

POLICE NOTEBOOK

INDICATORS which help assess the performance of their police forces have already been issued by the Audit Commission for public consultation. The indicators which local authorities must publish, will help residents, customers and tax payers to monitor key aspects of local government services, from the speed at which police respond to emergencies to the accessibility of public buildings to wheelchairs. The indicators are an important part of the Citizen Charter and are intended to give people the opportunity to make meaningful judgements on the standards of services provided by local authorities, as well as their quality and costs.

Different citizens make very different and potentially conflicting demands on the police force, depending on whether they are victims, witnesses, accused, or simply benefit from the absence of crime. Conflicts also occur with regard to the deployment of police officers. Operational decisions about priorities can considerably affect, for example, the way in which motoring offences are treated. In a police force there is a particular risk that the service may be distorted by the collection and publication of comparative statistics.

It can be difficult to interpret such statistics properly, for example, a good police force might encourage the reporting of crime, but appear to solve a relatively small proportion of it. Another force may actually be less successful at solving crime, but appear better in percentage terms because less is reported to it. At present the police report statistics on a calendar year basis, not a financial year basis, but this is likely to change. In these

exciting and controversial times, the Citizen Charter is a new concept, and we await the change it will inevitably bring.

CRIME BUSTER REVIEW

Criminal Damage or Vandalism as it is better known, has increased dramatically in the last six weeks throughout the Wychwood area. The pavilion at Milton has been hit hardest, with mindless youths breaking concrete slabs and ripping down the guttering. Shipton has had damage done to its tennis courts, although these are protected by a high fence; again the youths have broken the fence and the tennis net mechanism.

Ascott has not escaped the problem, although damage to a wall and fence is not thought to be malicious. Sadly several adults have witnessed these crimes, but for one reason or another they decline to come forward. Please remember these are your amenities, paid for by the council, and then by you, the rate payer.

Many people fear retaliation if information is given; to date this has not happened in this area. If any further damage is caused and I can prove who the offenders are, I will recommend that court action is taken rather than the usual cautions.

On a happier note, I must congratulate an elderly lady in Shipton, who at 4. a.m. discovered a burglar in her house. She did not panic, but called the police and guided them to where the offender was. A man from the Brighton area has been charged with the offence, and is being questioned about other crimes. Well done!

PC 379 Salmon

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