

Minutes

EXTERNAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

23 March 2021

VIRTUAL



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Devi Radia (Vice-Chairman), Simon Arnold, Raymond Graham, Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead), Ali Milani and June Nelson</p> <p>Also Present: Superintendent Jill Horsfall, Neighbourhoods Policing - West Area BCU - Metropolitan Police Service</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Jacqui Robertson (Service Manager for Community Safety) and Nikki O'Halloran (Democratic Services Manager)</p>
36.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Vanessa Hurhangee.</p>
37.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made.</p>
38.	<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That all items of business be considered in public.</p>
39.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 9 FEBRUARY 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
40.	<p>SAFER HILLINGDON PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. Superintendent Jill Horsfall, Neighbourhood Policing West Area BCU, advised that the last twelve months had been an unusual time with regard to crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) with reductions in most categories of crime. There had been an 11% decrease in the number of notifiable offences and a considerable reduction in the number of robberies and burglaries. Although there had been a reduction in violent offences overall, there had been increases in some areas. ASB cases had included a large number of COVID-related instances.</p> <p>Concern was expressed in relation to the timescales and the way in which complaints about ASB were being dealt with. Ms Jacqui Robertson, the Council's Service Manager for Community Safety, suggested that, although ASB did not fall within her</p>

remit, she would be happy to talk to Councillors about any specific issues that they might have outside of the meeting and follow up on them. She understood that communication was key and that a lack of communication could leave residents feeling frustrated.

Although it was thought that Heathrow Villages had an active community group that worked with the police, it did not currently appear to be functioning properly. Although it was suggested that more dialogue was needed, Supt Horsfall advised that communication to the SNT should be sent to the team email address rather than to a specific officer to ensure that it was picked up and acted upon promptly. If the issue was in need of more urgent action but did not warrant a 999 call, it was suggested that the resident call 101 or use the online reporting facility. The a response was still not being provided, Supt Horsfall suggested that the matter be escalated to her or Ms Robertson as appropriate.

Ms Robertson advised that, as a result of the pandemic, figures in some areas had been favourable whilst in others there may have been an impact. The figures appeared to be reflective of restrictions being tightened and then relaxed. With regard to the target to *Reduce violence without injury by 5% per annum for the next three years (2020/21 to 2022/23)* there had been a 14.9% increase between Q1 and Q2 (from 1,279 to 1,470). Insofar as the target to *Reduce community and neighbourhood nuisance reports by 5% against the 2018/19 figure* was concerned, there had been a reduction between Q1 and Q2 (from 436 to 429) but the outturn for these quarters had been higher than the target which was 269.

There had been a small increase in the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse between Q1 and Q2 (from 51 to 53 against a target of 283). Given the disparity between the outturn and the target, this target would be subject to review to ensure that the data and target were robust. Reports of domestic abuse had increased slightly on the previous year which was thought to be as a result of COVID. Whilst some domestic abuse support services were being carried remotely and services to support victims were being delivered in a different way, it was recognised that the increase in prevalence of working from home meant that home was not necessarily a safe space. As such, the Council had introduced the Employers' Initiative. Hillingdon Women's Centre, GROW and the Sharon Project had been working with the Council to implement the Workplace Safe Space initiative (similar to the Employers' Initiative). This work had included the provision of training for 48 organisations and almost 200 employees to enable them to recognise signs of domestic abuse and know how to report it.

Ms Robertson noted that the Council had been looking at how it could work even better with partners. Communities had been engaged and action was being taken to improve the flow of communication from Neighbourhood Watch Schemes to Ward Panels to the bi-monthly meetings of the Safer Neighbourhood Board. Ward Panels would be reviewed to see how they were working. In Hillingdon currently, some Ward Panels had good Ward Councillor attendance but others were not so good. Consideration would need to be given to the priorities and effectiveness of the Ward Panels to ensure that resources were being used appropriately to respond to concerns.

Supt Horsfall advised that there had been good levels of public subscription to the OWL service. Hillingdon had good CCTV quality and coverage in the Borough and further work would be needed to use this more effectively. Suggestions on how this could be improved would be welcomed from Members.

Members were aware that there had been a lot of publicity when the OWL service had started and queried whether there had been an increase in subscriptions since the start of the pandemic. The Council worked with Neighbourhood Watch who ran OWL along with the police. OWL subscription figures were not available at the meeting but it was thought that there were about 1,800 across the Borough. Supt Horsfall advised that there had been some concern in the previous year about the availability to support the service but MOPAC had now agreed to fund the initiative going forward. It was suggested that the OWL service was used to disseminate crime prevention messages and could be used to circulate environmental health and other relevant messages.

Ms Robertson recognised that communication was key particularly when residents had raised concerns that could be resolved by the Council. In these circumstances, it would be important for the Council to take action where possible and use the victim's voice in decision making. The Council had good working relationships with the police across several different departments and the pandemic had highlighted the need to work smarter together and the difference that this approach could make.

With regard to hate crime, it was queried why the targets had not included race and sexual hate crime and the action taken to deal with online hate crimes. Supt Horsfall advised that the pandemic had impacted on these crimes. Because communities had largely spent Eid and Ramadan in isolation, racial hate crimes had reduced accordingly at that time. As there had been no Pride events staged, the LGBTQ+ community had been less visible and hate crimes against them had decreased.

The importance of reporting hate crimes (indeed any crimes) was stressed and Members were asked for suggestions of how to improve public confidence to ensure that victims of hate crime reported incidences. Ms Robertson advised that Ms Fiona Gibbs, the Council's Community Cohesion Manager, continued to monitor community tensions. Work had been undertaken to look at how to engage with 'fail to reach' groups. Bi-monthly multi-agency training sessions had been held prior to the pandemic which had looked at the barriers to reporting for these groups. It was important to push boundaries, listen to the community and address these issues in the training sessions.

Supt Horsfall advised that at the start of the pandemic there had been a COVID-related increase in the levels of sickness absence amongst police officers in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). This had coincided with a decrease in the level of crime in the Borough. The MPS had subsequently been tasked with enforcing lockdown restrictions (the MPS had been responsible for public spaces and the Council had been responsible for businesses). The repeated changes in legislation and the announcement of these changes before the legislation had actually been written had caused some challenges. That said, most residents had been compliant with the restrictions. Issues with non-compliance had been no greater in Hillingdon than anywhere else which had not been reflected in the higher than average infection rate in the Borough. There had been an issue with unlicensed music events (UMEs) over the summer which might have contributed towards this. Where people had been caught for non-compliance, the police approach had tended to be to engage and explain rather than enforce. That said, a number of fines had been issued.

Concern had previously been expressed that the creation of the West Area BCU (covering Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon) would result in fewer police officers in Hillingdon. Given the nature of the shared arrangements, it was not possible to specify numbers for each borough. There was a response team in Hillingdon that was currently parading out of Uxbridge Police Station but resources were flexed three ways across the boroughs to meet need and ensure that no area was left short of resources.

There were a number of specialist teams which proactively and reactively covered the whole of the West Area as required.

Insofar as digital presence was concerned, it was noted that local policing teams used Twitter but that Facebook was not necessarily used, therefore missing large community audiences. Many community groups used Facebook and trends could often be seen in the reports that were made by the groups, for example, an increase in the theft of catalytic converters. However, there was no interaction between these groups and the police. Supt Horsfall advised that digital presence was something that was discussed by the MPS centrally in terms of what it should look like and the level of resources needed to support the various platforms. She would raise the issue of a Facebook presence with the central team for inclusion and engagement, which covered digital platforms.

With regard to the issue of catalytic converter thefts, Supt Horsfall advised that this was a real issue both London-wide and nationwide. As such, conversations had been held with vehicle manufacturers on a national scale to look at making the removal of catalytic converters more difficult for thieves. Advice about how vehicle owners could protect their property had also been disseminated. Enforcement activity had yielded good results but this was a long term issue.

Concern was expressed about the illegal use of electric scooters on the roads in Hillingdon. Supt Horsfall advised that sellers were required to point out the legalities of using the electric scooters on the public highway. Whilst many of the larger chains would do this, but this would not necessarily happen with some of the smaller retailers or with private sellers. It was noted that a pilot scheme had been taking place in some cities with regard to the hire of electric scooters which had been speed capped and risk assessed. London had not yet been taking part in this pilot.

The safety of electric scooters had been a key issue. There had been some electric scooter owners who had had their scooters stolen. In addition, there had been some people who had been robbed by thieves using electric scooters. It was difficult for police officers to stop individuals on electric scooters if they were on foot but there were also safety issues for police cars trying to stop them. When the police stopped someone on an electric scooter, they would often start with engagement and advice but there might be aggravating factors that might mean going straight to enforcement.

The Chairman had received an email from a resident about a cannabis factory and numerous other offences being committed in the Harmondsworth area and queried whether the police and Council were aware of these issues. Supt Horsfall advised that cannabis factories were organised crime and were a driver of serious violence. She queried whether these crimes had been reported to the police as it would be quite easy for the police to get warrants for things like cannabis factories. Ms Robertson advised that, if the issues were raised as Members' Enquiries by a Councillor, she would contact the local SNT and then make enquiries with other Council teams to gather as much information about the households involved so that this could be passed on to the police. It was also useful for the resident reporting a matter to be specific about times dates and locations so that CCTV could be reviewed to support any investigation.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. The Chairman was keen that the Committee chose issues that would make a difference for scrutiny in future meetings. Suggestions for scrutiny in the new municipal year had been included in the report and additional suggestions were made during the meeting. The composite list of suggested topics were as follows:

1. Preventative health – this could be obesity, childhood immunisations, cancer screening, etc;
2. OWL / Neighbourhood Watch – there appeared to be some gaps in this across the Borough;
3. 5G and connectivity – it was suggested that Hillingdon was probably not currently where it should be with regard to coverage but consideration could also be given to the impact on the environment/aesthetics and community buy in;
4. Children's dentistry – it was agreed that this issue, which had previously been the subject of an unfinished Select Panel review be concluded in a single Committee meeting (if possible);
5. Journalism and local democracy;
6. Apprenticeships and adult learning;
7. Environment Agency – work undertaken in Hillingdon with regard to river maintenance and upkeep (not canals or water treatment) to possibly include input from organisations such as Colne Valley Landscape Partnership Landscape Partnerships. The Democratic Services Manager would investigate this issue and report back to the Committee; and
8. Children's mental health – children were having to wait a long time for a mental health referral. It was agreed that this would be raised with Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust at the meeting on 29 April 2021.

At the meeting on 28 April 2021, consideration would need to be given to which topics would be scheduled into the 2021/2022 Work Programme.

With regard to the Hillingdon Hospital redevelopment, the Chairman advised that he was having regular meetings with Mr Jason Seez. In addition, at the Committee meeting on 28 April 2021, Members would be meeting with representatives from The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to look at the hospital redevelopment project as well as performance and the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre review. Updates from the Hospital about the redevelopment could then either be included alongside those of the other Trusts during normal Committee meetings or scheduled as a single item agenda.

Members were asked to provide the Chairman and the Democratic Services Manager with any additional topic suggestions in the next couple of weeks so that investigations could be undertaken before the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.51 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nikki O'Halloran on 01895 250472. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.