

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL 28 MARCH 2013

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

1. COMMUNITY HUBS

The Panel received a report from Alex Gear, Senior Project Manager from the Chief Executive's Service, on progress with the development of the borough's libraries into Community Hubs. The Panel noted that work so far had established a number of characteristics and trends within Haringey libraries. These included;

- The number of visits to libraries had reduced in recent years;
- Haringey's opening hours were significantly longer than those of other boroughs;
- Loan transactions were still predominantly undertaken by staff;
- Haringey had the lowest net cost per usage compared with nearest neighbouring boroughs;
- Unlike other boroughs, Haringey still had a free events programme;
- The commercial potential of libraries was low; and
- There had been a lower level of investment in them in recent years.

The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that the review had been set up at his instigation. The borough's libraries were well loved and had very low unit costs. However, the way in which libraries operated had changed and the role of staff was now more concerned with communicating with customers. There was potential for their use to be further developed.

The Panel noted that there would be consultation with library users, including friends groups, as part of the next phase of the review process. It was suggested that one option might be to gather all of the friends groups together in order to elicit their views.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member reported that it was hoped to enable parking fines and the purchase of visitors vouchers for parking to be paid for in libraries although some further work was required first, including investment in IT. It was noted that the plan for the next phase of the project would be available in mid April. The Panel thanked Mr Gear for his presentation and report.

We **AGREED** that a further report on the next phase of the development process for community hubs, including plans for consultation, would be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

2. MOPAC POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2013 - 2017

Superintendent Mark Wolski, Deputy Borough Commander, reported on the changes introduced as part of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017. The new model of neighbourhood policing was due to go live on 24 June. As part of the Plan, an additional priority had been set in addressing criminal damage and targets for these were currently being set. Recent performance data showed that targets for the borough had been exceeded for all categories of crime with the exception of violence. However, levels of public confidence in the Police within Haringey had dropped from 65% to 50%, which was the lowest within the country. Addressing this issue successfully would be a major challenge but it was essential that

engagement was improved. In particular, the service needed to be able to share its successes more effectively with the community.

In respect of Police stations within the borough, Tottenham would now be open for 24 hours per day for 7 days a week. Wood Green and Hornsey were planned to be open to the public for 40 hours per week. In addition, another three contact points within the borough would be established. In terms of the new Safer Neighbourhood Boards that were to be established as part of the MOPAC plan, there was no detail yet regarding their terms of reference. Interim boards would need to be in place by 214 June.

It was recognised that the extension of the distribution of tasers to borough based Police officers was a potential threat to community confidence. Four events had therefore been arranged to engage with the community on this issue. A total of 50 people had attended these. Some of the dates had unfortunately clashed with Council meetings which may have reduced the number of Councillors who were able to attend. Further briefings were planned though. He stated that he was convinced of the benefits of the use of tasers. A monitoring group would be set up to monitor their use within the borough. There had, however, only been 7 incidents so far.

Panel Members were of the view that engagement with young black people was likely to be particularly challenging for the Police service. They also felt that there was a risk that tasers might be used disproportionately against black people. Mr Wolski stated that detailed statistics on the use of tasers were not yet available but there appeared to be a fairly even balance in terms of the ethnicity of those who tasers had been used against.

Cllr Newton reported that Muswell Hill Police station had been kept open due to the support of the local community. The new model would entail the loss of this facility and he was concerned that this might affect local levels of confidence in the Police as well as leading to an increase in crime. He was of the view that ward panels in the area had worked very well and attracted a wide range of people. There was a danger that the benefits of this model of engagement would be lost under the new arrangements. He had drafted two letters to the Deputy Mayor for Policing expressing the concerns of local residents and suggesting alternative options for a Safer Neighbourhood Team base and front counter. However, a response had not yet been received. Mr Wolski agreed to follow this matter up.

Panel Members expressed concerns that the level of local knowledge within Safer Neighbourhood Teams could be lost under the new arrangements. Many had built up good local contacts and levels of goodwill. The Panel noted that a letter had already been written on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime regarding the MOPAC Plan that, amongst other matters, expressed concern at the lack of clarity regarding the proposed new model of neighbourhood policing. It was agreed to recommend that a further letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Deputy Mayor requesting clarification of how the new arrangements would work.

We **RECOMMEND** that a letter be sent on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime requesting clarification of how the new arrangements for neighbourhood policing will operate.

We **AGREED** that copies of the letters sent by Councillors Engert and Newton to the Deputy Mayor for Policing regarding the proposals within the MOPAC Plan and its implications for the west of borough be passed to Superintendent Wolski so that a response to the proposals within them from the Police Service may be sought.

3. USE OF TASERS

The Panel noted the response that had been received by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to concerns that he and the Panel had expressed regarding the extension of the distribution of tasers to borough based Police officers. It was also noted that the Police and Crime Committee of the London Assembly was undertaking a specific piece of work on tasers and were inviting contributions from interested parties. In view of the Panel's previous concerns on this issue, it was agreed to recommend that a submission be drafted to the Assembly on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that this focus on the following issues:

- Governance arrangements;
- Communication/engagement; and
- Possible disproportionate impact on minority communities.

It was noted that the letter to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had suggested that a further reply relating to engagement with the wider community would be sent to him from the Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing. It was agreed that the Chair would be asked if this had happened.

We **RECOMMEND** a submission outlining the concerns that have been expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the extension of the distribution of tasers to borough based Police officers be drafted and submitted to the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee in order to assist with their work on this issue.

Councillor Dave Winskill
Chair