

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Councillors Adje, Basu, Bull, Reid and Winskill (Chair)

LC1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed attendees to the inaugural meeting of the Panel.

LC2. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

LC3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC4. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

LC5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted that Members enquiries was included within the service areas that the Panel covered. The list of these included within the report was not exhaustive and contained just the main headings.

The statement within the report which said that the Panel did not have the legal capacity to discharge overview and scrutiny functions and that all recommendations needed to be approved by the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee was queried. Panel Members were of the view that that this could cause unnecessary delay. Other local authorities that had standing scrutiny panels did not place similar restrictions upon them. It was noted that the new arrangements would be subject to review in due course.

AGREED:

That a letter be sent by the Chair of the Panel to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining the above-mentioned concerns of the Panel regarding the terms of reference.

LC6. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

Councillor Richard Watson, the Cabinet Member for Communities, was welcomed by the Chair and outlined the main areas of work that were currently taking place within his portfolio:

- A review was currently taking place of the Community Safety Partnership with the aim was of reinvigorating it. There was currently limited awareness of its role and function. In addition, the partnership needed to adapt to the changing economic environment. The review was being undertaken by an individual with considerable experience of this policy area.

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- Work to develop community hubs was continuing. The Council had already indicated its desire to maintain the borough's libraries and the intention was that they would also be used as a base for a range of other Council services.
- Work was also being undertaken to identify and better address the needs of the Traveller and Roma community within the borough. He was happy to share this with the Panel. A wide range of views were being sought to inform the work being done.
- Procurement was being looked at to ensure that processes met equalities requirements. Particular attention was given to ensuring that needs were picked up in contract specifications and throughout the procurement cycle.

In response to questions from the Panel, the following was noted:

- It was currently planned that only partners would be interviewed as part of the Community Safety Partnership review and not the public. The Partnership wished to move quickly with the review but the Cabinet Member agreed to consider further the appropriate level of engagement.
- The work on the Traveller and Roma community would include reference to crime and community safety issues.
- In response to concerns about the small size of some libraries and, in particular Coombes Croft, the Cabinet Member stated that not all community hubs would contain the same range of services. It was acknowledged that Coombes Croft had limits to its capacity. Consideration was being given to providing an enhanced range of services in the biggest libraries. Plans for Coombes Croft would reflect the fact that it was within a regeneration area. There was an ongoing discussion about its role and ward Councillors would be included within this.

In respect of leisure centres, the Panel requested a breakdown of activity between Park Road and Tottenham Green. There was a commitment that the successful provider would maintain concessionary rates. Prices were regularly reviewed by the Council – normally on a bi-annual basis. The contractor was required to implement these.

In respect of anti social behaviour, the Panel requested information on whether there was any correlation between its level and the economic downturn. It was noted that a report on this issue would be coming to the next meeting of the Panel.

Panel Members also requested information about developments concerning Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). The Cabinet Member stated that there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed in respect of SNTs. He hoped to arrange a meeting with the Police to take these forward. It was noted that local issues relating to SNTs could be addressed through area committees.

Panel Members requested clarification on the distinction between a Members enquiry and a service request. Concern was expressed that there was not the same monitoring and feedback processes in place for service requests as Member enquiries which meant that Members were not in a position to report back to residents on the progress with matters that they had raised on their behalf. The Cabinet Member

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stated that he was aware that there were some issues in respect of service requests which he was happy to discuss further. There were different timescales for different processes. It was noted that a service request became a Members enquiry if it was not dealt with sufficiently quickly.

The Chair raised the issue of the Olympics legacy and requested information on how the borough was responding. The Cabinet Member reported that a large number of initiatives and activities had been undertaken or were planned and agreed to provide further information on these to the Panel. These included outdoor gyms in several parks and the adoption of Inclusive and Active 2, the London wide sport and physical activity strategy for disabled people. A strategy for culture was being developed and this would include sport. It was noted that it was now more challenging to obtain external grant funding for projects as there were currently fewer opportunities to bid.

The Chair noted the success of the Paralympics and asked the Cabinet Member to lobby his fellow Cabinet Members to improve pavement surfaces for wheelchair users and less abled people.

The Chair reported that some Police teams now straddled to railway line that ran through the middle of the borough. He enquired whether this could represent an obstacle to responding quickly to incidents due to the limited number of crossing points. Chief Inspector Jane Easton, the Police Borough Liaison Officer, reported that there was currently no evidence of this happening. The Cabinet Member reported that the Police were currently looking to consult over local policing priorities.

The Chair asked if it was possible if questions asked by residents at area committee meetings could be put onto the Council's website. The Cabinet Member reported that the Head of Local Democracy was currently looking at this issue.

The Panel thanked Councillor Watson for his attendance and assistance.

LC7. ADDRESSING GANGS IN HARINGEY

The Panel received a presentation on this issue from Claire Kowalska, Community Safety Manager and Det. Supt. Stephen Clayman.

The presentation defined the features of gangs and provided a general outline of gang activity in Haringey and mapped gang crime activity across the borough. A multi agency approach to addressing the issue was undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership, with a Gang Action Group chaired by Det. Supt. Clayman leading the response. This aimed to prevent and minimise violence between gangs by sharing information and co-ordinating intervention plans for individual gang members.

The Police also undertook specific work to address the issue. There was a dedicated gangs unit within the borough that included both enforcement and engagement officers. A database that assesses gang risk was used to assist and inform interventions. In addition, the Police undertook specific work to engage with children and young people in schools as well as diversionary activities.

Haringey had been identified by the Mayor's Office as a one of the sixteen boroughs in London with issues relating to gangs. Action in respect of gangs was taken as part of the overall partnership strategy against violence. The key characteristic of gangs

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was that they were involved in criminal activity. There was now a greater focus on addressing the issue than previously. The accuracy of the hotspot map relied on the police correctly flagging up incidents as gang related. There had been 181 incidents logged last year, which equated to roughly one every two days. Noel Park appeared to be the main hot spot for gang related activity. Peak ages for involvement in gang activity were between 16 and 19.

The borough received grant funding from the Mayor's Office from two specific funding streams, the largest of which was for £199,074 from the Ending Gang and Youth Violence Funding. Amongst the projects funded was support to victims, which was provided by Victim Support, and safe and sound, which enabled vulnerable young people to be moved out of the borough. A peer review of work undertaken with funding obtained as part of the scheme was currently being undertaken.

Public health was now a key partner in work in relation to gangs and, in particular, working to reduce the spread of violent activity. It was noted that notable work had been undertaken in Strathclyde on territoriality that had involved public health.

The Panel stated that there appeared to be only one strategic objective behind interventions which was to prevent and minimise violence. There was currently nothing explicit on stopping gangs from forming and preventing young people from joining. It was noted that the Mayor's new strategy had a greater focus on prevention. Many current interventions were currently focussed on the more serious end of activity. The overall approach to gangs was wider and would be outlined within the borough's violence strategy.

It was noted that work was currently undertaken with schools from year 6 upwards. These interventions aimed to provide young people with a clear picture of the reality of gangs. A significant number of parents did not realise that their children were involved. There were an increasing number of girls involved and this was being addressed within schools. Gang activity often started in schools and continued outside. Data on gang activity was collected and analysed regularly and action taken on those most at risk. It was difficult to balance prevention with responding with incidents. Wider criminal networks were tracked as well. These normally involved older people than gangs.

A representative from Haringey Community Police Consultative Group stated the setting up of the Police gang unit, which had originally been one of the few across London, had been a positive development. A key area of its focus had been engaging with young people at an early stage as well as youth diversion. However, action was being now being focussed more on response. It was noted that gangs were responsible for around 15% of crime; the Panel challenged this figure as being an underestimate.

The Cabinet Member reported the money had been committed by the Community Safety Partnership for commissioning diversionary activities. Four young people were involved in the commissioning process, with one co-chairing the group responsible for leading on this. Action was also been considered as part of work with troubled families.

It was reported that there was an awareness of cross borough issues and, in particular, there were links with Enfield.

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A representative from the Youth Council stated that there could currently be a material incentive to join. Greater availability of part time jobs would assist in addressing this issue.

The Panel thanked officers and the Police for the excellent work that was being undertaken. The Panel were of the view that the strategic objectives of activity in response to gangs needed to be refined further and, in particular, preventative work given a higher and more explicit profile. In addition, efforts to address the issue within schools needed to be re-doubled as part of the preventative agenda. The Cabinet Member reported that working with schools was part of the action plan on gangs and funding had been given for all schools to visit the Ben Kinsella Knife Crime Exhibition. He agreed to pick up the issue of work within schools with the Cabinet Member for Children.

AGREED:

1. That the strategic objectives in respect of action by the Community Safety Partnership to address gangs include a more explicit focus on preventative work;
2. That efforts to address the issue of gangs within schools be re-doubled as a key part of preventative work to address gangs;
3. That the Gangs Action Plan be circulated to the Panel; and
4. That the Panel's thanks to officers and the Police for their excellent work be recorded.

LC8. THE USE OF TASERS

The Panel received a presentation from Sgt. Andy Harding on the extension of the distribution of tasers amongst Police officers within the borough.

He stated that a gradual roll out of tasers was taking place across the Metropolitan Police Service area. The Territorial Support Group (TSG) and the Police firearms unit currently had them but their distribution was to be extended to officers within boroughs. Following appropriate training, officers within Haringey were due to receive them in February. The TSG were providing the training. 40 officers would be trained and there would be a maximum of 4 officers in two patrol vehicles that would be equipped with tasers within each borough. The TSG and armed Police unit would still also have them.

Training lasted three days and, as part of this, officers would need to pass a fitness test before being authorised to use tasers. This included ensuring that they were also psychologically fit to handle them. The training also included an eyesight test and life support training. The taser training process had been examined by Amnesty International and found to be the best of its kind in the world. Not all officers were successful in passing through it. Around 25% did not meet the required level.

The public were generally aware of what a taser was. It worked on both a physical and a psychological level. It had been shown to be effective in stopping violent situations when it was seen. In the six years that tasers had been in operation, they

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had been drawn over 1,000 times but only used in just over 100 instances. As part of the extension of their use, 5 boroughs had already begun deploying them. They had been drawn on 55 occasions so far but only fired twice. In percentage terms, they had not been used after being drawn in 96% of cases.

The taser fired two 21 feet copper wire probes at individuals. The optimum distance for their use was 12 to 15 feet. The taser delivered a charge of 50,000 volts. However, the number of amps produced was only 0.0021 which was very small. Tasers were designed to incapacitate and interrupted messages from the brain to the muscles. Each taser contained a small computer and information on use could be downloaded. All incidents where tasers had been used were logged and reviewed. A full report was made should there be any issues arising.

It was noted that a taser was not a gun or a firearm although it was a "use of force" option. It was less injurious than other options. If a taser had already been used against an individual a number of times to no effect, officers would need to consider alternative means of restraint and officers were trained to do this. Although a discharge of 5 seconds was standard, tasers were able to give a continuous discharge.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked whether it would be possible to delay the deployment of tasers within the borough until the issues relating to the death of Mark Duggan had been resolved. Sgt. Harding stated that the decision to extend the deployment of tasers had been a Metropolitan Police wide decision. Any issues in respect of this would need to be determined by the Borough Commander, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead person.

It was noted that the use of tasers would be logged and reported to the Community and Police Consultative Group. The Panel were of the view that the forthcoming deployment of tasers needed to be communicated to the local community. In addition, it was important that any use was monitored closely to ensure its use did not disproportionately impact on specific communities or individuals.

Sgt. Harding reported that such monitoring information that was available in respect of tasers differed from stop and search and showed no particular pattern in terms of the ethnicity of those who had been tasered. The use of tasers was very closely monitored and any use had to be properly documented. The consensus amongst the public was that they were beneficial for the police to have as they reduced confrontations. They were an effective non compliance and use of force option.

The Panel thanked Sgt Harding for his presentation and for attending. They were of the view that it was important that the Police engaged fully with local communities about the roll out to ensure that there was wide awareness of the device, its potential and in which circumstances it might be used.

AGREED:

1. That consideration be given by the Police Service to updating the public information leaflet that had been produced so that it was more specific on the potential use and impact of tasers on individuals and communities;

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2. That the Police Service be invited to give a presentation to all Councillors and community leaders on the use of tasers so that the issues may be better communicated to the local community;
3. That the Community Safety Partnership be requested to share its proposals for community engagement with the Panel so that it may feed in any suggestions that it may have; and
4. That the Community Safety Partnership be invited to report back to the Panel in a years time on progress and provide appropriate monitoring information on any use of tasers within the borough.

LC9. BUDGET MONITORING

The Panel received monitoring information on the budget position within the areas covered by the Panel. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the purpose of the information was to ensure that the Panel was aware of trends and emerging issues within services before they considered the budget proposals later in the year. All of the scrutiny panels would be receiving similar information regarding their specific policy areas.

Panel Members suggested that future reports might be enhanced by a brief commentary so that Members could gain a better understanding of the figures and any trends.

AGREED:

That the Chair discuss further how best budget monitoring information might be presented most effectively in future with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Assistant Director of Finance.

LC10. LEISURE SERVICES

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that he had been informed that it would be unwise to enter into debate about the leisure contract at the moment as a decision on the award of the contract was shortly to be taken by the Council's Cabinet. Discussion could possibly open to Council to risk of legal challenge. It would therefore be prudent to defer debate until the process had been completed.

The Panel were of the view that it was important that there was an opportunity for contract specifications to be scrutinised to ensure that they reflected the needs of the community. It was noted that this process preceded the procurement process. Consideration could be given to how engagement was built into processes with a view looking at how this could be done at an earlier stage.

AGREED:

That the issue be referred back to the Panel in the new year and, in particular the Panel consider the engagement process with a view to making recommendations about how future processes could be improved.

LC11. AREA COMMITTEES - IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNANCE REVIEW CHANGES

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The Panel considered proposals for an in-depth project for the Panel on area committees and the implementation of the governance review proposals.

The Cabinet Member suggested that the project would look more widely at how the Council engaged with the local community on areas such as community safety. He also invited the Panel to assist in the work that was currently being undertaken on the Roma and Traveller communities.

AGREED:

1. That a meeting be arranged between the Chair, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Panel's support officer to discuss further the scope and terms of reference for the project; and
2. That the needs assessment for the Roma and Traveller community be circulated to Members of the Panel.

LC12. WORK PLAN

AGREED:

1. That the item on Members Enquiries be brought forward to the December meeting and that the item on domestic violence be moved back to January; and
2. That the scrutiny review report on Members Enquiries from 2004/5 be circulated to all Members of the Panel.

LC13. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

**Clr Dave Winskill
Chair**