

Minutes

EXTERNAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 September 2017

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chairman), Teji Barnes, Mohinder Birah, Tony Burles, Alan Chapman (In place of Ian Edwards), Brian Crowe, Phoday Jarjussey and Michael White</p> <p>Also Present: Steve Ashley, Chairman, Local Safeguarding Children Board / Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board Dan Kennedy, Deputy Director Housing, Environment, Education, Health and Wellbeing Tom Murphy, Assistant Director of Early Intervention Prevention & SEND Jacqui Robertson, Service Manager for Community Safety Colin Wingrove, Borough Commander, Hillingdon Metropolitan Police Service</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Nikki O'Halloran (Democratic Services Manager)</p> <p>Press and Public: 2</p>
19.	<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 Ian Edwards (Councillor Alan Chapman was present as his substitute).</p>
20.	<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That all items of business be considered in public.</p>
21.	<p>MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME AND METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE: PUBLIC ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Borough Commander, Mr Colin Wingrove, for attending, particularly as he had also been presenting at an event about the same issue in the Council Chamber the previous evening. Mr Wingrove had been pleased with the attendance at that event which gave members of the public the opportunity to comment on the proposals. It was noted that the deadline for consultation responses was 5.30pm on 6 October 2017.</p> <p>The MPS had been engaging with members of the public and encouraging responses to the consultation through Facebook, Twitter and, more locally, in Hillingdon People. However, it had still been challenging to get residents to attend the consultation events.</p> <p>Members were advised that the strategy had been worked up by the Mayor's Office for</p>

Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and not by the Borough. It covered all 32 London boroughs and had been brought about by the need to save £400m on top of the £600m already saved. The first round of savings had resulted in the outsourcing of some back office functions and a reduction in the number of PCSOs. It was anticipated that the proposals would result in revenue and capital savings and would include an additional 800 new police officers.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) currently occupied more than 400 buildings across London and it was anticipated that the proposals would reduce this number to around 100. Each borough would have one police station which was open 24/7 - the proposal was that, in Hillingdon, this control centre would be on the current Hayes site. The stations in Uxbridge and Ruislip would be sold off and the Northwood station would be returned as per the building's covenant. Mr Wingrove noted that the Uxbridge site would sell for more money than the Hayes site and cost more to maintain. The proposals would include the refurbishment and modernisation of Hayes police station to accommodate the additional 200 officers that would need to be decanted from Uxbridge. The detail of this work had not yet been determined. It was suggested that the projected value of the Hayes site would increase with the advent of Crossrail so that it was more in line with (or exceeded) the value of the Uxbridge site.

Members queried whether an adequate cost benefit analysis of the proposals had been undertaken (which included the impact on services and operational ability) and whether the value of the sale of Uxbridge and the refurbishment of Hayes would cancel each other out. Concern was expressed about whether Hayes, even after development, would have sufficient capacity for staff and whether consideration had been given to developing a brand new purpose built station in the Borough. It was noted that there were operational advantages and disadvantages to both sites, for example, demand was greater in Hayes, Yiewsley and West Drayton but Uxbridge would be more visible and was closer to Brunel, the London Underground and major road networks.

Each of the 32 London boroughs previously had their own Borough Command. Pilots had been undertaken to group some boroughs together into single command structures/Basic Command Units (BCUs) in order to deliver a better and more efficient service. Although the performance of / learning from these pilots had not yet been evaluated / analysed, if BCUs were to be rolled out across London, Hillingdon would be partnered with Ealing and Hounslow and consideration would be given to the structure of specialist teams.

Concern was expressed about the restructuring of specialist services and how they would communicate with Borough officers. This communication was critical with regard to child protection conference and strategy meetings so it would be essential that social workers were able to contact the relevant officers out of hours. Mr Wingrove advised that Islington/Camden had created a safeguarding umbrella for a number specialist units where officers worked shifts to cover 24/7. He also assured Members that many local arrangements, such as MASH, would remain in place but that other additional arrangements would also be put in place.

Hillingdon was a large borough bordered multiple counties and which was impacted by issues such as HS2. As such, it would be important to ensure that consideration was given to locating patrol cars in Ruislip and Hayes as part of the new arrangements. It was noted that Ealing was a smaller and more compact borough but that it would experience similar patrol car coverage issues as its police station was likely to be in Acton.

Members were advised that the number of Dedicated Ward Officers (DWOs) in each

Hillingdon ward had increased from 1 to 2 in 2016 and had resulted in very positive feedback. Public confidence had increased over the last year from 56% to 64%.

It was thought that police officers' use of mobile technology would be helpful and would enable them to be more responsive. Tablets would be rolled out to all front line officers in mid-October and, unlike the rest of their equipment, they would be allowed to take them home. Officers would be given power packs to ensure the batteries for their tablets lasted for the duration of their shifts. A trial of mobile technology in Hammersmith and Fulham had freed officers up for at least one hour each day and had proved very popular.

Investigations were currently underway to identify partner locations around the Borough that could be used as hubs for DWOs. The Council and other partners had been supportive of this concept. It was anticipated that hubs would be based near to DWOs' patrol areas and would be accessible. Mobile technology would be key and would help to improve efficiency through the increased use of Skype and the collection of CCTV footage (an application was being developed for businesses to be able to transfer encrypted files to the MPS). As the DWOs would be able to access information remotely, they would be able to update reports on vulnerable adults and children, which would assist with safeguarding.

It was recognised that an increased police presence was an important part of effective policing which provided a visible deterrent.

Hillingdon's major custody suite was based at Polar Park which would be affected by the third runway at Heathrow if it went ahead. Individuals arrested by police officers in Hillingdon would generally be transported to Polar Park to be held in custody.

Concern was expressed that the location of DWOs in hubs around the Borough, rather than working from a central base, would reduce contact between police officers and potentially have a negative impact on team working and camaraderie. Mr Wingrove noted that Hillingdon was currently a people-centric Borough with police officers being able to access support services such as counselling, the wellbeing forum and professional development days. Consideration would need to be given to how this approach to staff would be maintained with regard to remote working, particularly from a supervisor perspective. To this end, where possible, Mr Wingrove tried to contact every officer in Hillingdon that was injured in the line of duty to ensure that they were looked after. Plans had been put in place to monitor staff wellbeing and the leadership would need to ensure that remote workers were adequately supported.

Mr Wingrove advised that the proposals also included an increase in the number of Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) to ensure that every school had access to one. Concern was expressed that if there were fewer police stations, the schools would become a substitute station. Members were assured that SSOs were associated with specific schools.

The consultation had already prompted a significant number of detailed questions about the logistics of the proposed changes. However, as the proposals were still in the early stages, this level of detail had not yet been worked out.

Mr Wingrove noted that there had been a soft launch of the new online service. Despite not advertising the facility, there had been an increase in its usage. The soft launch had enabled the MPS to smooth out any wrinkles in the system. Users were only able to report less serious crimes through the online service and the website would force the user to call the police if the crime were more serious.

It was anticipated that online and telephone investigations would evolve over time. The

MPS was aiming to increase the number of telephone investigations from 34% to 40%. It was noted that 101 operators assessed calls as they came in and passed them on to the relevant team to progress. This process freed up officers from having to visit every victim or scene of crime so that they could concentrate on more urgent issues. Clearly, there were some crimes where it would be important for officers to visit and speak to victims face to face.

It was recognised that the introduction of web contact could ease the pressure on the 101 service. As demand had already increased by 12%, plans were in place to improve the way that this contact was dealt with as well as how to reduce the demand on the service in conjunction with partners (for example, monitoring repeat callers who were known to multiple organisations). Demand varied and an algorithm was used to determine the right number of officers and put them in the right place at the right time. Members were assured that any hate crime reported through Twitter was dealt with quickly.

The service would need to ensure that plans were in place with regard to how these proposals would actually work on the ground: consideration would need to be given to how an officer's day would actually look like; where their equipment would be stored; and where they would park their personal vehicles. Mr Wingrove acknowledged that staff engagement would be a very important part of the process and that a team was in place to work on the fine detail through a sophisticated change programme.

If they were interested, Mr Wingrove invited Members of the Committee to ride along with a member of his team to experience their working day first hand.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. the Committee's comments be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration; and**
- 2. the presentation be noted.**

22. THE CRIMINALISATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) (Agenda Item 5)

As the criminalisation of looked after children (LAC) fell within the remit of more than one Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman and Labour Lead of the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee had been invited to participate in this item.

Mr Tom Murphy, the Council's Assistant Director of Early Intervention Prevention & SEND, advised that the Strategy and Protocol attached to the report set out the activity between the police, social care and youth offending, primarily around placements. The effectiveness of the Strategy and Protocol would be regularly monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Where a LAC had committed a crime, staff in children's homes would be more likely to call the police than foster carers who tended to deal with the situation as they would with their own child. As such, consideration needed to be given to how the police were equipped to make a judgement about an individual child (culturally and professionally) in a care home.

It was noted that Children in Care (CiC) were disproportionately represented within the criminal justice system. As the corporate parent, the Council had a responsibility to work with the police to put local arrangements in place to ensure that proportionate/balanced action was taken to deliver justice.

It was suggested that the police formed a wider part of the community parenting

community and recognised that the relationship between the Council and the police was good. Mr Murphy noted that the protocol had helped the Council to assist the police in their duties and raise awareness of people in care that had issues which made their transition from child to adult more challenging.

One of the three children's homes in the Borough had had 51 police attendances in the last quarter (37 of which were in relation to one child). Mr Murphy advised that the majority of police attendances had been curfew related.

Members were advised that there were currently 12 children currently deemed to be missing from care. However, 7 of these were thought to be immigration absconders. Mr Murphy would forward further details regarding absconders to Democratic Services for circulation to Members.

It was suggested that children in foster care were less likely to have a lot of other children at home and therefore proportionately less likely to be exposed to negative influences. Furthermore, children admitted to care homes were likely to be older so it was more challenging to correct poor behaviour. It was noted that children could become LAC because they had a criminal episode or could have a criminal episode because they were LAC.

Concern was expressed that children in foster care experienced breakdowns in communication with their carers because of the child's criminal behaviour. Furthermore, appearances in court were seen by some of these children as a badge of honour and they needed to be educated about the impact of the behaviour in terms of their future. As the application of principles and approach in the Strategy and Protocol applied to children foster care and care homes, Mr Murphy would ensure that the documents were updated to be more explicit. It was suggested that this education be delivered by the care homes and that consideration be given to addressing the emotional root causes of the behaviour before it became an issue. Programmes such as Unique Swagga offered young people a diversionary opportunity to turn their lives around.

It was queried whether it needed to be the police that dealt with all calls from care homes as this could result in the badge of honour or the start of a stigma. Furthermore, it was suggested that there would be benefit to postponing police action in some cases and clear guidelines on when to charge children. As such, Members requested that the wording in paragraph 2.3 be updated to state that there would be a *presumption* that the police would not necessarily arrest. Mr Murphy would revisit this wording to ensure that the best solution was derived from the given circumstances.

With regard to out of borough placements, the Council was still the corporate parent to these children. It was suggested that consideration be given to putting children in placements outside of Hillingdon where they were taken away from local negative influences and potentially minimising the risk of further offending. It was also queried as to the extent that CiC were given opportunities that were normal to other children, such as membership of uniformed groups (Air Cadets, Police Cadets, Scouts, Guides, St John's Ambulance, etc), sports clubs and creative activities, and whether they took up these opportunities. The Hillingdon Virtual School provided activities for LAC at certain times of the year but these were not clubs where the children could be part of a group of children that regularly met. Mr Murphy would establish whether there was any data available on memberships and, if there was, forward it to Democratic Services for circulation to the Committee.

Members requested that the services provided by the Council (and perhaps other

organisations) be linked to the Strategy and Protocol. Mr Murphy noted that paragraph 2.6 of the Protocol mentioned signposting to other services/partners. However, consideration would need to be given to how the wider offer could be plugged in.

It was noted that one of the Corporate Parenting Sub Groups had been investigating the possibility of a leisure card for LAC. This type of scheme had been implemented in other parts of the country with the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities where their LAC had been placed out of borough. Progress was being made in Hillingdon.

Concern was expressed that, if the police attended, it was a judgement call as to whether or not the young person was arrested which could then result in a criminal record. LAC taken to a police station were likely to have to wait up to eight hours before someone arrived to represent them who they may never have met before (it was important to get a social worker there as soon as possible to support the child in the same way that other parents would). These children would be given different advice and treated differently to non-LAC. It was noted that if every parent phoned the police every time their child missed their curfew, the police would be very very busy.

CiC were often labelled as being trouble. There were some school staff who had complained about the number of LAC that they had to take in. These staff should be reminded that LAC were children and should not be labelled in this way.

It was suggested that the Strategy and Protocol needed to be forwarded to the LSCB and other bodies to ensure that there was buy in and the expectations of other agencies needed to be clear. Mr Murphy advised that the content of these documents had been coproduced by the police, Council and other partners.

Concern was expressed about the possible closure of Mulberry Parade Children's Home. Mr Murphy would speak to colleagues in Social Care to establish what was happening. It was suggested that the future care of these children needed to be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Committee wanted to stress that crime was not an inevitability for LAC. It would be important to ensure that all agencies signed up to the approach being proffered and that the police identified alternative action to arrest.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. Mr Murphy forward further details regarding absconders to Democratic Services for circulation to Members;**
- 2. Mr Murphy ensure that the Strategy and Protocol documents were more explicit about the inclusion of foster care;**
- 3. Mr Murphy establish whether any data was available on memberships and, if there was, forward it to Democratic Services for circulation to the Committee,**
- 4. Mr Murphy speak to colleagues in Social Care to establish what was happening with Mulberry Parade Children's Home; and**
- 5. the presentation be noted.**

23. **WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.32 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.