident communities.

- a. Cross-Ministry co-ordination
- b. Churches, youth groups, business groups and other stakeholder co-ordination
 - Crimestoppers
 - Tourist Board
 - Gender Affairs
 - Social Development & Sandy Lane Center
 - Schools and Education Department

4. Maintaining a Robust Criminal Justice System

- a. PP/AG/Criminal & Family Lawyers
- b. Judiciary
- c. Social Development
- d. Law Enforcement, Border Security, Patrol Officers
- e. Penal System (Sentencing & Prisons)

NB: This is not an exclusive list and is included by way of example

3.4 A formal public consultation is envisaged in the autumn of 2012; however, it is proposed that the Drafting Group engage with key stakeholders and other groups with an interest in the issues arising. From this phase will develop specific issues that can realistically be built into a performance-related framework in order to help consider and shape the overall priorities and themes for the Strategy

4.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

Strategic Framework

4.1 The proposed themes from the consultation exercise will provide a platform for a strategic framework for considering a new Community Safety Strategy.

4.2 It is anticipated – based on experience in other jurisdictions – that the key themes likely to arise in relation to the “cross-cutting” themes above, will be:

- i. Delivering in partnership;
- ii. Empowering local communities;
- iii. Early interventions;

4.3 These anticipated themes mutually reinforce one another, with partnership between statutory agencies, voluntary groups, communities and individual citizens enabling local communities to provide local solutions to local issues.

4.4 For example, early interventions in addressing the risk factors that lead to youth offending and anti-social behaviour can lead to a safer community for all.

4.5 Crime and disorder cannot be addressed by the police and criminal justice agencies alone, and many agencies already have a role to play. A Community Safety Strategy involves an approach to preventing, reducing and responding to crime which:

- a. focuses on wider social problems, including fear of crime, quality of life issues, and social and economic factors
- b. is delivered through a partnership approach, involving the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, as well as community groups and individual citizens; and
- c. offers holistic, cost-effective, problem-oriented solutions.

5.0 Delivering in partnership

5.1 Any new strategy should, where appropriate, complement and not duplicate other Government strategies and initiatives. Achieving a safer community is the responsibility of many agencies, and a coordinated, target-driven approach will help ensure a more effective outcome.

5.2 In particular, activities around specific social problems may benefit from a bringing together of other strategies; for example

- i. unlawful narcotics,

- ii. child abuse
- iii. firearms
- iv. motor scooters
- v. driving standards and vehicle licencing
- vi. drink-related violence/alcohol licencing
- vii. prompt and efficient justice
- viii. social development
- ix. mental health
- x. prison release
- xi. 'sister island' coordination
- xii. Gender Affairs
- xiii. Domestic Violence

6.0 Empowering local communities

6.1 Community safety is about local solutions to local issues, with local communities playing a role in partnership with agencies at a local level. In other jurisdictions, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) have played a pivotal role in addressing anti-social behaviour and crime locally, identifying local needs and delivering solutions.

6.2 Statutory agencies have a key role to play, but communities themselves must be central to addressing local issues and providing local solutions.

7.0 Early Interventions

7.1 A range of risk factors can influence the likelihood of offending, ranging from individual and family risk factors to school and community factors. Intervening at an early stage to support parents and improve the lives of young children can be effective in reducing the risk of crime in later years. Keeping children and young persons out of prison has been shown globally to reduce recidivism.

7.2 However, this approach requires an effective long term strategy, focused on intensive and wide ranging early interventions, with long term resource investment, and a recognition that the results may not be apparent for many years.

8.0 Questions for Consultation

1. How do we measure success in a Community Safety Strategy?
2. What should the priorities be in a new Community Safety Strategy?
3. What lessons can we learn from other areas?
4. Are the proposed themes suitable? What other approaches should we consider?
5. How do we effectively address the risk factors that lead to offending?

6. What other strategies and initiatives (both current and forthcoming) should we consider in the Community Safety Strategy? How do we best align the objectives with other strategies?
7. How can we best deliver programmes and projects in a context of scarce resources?
8. How can we ensure cross-ministry coordination and “joined up thinking”?