

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

16 JANUARY 2020 AT 7PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Adel Khaireh (Chair); Councillors Angela Cornforth (Item 7 to 9), Ann-Maria Cousins, Ian Hawking, John Hills and Clive Mardner.

Under Standing Orders:

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety.

Officers:

Assistant Director Community Safety and Corporate Governance Officer

Other People in Attendance:

Eileen Glover – Chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board; Supt Andy Carter - Met Police BCU Commander

Item

No.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors Tonia Ashikodi and Rajinder James.

2. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business for consideration. However the Chair drew Members attention to the briefing report, circulated in advance of the meeting, in relation to item 6 – Police 3 Borough's Merger. Further, that Members note the information tabled, in relation to Item 7 - Update report from the Safer Neighbourhood Board: Safer Greenwich, giving details of the Current Trustees.

The Chair advised that as the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety was delayed therefore, the Panel would take Item 7 first.

3. Declarations of Interest

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4. Minutes

Resolved –

That the minute of the meeting of the Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 19 September 2019 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5. Action Points Review

Members requested that the outstanding action in relation to the report resulting from the work between MetroGad and the University of Greenwich challenging the disparity of recognising and reporting disability hate crime.

Action: Corporate Governance Officer

Resolved –

That the position on the outstanding and ongoing actions in relation to the previous meetings of the Panel be noted.

6. Police 3-Borough merger

Superintendent Andy Carter, deputising for PC Dobinson, drew Members attention to the briefing report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. He noted that a new strategic approach for the next seven years, had recently been agreed, which established three main operational priorities and four enabling priorities, as set out in the briefing report. He assured the Panel that crime reduction remained at the heart of the BCU and policing.

In highlighting some of the key areas of the BCU policing model, Supt Carter advised that Stop & Search had increased by 50%, with a focus on removing weapons off the street. That 35% of incident call responses were in the North of the Borough, however the custody suite in Plumstead. Further, that consideration was being given to re-opening a police suite in Bexley as police

vehicles from the Plumstead Station were frequently called upon to attend incidents in Bexley.

Supt Carter confirmed that good working relationships had been established with Council departments, Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) and Neighbourhood Panels and were working closely with Council Officers and Members in setting up the Greenwich RESET team.

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community advised the Panel that there had be concerns, when the 3 Borough Merger was originally proposed, and all partners involved had faced challenges. It had quickly become apparent that there was a need to work in partnership to reach good working outcomes for everyone. Regular partnership meetings, on a 4-weekly basis, as well as daily contact between the BCU and the Assistant Director Community Safety and Environment had become embedded working practices.

Councillor Jackie Smith continued that liaison working with Greenwich RESET was now working efficiently, exempling that the police would notify the Council contact that X person had stabbed Y person and the location; the Council would quickly identify key information including identifying any siblings and where they were school, if either family were known to receive social care and ensure family support was initiated, almost in real time, to ensure issues of safety were identified and mitigated.

Councillor Jackie Smith advised that Integrated Enforcement (IE) was still evolving and were working with the Police on creating safer spaces. Also, Ofsted recently undertook an inspection of Children's Services, reporting that good partnership working had been established with the Police and MOPAC. She noted that this partnership working was not always easy to deliver and there was a need for honesty, from all parties, to achieve positive outcomes.

Members commented that they had constituents coming to see them who had been victims of home burglary or car theft where the police had not attended. They were only received a Victim of Crime letter, sometimes two weeks later, which did not contain information is to why the incident would not be pursued, thresholds for action or even mitigating action the victim may take to avoid future situations.

Members were concerned that the Victim of Crime letter did not build confidence with the public and a Member noted that it could create a public

sense of 'it's not worth contacting the police' and that car crime may escalate to home burglary.

Supt Carter responded that every reported incident of crime was assets and if there was no CCTV or evidence it was unlikely that an Officer would attend. He acknowledged that it was not easy for either the victim or the police to accept that the case would not be progressed.

A Member questioned what the threshold would be for repeat non-urgent calls to become urgent?

Supt Carter responded duplication of reported incidents may escalate the status of a call but cautioned that would depend on the situation and nature of duplicate calls which may be from the same person about the same event or ongoing events or several people on one event or ongoing events, duplication may raise urgency level. He noted that Police Officers were unable to escalate or de-escalate the status of a call but may increase patrols in an area of concern.

The Panel felt that there was a need for the Victim of Crime letter to be re-examined to give clear information and advice to victims, so as not to raise expectations. Supt Carter confirmed that this was currently being looked at.

Supt Carter assured Members that when the Bexley custody suite opened it will not result in the closure of the Plumstead Police station. However, the Plumstead custody suite would only be used in extremis. There would be a necessary reallocation of staff which had been modelled and it was considered that the locations would best support investigation and response teams.

With regards to Stop and Search, Supt Carter advised that all Police Officers were issued body worn video equipment which recorded all interactions, which greatly reduced the number of negative interactions and gave people a better understanding of the professional conduct of Officers and that they were behaving ethically and properly. He accepted that Stop and Search was intrusive, and Section 60 Orders allowed for intensive Stop & Search activities for a limited time within a designated area. Training was given to all officers including awareness of proportionality and independent scrutiny was conducted and, whilst the number of searches had increased, this was monitored daily. He confirmed that he would provide the Panel with Stop & Search figures for the Brough to Members.

Action: Supt Andy Carter

Supt Carter responded to members that, as a result of the merger, there had been a reduction of 120-130 staff, the majority of which were administrative through new working practices. There was a Police recruitment drive and all the new recruits would have to attend Hendon Police training before undertaking a two-year probation period on street duty. At the end of the probation service a number would move to high demand specialisms, the remainder would serve as uniformed Officers

Supt Carter advised that the greatest demand was in the East of the Borough and all new Officers needed to learn the geography and demand of each area. Police Officers were provided with mobile technology which linked directly to the Police National Computer system, allowing for activities such as identification of an individual through taking electronic fingerprints. However, the IT did not always match Officers expectations and new IT was being looked at, as well as continued monitoring compliance and current use.

In respect of under reporting on certain crimes Supt Carter responded that there was evidence that Domestic Abuse was being under reported and victims were often unwilling to pursue charges. There was also an awareness that the level of hate crimes was still being under reported.

He noted that the overall detection rate for the BCU area was 8%, which was within the London Average, exemplifying the rate ranged between 10% and 5%. He clarified that the figure of 8% did not record all crime reported but just those that where a measurable outcome was achieved. However, he did not have trial data giving the figures on successful prosecutions arising from charges brought

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Environment added that this was still an area that all parties felt could be improved on. Whilst it was right to log all crimes, including where there was no evidence or likelihood that the perpetrator would not be found, it was considered that Police time would be better focused on incidents of violent knife crime and hate crime.

Councillor Jackie Smith added that crimes with threat were among the issues being discussed by the Police with Safer Neighbourhood Panels and Neighbourhood Watch, to provide crime prevention information to residents.

A Member proposed, and the Chair and Panel agreed, that future reports gave figures rather than percentages. Further, that the next report to the

Panel gave clear details of the Key challenges and areas for improvement and how these were being address.

Resolved -

That the briefing from Superintendent Andy Carter be noted.

7. Update report from the Safer Neighbourhood Board: Safer Greenwich

The Chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) tabled information, as requested by the Scrutiny Panel, giving details of the Current Trustees; advising that one group was not listed as they were a new member and details were not available.

The Chair of the SNB advised that the Board received a grant of £28,000 PA, for a 3-year period. They were currently running 2 projects; £15,000 over 3 year had been used to establish the Neighbourhood Watch project, which was nearing independence. The other was developing Safer Neighbourhood Community Projects, which was moving into its 3rd year of support and is anticipated to reach fruition next year, with a view to it becoming a self-funding ongoing event.

She advised that the Safer Neighbourhood Panel were established in line with the Police Cluster System. This system was not being as part of the in-depth review into the efficiency of the Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNP), which was supported by 1 admin officer. The review was looking at distribution of Panels, if they meet current need and where there were gaps as well as refreshing and updating their constitutions. The review included establishing new membership and it hoped that this work would be completed by June and that all SNP achieve Grade 1 & 2 level of engagement with police and partners.

In response to Members questions the Chair of the SNB advised that they were an Independent Charity, with no Councillor representative on the Board or sitting as trustees. The SNB received funding through Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) and had never approached the Council for a grant as it was considered that it would be inappropriate to ask for public money without representation. The Council did offer support in kind with assistants in securing meeting venues and advertising meetings and events on the Council web site.

She confirmed to Members that the SNB had a good working relationship with the Police with regular 1-2-1 meetings with the BCU Commander. Though the Board felt that there were still areas for improvement exemplifying that several Stop & Search Section 60 orders were issued by the Police across the Borough. It would have been helpful for the information on the areas to be covered and the reason for the orders to be past to the relevant SNP chairs, particularly as, it transpired, the orders were in relation to gang violence, which was an area of work being addressed, in partnership with others, by the SNP and SNB.

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety commented, as a point of accuracy, that knife crime in the Borough was coming down. The MOPAC were continuing to look at serious youth violence and shared the concerns of the SNB on these issues. She also proposed that the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Environment could liaise with the SNB Chair to help identify groups working with adults with special needs, older people and similar groups. Which the Assistant Director Community Safety & environment confirmed would be possible and was accepted by the Panel.

Action: AD CS&E

The Chair of the SNB advised that she would take up the offer. Further, whilst aware of the position in respect of knife crime, this did not alter the perception of residents and it was part of the SNB and SNP work to ensure the correct information was made known, which was partly achieved through SNB meetings, which were open to the public and all SNP chairs and any Councillor who wished to attend.

In respect of any conflict of independency from MOPAC the Chair of the SNB confirmed that as a registered charity they were independent. The SNB was set up and was funded by MOPAC but that funding ran one financial year behind and, whilst it was possible to negotiate funding extensions this took a lot of time to pursue and small groups didn't have the capacity of volunteers' time to do this. She advised that the SNB were in discussions with MOPAC in respect of this situation. External funding could take time to secure and GVAC undertook most of the admin to support groups but could not write grant applications. She added that the SNB did not hold activities until the spring to coincide with receipt of the funding grant.

Members noted that there were several Trustee positions vacant and asked how these positions could be used to link with different and diverse groups and Councillors.

The SNB Chair advised that the document had been modified to remove personal information and agreed that there was a need for representation for all residents of the Borough and this was an area being looked with consideration to making it a mandatory element of the constitution that trustees must be drawn from different demographics. This piece of work would be undertaken with the support of the Her Centre, Victim Support and MetroGav. She noted that getting people who were willing to volunteer their time to training and attending meetings could be as difficult to solve as that of gaining funding and any support that Councillors could offer in achieving this would be considered.

She added that was also a need to ensure that Mental Health groups, elderly people and people with learning difficulties continued to receive support, noting, however, that the SNB had never had a representative from MIND sit on the Board.

The Chair of the SNB advised that there were areas, such as Abbey Wood, Plumstead and Thamesmead Moorings, that in line with the Police Cluster system, had no direct representation. SNP 's for these three areas were being developed. As part of the review, a new voting system, in respect of SNP representatives to the SNB, was being considered which would also help support more meaningful engagement at local level. She confirmed that, even if not sitting as representatives on the Board, all SNP members and chairs could attend the Board meeting and submit questions to the Board Members and Police.

A Member identified three areas that he felt that the Scrutiny Panel may wish to address;

- 1 – Was there a full list of groups in the Borough that needed funding?
- 2 – MOPAC funding – can the position of running a financial year behind be improved?
- 3 – If MetroGav were not identifying or reaching some groups would it be appropriate to ask them to speak to the Scrutiny Panel to look at ways of improving this.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Panel believe that it would be possible to consider progressing suggested actions 1 and 2. He noted that MetroGav were already heavily involved in proving support and were also an independent organisation with their own trustees involved in a provider/client position. He noted that there may be more that Members could do, in identifying groups within their Wards.

The Chair of the SNB confirmed that the Board tried to spread the £28,000 over several projects, asking groups to put in bids for projects requiring £5,000 to £10,000. She confirmed that she would forward details of the process and timelines for making bids available to Members, to pass to any groups, in their Wards, that may benefit from these grants.

Action: Chair SNB

Councillor Jackie Smith advised that she had raised getting a link to the information on submitting bids onto the Council website. The Chair of SNB confirmed that she was aware of this, but nothing had transpired but the publicity team did put the SNB meetings and conference dates on the Council Calendar

The Scrutiny Panel Chair requested details of the dates of the SNB meetings be past to the Panel as well as details of groups that received funding from the SNB over the past 3 years.

Action: Chair SNB / Corporate Governance Office

Resolved -

That the written and oral report be noted.

8. CCTV Scrutiny Review – interim report

The Assistant Director Community Safety and Environmental Health advised that, in addition to the Scrutiny Review, the department was looking at modernising the CCTV systems and strategy. This was an area of work that would be reported to the Panel, in due course.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Community Safety commended the Councils CCTV officers and service.

The Chair advised that all the evidence gathering meetings had been informative.

Resolved –

That the information provided within the report be noted.

9. Commissioning Future Reports

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 08.51pm

Chair