

## **REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL 8 JANUARY 2013**

The draft minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Panel are herewith attached. The main items discussed were as follows:

### **1. CRIME STATISTICS**

We received a presentation from Claire Kowalska, Community Safety Manager and Superintendent Mark Wolski, Police Deputy Borough Commander on the latest crime figures for the borough. We noted the following:

- There was reason to suspect that the latest census figures for London underestimated the actual numbers. This could impact on crime figures by artificially inflating the crime rate.
- The Mayor's office had set a target for reducing crime by 20% by 2020. The target was based on reductions in crime of a level that had not been previously seen.
- The borough's current crime statistics showed very good progress in a number of areas. For the first time, there had been reductions in violent with injury and acquisitive crime in the winter months. This had also been achieved in the midst of a recession. In addition, there had been a large decrease in motor crime. One area of concern was the increase in domestic violence and one theory was that violent crime had been displaced into this.
- Four of the borough's wards accounted for 40% of crime. All of these were to the east of the borough.
- The Police were challenged by confidence levels locally. Although borough residents had high levels of confidence in the Police generally, there were significantly lower levels of confidence in the local Police. How the Police engaged with the community locally was important and this might provide an opportunity for the service to re-invent itself locally. It was acknowledged that they could do better. The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that community safety partners were looking at the issue of engagement generally.

We noted that Haringey had been one of the leading boroughs for gang related violence. However, there had been recent improvements. Some prominent gang members had been imprisoned following the riots in 2012. In addition, interventions appeared to be having an effect.

Mr Wolski was of the view that the reductions in burglary and robbery were no accident. They were the result of knowing who offenders were and targeting them. We noted that some boroughs had used anti social behaviour orders extensively but Haringey had not taken this route and had instead tended to use acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) or injunctions. Mr Wolski reported that dispersal orders could be used in exceptional circumstances but this was not taken lightly due to the effect that it had on people's liberties. One had nevertheless been imposed on Ducketts Common but would be reviewed in a month's time.

Concerns were raised at the possible closure and reduction in hours of some police stations within the borough. Mr Wolski stated the Police would prefer to keep two Police

stations that were open for 24 hours a day within the borough but it was necessary for the Police to make large budgetary savings. Discussions were nevertheless at an early stage.

The Chair asked if it was possible to provide figures for the number of people who attended local Police stations. Mr Wolski stated that it was possible to provide figures for the previous month and agreed to provide them. We were of the view that without accurate statistics on demand levels, it would be difficult for informed decisions to be made on possible closures.

The Cabinet Member reported that the political message that Members were receiving was that there would only be one Police station that was open for 24 hours per day for 7 days a week in each borough. The Deputy Mayor had already visited the borough and Haringey's view on this had been clearly communicated to him. He nevertheless felt that it might not be possible to convince him of the borough's case. If there was only one 24/7 Police station in Haringey, the likelihood was that this would be in the centre of the borough which was Wood Green. The best case scenario would probably be for a second 24/7 Police station in Haringey, which would probably be in Tottenham. There was also the possibility of some cross border arrangements with neighbouring boroughs. We agreed that this issue would be put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Panel.

The Chief Executive reported that the budget challenge that the Police faced was considerable and it was best to concentrate attention on the areas where there was scope for success. Regrettably Muswell Hill Police station was not likely to be a high priority. Creative arrangements could be considered to mitigate the loss of facilities such as the use by the Police of churches or tennis clubs. There was also potential for the Police to work out of community hubs in libraries. We noted that the MOPAC reported to the London Assembly and lobbying of the Members for Enfield and Haringey would be undertaken.

We noted the Council's position regarding the potential closures and the budgetary pressures that the Police were under and recognised that it was best to concentrate resources on the areas where there was some prospect of success but also felt important that consideration was also given to the west of the borough.

#### **We RECOMMEND:**

1. That a report be made to a future meeting of the Panel on clear up rates for crime within the borough.
2. That the Police Service be requested to provide attendance figures for Police stations within the borough for the last three months.

## **2. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

We received a presentation from Mike Bagnall, the Anti Social Behaviour Action Team Manager (ASBAT) on the work of his team. He reported that the team took action through the use of the civil courts and this could be useful in acting against anti social behaviour in situations where action by the Police through the criminal courts was not possible.

When a case was referred to the team, an assessment was undertaken and, if it was of sufficient seriousness, the team would take it on. Cases below this threshold were referred to the Housing Advice Team (Private Sector) or the Tenancy Management Officer (Public Sector). Unlike many other boroughs, Haringey's team dealt with the private sector as well as public sector housing. There were set time scales that applied equally to all cases.

Performance was currently slightly below target. This was due in most part to a large increase in the number of cases.

We noted that, despite the increase in workload, staffing levels had remained the same and were of the view that staffing levels should reflect levels of demand. It was noted that some limited additional resources had been identified. Discussions were also currently being undertaken with Homes for Haringey, who were responsible for 85% of cases referred to the ASBAT. They had agreed to deal with some initial parts of referrals. Although the number of ASB officers had remained the same, the team no longer included Police or voluntary sector members. The Cabinet Member reported that there might be scope for the Police and voluntary sector to be re-introduced as a result of the new MOPAC funding scheme.

We commended the team for their work but felt that consideration may need to be given to amending targets to reflect the fact that the workload had increased whilst resources had remained the same. It was noted that Councillor Bull had submitted some questions in his absence and agreed that there would be circulated directly to him by the ASBAT Team Manager.

We **RECOMMEND** that the ASBAT team be complimented on their work and continuing high level of performance despite the demands on the service and the lack of additional resources.

### **3. MEMBERS ENQUIRES**

We received the results of the survey that had recently been undertaken of Members regarding Member enquires and service requests. In addition, they received statistical information regarding the Member enquiries. We noted that the survey showed high a high percentage of Members were unclear about the distinction between Member enquiries and service requests and agreed to recommend that appropriate training should be provided in order to ensure a greater level of awareness.

Panel Members were of the view that progress with service requests should ideally be notified to Members. However, it was noted that the Feedback Team did not have the capacity to deal with this. This was also the case for services, some of which received a very high volume of service requests. This was particularly true of Single Front Line who, along with the Feedback Team, had recently suffered from cuts in staffing resources.

The Cabinet Member reported that an app was being trialled which would allow residents to report issues by mobile phone. This would provide a response. The Feedback team determined whether an issue was either a Member enquiry or a service request. If a Member was not happy with the designation, it could be queried and ultimately could be referred to the Cabinet Member.

We **RECOMMEND**:

That, in order to develop greater clarity and awareness of obligations and expectations, a specific training session for Members on Member enquiries and the distinction between them and service requests be arranged.