

Minutes

Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities
Policy Overview Committee
Thursday, 11 October 2018
Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



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Members Present:

Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman)
Wayne Bridges (Vice-Chairman)
Lindsay Bliss
Nicola Brightman
Farhad Choubedar
Jazz Dhillon
Vanessa Hurhangee
Kerri Prince

Apologies:

Alan Deville

Officers Present:

Jacqui Robertson, Service Manager for Community Safety
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Mr Andrew Deane, Chief Inspector of Neighbourhoods and Partnership
Ms Lisa Cronin, Inspector for Neighbourhoods and Partnership

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alan Deville.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

32. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that all items would be considered in public.

33. REVIEW: POLICING IN HILLINGDON

The Service Manager for Community Safety was joined by the Chief Inspector for Neighbourhoods and Partnership and Inspector for Neighbourhoods and Partnership from the West Area Borough Command Unit (BCU), to address the meeting regarding the Police opinion of the new policing structures in Hillingdon.

The Inspector for Neighbourhoods and Partnership informed the Committee that she had been in post since June 2018 and was new to Hillingdon. Her role included responsibility for Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing, and through regular meetings with various areas of the Council, it was possible to ensure that the Police and Council were working towards the same goals.

The Chief Inspector of Neighbourhoods and Partnership confirmed that he had also been in post since June 2018, having previously worked in Ealing Borough. The role included responsibility for West Area Command, and reported to the Superintendent and then Borough Commander. Members heard that it was important to manage strategic relationships across the three boroughs, which may have varied objectives. Regular meetings with the Service Manager for Community Safety help the organisations to work together and ensures that the best solutions come through a joint use of powers.

The Committee heard that a major benefit of the new BCU structure was that neighbouring boroughs can benefit from Hillingdon's good practice, while it was possible for Hillingdon to import good practice from both Hounslow and Ealing. Members were informed that issues often arise during change, and this was no different with the management level thinned down significantly, but despite the learning curve and changes, the new system was working well.

Councillors queried how information from the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) and Ward Panels were fed into the Community Safety Team (CST), and were informed that the changes in structure mean that there is now an Inspector for Neighbourhood Policing for all of Hillingdon, and one sergeants for every three wards. It was not always possible to have a sergeant at every quarterly Ward Panel meeting to discuss ongoing crime trends, and often less experienced officers may be present, but there was room to improve how the information was fed in to the CST. The Chief Inspector confirmed that the BCU was recruiting new talent as Dedicated Ward Officers (DWO), and an increase in numbers would improve attendance at Ward Panel meetings.

It was confirmed that CST meetings were attended by ward panel representatives and Councillors, and this, coupled with the meetings that the Police have with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team (ASBIT) and CST to share priorities, allow the opportunity to feed in information from the Ward Panel meetings. The Committee heard that the Inspector for Neighbourhood Policing, who was in charge of the SNT, also had a monthly meeting with the Service Manager for Community Safety, ASBIT and other relevant teams, and this provided another important opportunity to share information between teams.

The Inspectors confirmed that they were happy with the links with Local Authorities, and the solutions to tackling major issues, such as moped crime or high-risk anti-social behaviour, has a strong level of buy-in at a local level. Officers also fed back that they have a good working relationship with the Council.

Responding to questioning from Members about whether improvements were needed to the CST, the Inspector noted that joint tasking meetings were key, as each local authority was different, but it was important to have a finger on the pulse and meet every fortnight to discuss trends or deal with problematic areas, as this has been very successful. In contrast, the same meetings take place on a monthly basis in Hounslow, and although one size may not fit all, it is good to overlap when good practice is in place.

The Committee were informed that the BCU could see that major investment in the police from the local authority had taken place, and the funding has led to a sergeant in both the north and south which was a significant asset, and meant that there was capacity to service a large borough. While Members noted that funding from the local authority was generous, they were informed that the BCU was also stretched as not all the vacancies had been filled, as the Police's emergency function and criminal investigation functions had been prioritised. The Chief Inspector confirmed that the DWO teams were under monthly pressure, and stability was necessary, so the support from the Council was very welcome.

Responding to questioning from the Committee, the Chief Inspector confirmed that that the teams funded by Hillingdon Council are ring-fenced to the borough of Hillingdon, and this will remain the case.

Members heard that currently there was a strong focus in the south of the borough on knife and drug-related crimes, and three major operations have taken place in the borough recently. Outside of these forms of crime, the police targets were in-line with the priorities of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), but also the objectives of the local authority.

The Committee heard that the new structures meant that there was a period of profound change with the BCU, but the West Area BCU had been a beacon of success, and although there are always some issues with major changes, the new structure was the right way forward, and the benefits of the changes far outweigh any of the teething problems that the BCU has faced. Members were informed that many officers were working to their capacity, and noted that fatigue was a concern, and, as such, sustainability could become an issue.

The Chief Inspector stated that the only constant was change, but the BCU has absorbed the changes very well, and successfully found a way to work smarter with less resources. The most significant challenge faced by the BCU was the loss of officers, but the teams were doing very well in coping with this.

Members asked if the Police could provide a report regarding how tasking teams were used, and the Police agreed to provide a written response following the meeting.

Councillors questioned the use of firearms officers, and were informed that the West Area BCU is an unarmed BCU, but there has been a recent uplift in the Firearms Command Unit, and more armed-response vehicle units are deployable. These units are managed on a daily basis and can respond to an incident quickly, so are often the first units to the scene.

Members heard that information sharing was key to the BCU, and a daily digest of information was very helpful, while day-to-day information sharing was a vast improvement on previous practices. Sharing co-locations where possible could be beneficial to all parties and the Chief Inspector noted that this should be encouraged where possible. The Committee were informed that having one Chief Inspector working across three boroughs could be a challenge, but if meetings were harmonised and booked in the diary early, then this would not be a problem. Furthermore, quick contact was often vital to clarify actions or prevent events, but it was now easy to just pick up a phone and contact the Chief Inspector, which helped increase access to the Police for local authorities.

The Inspector for Neighbourhoods and Partnership confirmed that the current structure was working really well, and helped focus on problem areas and issues. The ability to share resources between the three boroughs was also very helpful, and this was exemplified by an eviction in June, when officers were pulled in from all boroughs to ensure there was a large police presence that prevented any problems. The Chief Inspector stated that having shared interests and resources across three boroughs could be very advantageous, and the secure MOPAC funding received can help all the local authorities.

Members noted the increased use of ward panel intelligence may be beneficial, particularly from ward panel chairmen, and the Service Manager for Community Safety confirmed that through Members' enquiries there is daily contact between ward sergeants and the Inspector for Neighbourhood Policing which allows intelligence to be passed on immediately. As such, the Committee was informed that this led to very good intelligence sharing.

Regarding the new CCTV cameras and operation room, the Chief Inspector commented that the major investment and upgrade was very welcome, as CCTV was essential for evidence and also a helpful crime reduction tool.

The Committee heard that the feedback received on the new Hayes Town Centre CCTV cameras has been very positive, and the quality of images are first rate. This has led to an improvement in identification of suspects via CCTV, due to the higher quality imagery. Members heard that the BCU and local authorities must take advantage of the upgrade, and an open line for the Service Manager for Community Safety to the control room was very helpful.

With regards to image requests, the Inspector confirmed that the process works very well, and while it can take a couple of days, the images are rarely required immediately. Members heard that the operation room at Hounslow received imagery from CCTV cameras within Hounslow and Ealing, but not from Hillingdon. However, the Committee was informed that this was due to a police issue with technology, and agreed to provide an update to Councillors on the problem.

The Chief Inspector confirmed that a line of communication with the CCTV Control Room was fundamental, and having the ability to view live feeds for major incidents was vital. The Committee heard that the control room was not staffed 24 hours a day, which was one limitation, and that having 24/7 staffing would improve the service further, as CCTV can carry a lot of weight in investigations.

Responding to Members' questioning, the Inspector confirmed that the control room allowed officers to watch live imagery on static cameras, but there was no control over mobile cameras. In the cases where mobile CCTV cameras were required for evidence, officers may need to walk the route of the crime to discover where CCTV was situated. The Service Manager for Community Safety noted that all crime reports include a question regarding whether there was CCTV footage of the incident, and as such, a phone call to the Community Safety room from the officer would allow them to provide the location of cameras, and help the officer to find out whether CCTV footage may exist.

The Committee heard that Hillingdon was leading the way with regards to Online Web Links (OWL), which allowed the BCU to contact local businesses, residents and Neighbourhood Watch directly. Members were informed that OWL has been a very good news story for Hillingdon, and is beneficial for both the BCU and local residents. The local authority has been very supportive of OWL, with nearly 5,000 views and 16,000 addresses signed up to the system. Private CCTV can also be used as part of the system, which is very helpful.

Responding to Councillors' questioning, the Inspector noted that the location of all mobile cameras was not required for all police officers, and some operations will not be known to other units, so that level of access is not necessary. Members heard that the police must ensure that access to CCTV resources is communicated well to officers, and noted that they would explore the possibility of keeping the locations of all CCTV cameras, static and mobile, at the top levels of the BCU and report back.

The Police confirmed that officers and local residents were supportive of OWL, and the potential to upload images of suspects to OWL would be helpful. Members noted that the police have promoted OWL heavily, and stated that they would check with Communications to see whether the Council had also promoted the system, as it may be helpful to do so if information had not already been publicised. It was confirmed that the OWL system had huge potential and the use of the system was improving steadily. The Service Manager for Community Safety confirmed that OWL had been rolled out across all 22 wards, although the uptake rates remained varied. The Committee noted it was good to make people aware of the system, but it was important to ensure good news stories were also circulated to residents.

The Service Manager for Community Safety stated that CCTV images could be sent live to the Police, and the Inspector confirmed that this was an invaluable tool as it gave officers a picture of the issue before they had even arrived at the scene.

The Committee thanked the Inspectors for their time, and noted it was encouraging to hear the work that was being done, and that both the Police and Council feel similarly positive about the new policing structures.

RESOLVED: That the evidence submitted within the witness session, with regards to the Committee's review into Policing within Hillingdon, was noted.

34. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED: That the forward plan be noted.

35. WORK PROGRAMME 2018-2020

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted, subject to the following changes:

- 1. A further witness session be added to Review A in January 2019, and the Findings and Final Report are moved later accordingly;**
- 2. The item to agree a topic for Review B be moved to a later date in 2019; and**
- 3. The update on the past review into Recruitment be moved to January 2019.**