

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 22 JUNE 2011

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –14 JUNE 2011

Community Safety Plan

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Community Safety Plan had been admitted late to the agenda in order that it could be considered as near to the beginning of the period to which it applied as possible.

An officer introduced the report, which brought together the plans of the Council, the Police and the Probation Service as well as a range of other agencies to address crime and anti-social issues identified in the Strategic Assessment which appeared elsewhere on the agenda. He advised that its purpose was not to develop policy but to report what the various services were committed to doing. The Plan would shortly be abolished as it was not an essential policy development tool but it was likely that there would be an update in 2012 and then no further Plan.

The Borough Commander tabled a presentation on the Restructure of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and advised that the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition and Cabinet had been briefed on the current position. During the course of his presentation he reported that:

- SNTs would maintain their existing structure, with an ability to temporarily move resources across ward boundaries in response to specific safer neighbourhood problem solving demand. This flexibility would mean that resources could be moved to busier wards. As the wards of, for example, Greenhill and Wealdstone had more issues, it would be helpful to move staff on a 1-2 week attachment from, say Pinner South ward, should the need arise.
- The current numbers of two Police Constables (PCs) and three Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would remain unchanged in each ward.
- Five Sergeants would be removed and some teams would be required to share a sergeant. He would need to place resources in accordance with demand. Across the Metropolitan Police Service, 150 sergeants would be removed.
- A sergeant would lead the Problem Solving and Anti Social Behaviour teams.
- The Harrow Community Board would oversee the actions of the Anti Social Behaviour response team and assist in the development of priorities for the SNT Tasking Team. The Board would comprise representatives and a deputy from each of the SNT clusters.
- SNTs should embody problem solving.

- Harrow was the only borough in London with a Community Board.

Following the presentation, Members made a number of comments and asked questions as follows:

- A Member challenged the proposals in that he felt it was a move away from SNTs. Every person in the borough had a basic right to minimum policing and he did not agree that staff should be moved across wards. The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) website stated that there were 386 police officers in Harrow and the Member suggested that 85% of the Borough Commander's staff could be moved into a problem area should the need arise. These views were not supported by some of the other Members of the Committee who felt that flexibility was the key. The Borough Commander stated that his teams had different roles and were therefore treated differently.
- Referring to the Strategic Assessment that was being considered in conjunction with the Plan, a Member drew attention to the figures in relation to thefts from motor vehicles and residential burglaries where Pinner South appeared in the top six.
- A Member reported that the Borough Commander of Brent was pleased about the flexibility of SNTs. The Member added that tasking groups was vital to getting issues resolved and that this model was an improvement.
- A Member challenged the Portfolio Holder on the level of policing in the town centre and was advised that funding of the team would continue but with 5 rather than 6 staff. An officer advised that the flexibility previously mentioned would enable a redeployment of staff should the need arise. The Member requested written confirmation that there would continue to be a town centre police team as this was not mentioned in the Plan.
- A Member questioned the Portfolio Holder on Third Party reporting sites, adding that the Hate Crime Forum had on one occasion been cancelled with only one hour's notice and two further meetings had been cancelled. She stated that if the Forum was highly valued, performance in terms of the meetings and how they were run should be improved. The Portfolio Holder undertook to look into this issue and the Member indicated that she would provide him with further detail.
- In terms of a Member's comments that the Plan lacked detailed outcomes/milestones, contained jargon and should be made more reader friendly to residents, an officer advised that there was a direct link with the Adults Treatment Plan. The Community Safety Plan had been drafted before the Police targets had been set and these were the primary indicators of community safety.
- In response to a Member's question on the creation of a Joint Intelligence Unit, it was confirmed that there was now a Joint Intelligence Group that had an IT capability in the Civic Centre. This enabled police to sit alongside local authority staff.

- A number of the statistics on page 10 of the report were particularly worrying and a Member questioned whether these were just an issue for Harrow. The Borough Commander stated that in terms of racist offences, domestic violence and hate crime, the increase was likely to be due to the increased confidence in reporting from vulnerable sections of the community.
- The consultation exercise did not mention under 18s and the common assault statistic indicated that this was an issue for 8-17 year olds. The Member questioned whether there was work being carried out in schools and any awareness training. An officer confirmed that under-18s had been consulted but had not given quantifiable results. The Plan had been considered by the Youth Parliament and there was a young person on the Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group. Given the Member's concern in terms of common assault on boys, the officer undertook to see if there was a gap in this area.
- The Plan and the Annual Strategic Assessment appeared to contradict each other in terms of figures and therefore a Member expressed concern at their validity. An officer explained that it was difficult to get a common reporting timeframe and so there would always be a difference between figures.
- In relation to a Member's query on the active engagement of religious and community leaders, the Borough Commander advised that Harrow had a large Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population, was one of the safest boroughs and that the police had significant support from religious communities.
- Activities for teenagers were not detailed in the report but appeared to be the fifth most important issue as rated by Harrow residents. An officer advised that the chart aimed to show the relevant importance of crime against a number of other issues for the purpose of comparison.
- In terms of the Government's drug strategy, a Member questioned which agencies the Council was working with and requested a written response on what analysis had been done on drug misuse and domestic violence, and on alcohol misuse and domestic violence, given their prevalence in Harrow. An officer advised that whilst the Government had announced the strategy, a lot of the detail had yet to be worked up. Another officer advised that two pieces of work were ongoing - the Information Strategy and the Drug Intervention Programme. The latter aimed to track people through the system to identify those that had been 'lost'. The Borough Commander added that there were a large number of repeat calls in terms of domestic violence and it was necessary to act quickly on this. The majority of perpetrators had been using alcohol and/or drugs and it was often difficult to keep the victims on board in order to make a conviction.
- More evidence to support the figures would be helpful and a Member questioned whether the Council would be providing additional funding to tackle domestic violence. An officer advised that some funding was provided through the grants process and the Leader of the Council had given a

guarantee that any shortfall would be met from his contingency budget. He had also requested a growth bid for funding to be mainstreamed.

- SmartWater had been rolled out two years ago and a Member questioned whether its effectiveness had been analysed and how many cases had been to Court based on its evidence. Members were advised that take up had varied across areas and that the burglary trend was being analysed. The Borough Commander reported that the MPS had launched Operation Target and whilst Harrow was not included, it was surrounded by boroughs that were (Barnet, Brent, Hillingdon and Ealing). An officer advised that every offender that came through Harrow was scanned for SmartWater and all SNTs had wands.
- Inclusion of Member representation on the Community Board was questioned and an officer undertook to provide a written response.
- The Portfolio Holder was questioned about the ability of the Probation Service to undertake the appropriate amount of offender supervision. He advised that there was activity and would advise the Member separately on numbers.
- Better use of accident and emergency data was requested and, if possible, data from the out-of-hours walk in service.
- A Member requested an update on the case of Kevin Sweeney, a resident and victim of Hate crime that had appeared on the BBC news. The Borough Commander reported that the ring leader had been arrested.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder, Borough Commander and officers for their attendance, participation and the responses provided.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's comments on the Community Safety Plan be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 June 2011.

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 June 2011

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