



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Environment and Residents Services Select Committee Minutes

Tuesday 9 November 2010

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Robert Iggulden (Chairman), Jean Campbell, Rachel Ford, Lisa Homan, Jane Law and Peter Tobias

Other Councillors: Nicholas Botterill (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management), Mark Loveday (Chief Whip and Cabinet Member for Strategy) and Greg Smith (Cabinet Member for Residents Services)

Officers: Pat Cox (Head of Policy and Spatial Planning), Gary Marson (Principal Committee Coordinator), Maureen McDonald-Khan (Assistant Director, Building and Property), David Page (Assistant Director, Safer Neighbourhoods), Larry Wright (Head of Integrated Youth Services), Teresa Brown (Head of neighbourhood Services, H&F Homes) and Patricia Cadden (Senior Commissioner for Substance Misuse)

Others; Kevin Hurley (Metropolitan Police, Borough Commander), Cindy Butts (Metropolitan Police Authority), Adela Kacsprzak (Assistant Chief Officer, London Probation Trust)

21. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

RESOLVED that;

- a) The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Residents Services Committee held on 7 September 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- b) Progress with the acceptance and implementation of recommendations be noted

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ali de Lisle, Wesley Harcourt and Matt Thorley.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP - REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES

The Committee received an overview of community safety activity in the borough, examining a number of related issues including the role and performance of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Council's community safety unit, and the development of the Partnership's new strategic plan. Members also noted the impact of relevant Government initiatives including the concept of the Big Society and the Policing in the 21st Century White Paper. In so doing the Committee heard from and took the opportunity to question the following key stakeholders in the Partnership;

- Kevin Hurley, Borough Commander Metropolitan Police,
- Cindy Butts, Metropolitan Police Authority,
- Adela Kacsprazak, Assistant Chief Officer London Probation Trust,
- Councillor Greg Smith, Cabinet Member for Residents Services
- Dave Page, Assistant Director, Safer Neighbourhoods
- Larry Wright, Head of Integrated Youth Services,
- Patricia Cadden, Senior Commissioner for Substance Misuse

Members recalled that the CDRP brought together statutory agencies to tackle crime and disorder, anti social behaviour and drug misuse across the borough. The current three year Partnership Plan which set out the objectives and planned the activities of the CDRP was due to expire in 2011. The forthcoming annual strategic assessment of crime and anti social behaviour would inform the shape of the new Plan covering the period 2011-14.

Kevin Hurley provided the Committee with details of the 5 year trends in crime figures including projected outcomes for 2010/11. The steady downward trend in total notifiable offences had been interrupted in 2009 with a 3% increase following the opening of the Westfield centre which brought with it an additional 1,000-1,500 offences per annum, predominantly shoplifting and pick pocketing.

In response to a question from Councillor Lisa Homan the Committee was informed that the Westfield shoplifting was partly undertaken by organised gangs from outside the borough while some outlets were stalked by gangs targeting children coming out of shops. The Centre had a large security force but from January 2011 would be funding an additional 8 police constables and a sergeant to operate within the area. Meanwhile the Police continued to work with the Westfield Centre and the individual stores to identify solutions including the banning of individuals from the premises, intelligence sharing and the use of store staff as special constables.

Members noted that the numbers of residential burglaries and personal robberies showed a significant decline on the 2005 figures. Kevin Hurley acknowledged that in both cases the Police had been slow to react to upward trends in the spring and early summer but had now asserted a measure of

control and performance over the previous 12 weeks was substantially more encouraging. Violence against the person and theft from motor vehicles had also been reduced year on year.

Kevin Hurley emphasised, however, that despite these promising figures there was no room for complacency. Alcohol related violence associated with licensed premises was increasing in the Shepherds Bush area and there had been a small increase in rape offences. Knife and gun crime was stable and on a relatively small scale; there had been 158 cases of knife crime recorded in the year to date and 10-20 gun crime incidents, although it was emphasised that the definition of gun crime was very wide.

Councillor Homan suggested that Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels would welcome information of the type made available to the Committee at the meeting in order to ensure wider public access. The Chairman concurred, suggesting that there were opportunities to better disseminate information through the media on the valuable work done by CDRP partners, thereby helping to reassure the community. Cindy Butts, however, cautioned that while there might be scope for some cross fertilisation of approach, the Safer Neighbourhood Panels were designed to each provide a distinctively local perspective. Cllr Greg Smith agreed that there was a clear linear organisational structure in which Ward Panels set priorities for local Safer neighbourhood teams. The Community Safety Board and Crime Summit would be more appropriate places for information of this type. There were plenty of local fora and bodies accessible to the public; the challenge remained encouraging people to engage.

The Committee also raised the issue of Ward Member attendance at the Safer Neighbourhood Panels. The position appeared to be variable with some Members freely invited to attend and participate and others requested not to do so. Councillor Smith suggested that this might be a consequence of original advice from the Metropolitan Police, now withdrawn, that Councillors should not sit on the Panels. Kevin Hurley could not see any obstacle to Member attendance and agreed to ensure that details of the meetings and the relevant papers were sent to ward Members. He also agreed that the Strategic Assessment could be provided to the Committee, suitably redacted in view of the sensitive intelligence it contained.

Larry Wright outlined the activity and performance of the Council's Youth Offending team which was responsible to both the CDRP and the Childrens Trust. It was noted that some 236 young people within the borough had been involved in crime during the previous 12 months, a 50% reduction from 2004. Of these 20 offenders were being actively targeted as a result of shared intelligence which suggested they were likely to be involved in serious violence.

Performance against the National Indicators showed a decline in the number of first time entrants to crime and continuing improvement in the reoffending rate with an average of 0.78 crimes being committed by offenders for every 1 in the previous year. There had been an increase in the numbers of young people taken into custody and the number of offenders from Black and African Caribbean backgrounds was disproportionately high, the group being

over represented by 29%. This over representation was however declining and the situation was partly explained by a correlation with disadvantage. Efforts were made to keep young people in education, training or employment and the trend was positive with 90% of clients leaving the Youth Offender service with a full time placement.

Mr Wright informed the Committee that a single youth offending service was being planned across Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster in order to drive efficiencies. The three authorities, together with Wandsworth, were also planning an application for a custody pathfinder project. Savings in management costs of 25% were targeted for 2011/12.

Councillor Homan asked how parents could access advice on programmes and activities to assist them in managing their children's behaviour. Mr Wright commented that Officers worked with a range of organisations to ensure that whenever parents came into contact with an agency there would be somebody capable of advising them on suitable services. Schools and Childrens Centres were key points of contact. It was important that processes and systems were developed to enable people to access services at an early stage, thereby avoiding the need for more intensive interventions subsequently.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Larry Wright confirmed that each young offender was assessed and provided with a tailored programme of support suited to the specific needs of the individual.

Patricia Cadden addressed the Committee on the issues of cannabis misuse and substance misuse by parents. Cannabis misuse was a priority for the CDRP and although figures were declining it accounted for 77% of offences for possession and was a significant issue in respect of police time and harm to individuals. Drug treatment funding tended to be directed towards more problematic users such as those on crack or heroin but there remained a need to manage cannabis use.

In response to a question from the Chairman Ms Cadden confirmed that possession of cannabis was a crime and its use was a contributory factor in some crime amongst the younger age groups although not to the extent of harder drugs. Councillor Greg Smith remarked that the real impact was the progression to harder drugs with the real criminality centred on the supply networks. The approach to Fixed Penalty Notices for possession of cannabis was changing in order to provide a carrot and stick approach to managing repeat offenders and pathways into treatment, employment, training and education. Turning Point Druglink in Shepherds Bush provided 5 day a week access to information, advice and structured counselling. Ms Cadden confirmed that the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) was working with the Police on intelligence sharing and particularly the challenge of updating reports on the Police computer system.

The Committee noted that 18% of the drug treatment population in the borough were parents against 30% nationally. Nevertheless, it had been estimated in 2008 that as many as 3,000 children could be exposed to harmful impact as a result of parental substance misuse. Interventions were

beginning to have an impact but the borough had historically high rates of alcohol related illness attributed to increasing and higher risk drinking. Information sharing across services was vital but often difficult to achieve as those with alcohol or substance misuse issues were often reluctant to disclose due to a fear of losing custody of their children. DAAT was working to reduce the impact on children, integrating the issue into childrens social care processes, developing signposting information for parents and offering parents access to paid childcare in order to help them reintegrate into society.

Adela Kacsprzak provided the Committee with an outline of the strategic priorities for the London Probation Trust, details of its statutory probation caseload in the borough and challenges going forward and details of the approach to integrated offender management.

Members noted that a local Hammersmith & Fulham Delivery Unit had been established in June 2010, decoupling the borough from its previous linkages with Wandsworth as part of a move by the London Probation Trust o localism. The strategic priorities of the Trust, including risk management, public protection and the reduction of reoffending, were closely aligned with those of the CDRP. There were currently 876 people on statutory supervision with 353 offenders serving custodial sentences. Some 76% had a problem with drugs, 54% a problem with alcohol and 45% did not have stable accommodation. The Trust worked closely with partners to stabilise offenders, ensuring that support needs were met in order to educe reoffending.

The Trust was a key player in the Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) Strategy funded by the partnership as an integrated approach to dealing with prolific offenders. There had been a 72% reduction in the reoffending rate in the PPO cohort of 31 individuals in 2009/10. The scope of the project was shortly to be enlarged to include cohorts with drug issues and in need of resettlement. An integrated offender management approach was also shortly due to be piloted in respect of male perpetrators of domestic violence prepared to work on a voluntary basis to address their violent behaviour. Ms Kacsprzak confirmed that the integrated approach was fully established in the borough and worked more successfully than in other parts of London.

The Chairman enquired whether agencies and charities ever undertook any research into the causes of domestic violence in an effort to concentrate resources on prevention. Dave Page confirmed that work had been undertaken to establish the causes and his staff collaborated with colleagues in Childrens Services and other agencies on early identification of potential problems.

Dave Page, responding to a question from Councillor Lisa Homan, confirmed that two Officers were employed by the Council to work with the Probation Service on the community payback scheme. Adela Kacsprzak informed Members that the Probation Trust was establishing a community forum in order to identify suggestions to take Community Payback forward but the scheme was going out to competition in 2011 and it was not certain that the Trust would still be delivering it. Ms Kacsprzak agreed to give consideration to a suggestion by the Chairman that the scope of the scheme could be

broadened and its effectiveness enhanced if it was extended to incorporate under resourced community groups in need of volunteer support.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful if Members had the opportunity to meet with recipients of some of the services highlighted during the course of the meeting and discuss the success of the interventions with them. Adela Kacsprzak confirmed that it would be possible to identify offenders prepared to talk to the Committee while Larry Wright would be in a position to provide case studies.

In response to a question from Councillor Peter Tobias, Councillor Smith confirmed that in the light of the abolition of Local Area Agreements the only targets that would be presented next year would be those of the CDRP and Metropolitan Police. Cindy Butts indicated that there would be fewer Police targets with less of a focus on crime types and a new emphasis on partnership working.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the Police be requested to invite local Ward Members to Safer Neighbourhood Panels and supply details of relevant meeting dates and papers;
- b) the draft Strategic Assessment be reported to the Committee for comment;
- c) the CDRP be encouraged to give more publicity to its innovative community safety work in order to widen access to information and reassure the public; and
- d) an informal session of the Committee be convened to receive testimony from offenders in receipt of interventions from the Probation Trust and other agencies.

25. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY - CONSULTATION

The Committee gave consideration to the Council's proposed submission Local Development Framework Core Strategy and associated changes to the adopted Proposals Map.

Members noted that the Core Strategy was a key part of the Local Development Framework which would be used, together with the London Plan, to help shape the borough, deliver regeneration and determine individual planning applications. The Core Strategy set out the Council's vision to create a borough of opportunity for all by 2031 and contained strategic objectives and policies for the regeneration of Hammersmith & Fulham over a 20 year period. It outlined a programme for regeneration with indicative targets for homes and jobs in five areas, namely the White City Opportunity Area, North Fulham Regeneration Area and Opportunity Area, Hammersmith Town Centre and Riverside, South Fulham Riverside and Old Oak Common and Hythe Road.

The Core Strategy also included borough wide policies on matters such as housing supply, with a minimum housing target of 615 additional dwellings a

year, and affordable housing, where the borough wide target was for 40% of all additional dwellings to be affordable. There were also policies on issues such as local employment, community facilities, open space and design and conservation, together with a schedule of social and physical infrastructure that would be required to support the proposed growth.

The proposed submission Core Strategy had been approved by Council in September and the document was now subject to a six week period of public consultation. Following submission to the Secretary of State it would be examined in public by an independent Planning Inspector. The document was scheduled to be adopted in late 2011.

Following a presentation on the Strategy and summary of the regeneration area proposals by Pat Cox, Head of Policy and Spatial Planning, the Chairman enquired why the Strategy did not address space and amenity standards in an effort to manage the trend towards reductions in the size of accommodation. Pat Cox informed the Committee that detailed standards and guidance on best practice of this type had been issued by the Mayor of London and would be observed in the absence of local provision. In response to a further question from the Chairman she confirmed that the Mayor had undertaken research in to the impact of space standards on living habits and the guidance took account of the findings.

In response to a question from Councillor Rachel Ford, Pat Cox confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of applications for student blocks, reflecting London wide trends. This was likely to be driven by the more attractive profit margins that they now offered over residential developments. Student housing projects would be most appropriately located in areas where it did not impact on neighbouring residential homes.

Councillor Peter Tobias asked about the impact of climate change on the proposals. He was informed that one of the principal issues was expected to be an increase in surface water flooding as a result of heavier rainfall patterns, largely as a result of lack of capacity at Counters Creek.

Councillor Lisa Homan asked about the nature of the public response to the consultation. The Committee was informed that there had been only a limited number of comments to date although more were expected ahead of the deadline on 12th November. It was difficult to engage residents on detailed technical documents of this nature but there had been pro active consultation on earlier consultations, particularly at the Issues and Options stage. All responses to the current consultation were to be published online and members of the Committee would be notified when they were ready to view.

The Committee asked to receive reports on future Local Development Framework documents, including the Development Management Development Plan Document which was likely to be adopted by mid 2012 and would set out policies that would be used for development management purposes.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the key challenges being tackled in the Core Strategy and the public consultation exercise be noted; and
- b) reports on future additional Local Development Framework documents, such as the Development Management Policies document, be provided to the Committee at the appropriate time.

26. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2010/11 Municipal Year. The list of items had been drawn up in consultation with the Chairman having regard to previous decisions of the Committee and relevant items within the Forward Plan.

The Committee also noted details of forthcoming relevant key decisions which were due to be taken by the Cabinet and would be open to scrutiny by the Committee.

RESOLVED that;

the work programme as amended be approved, subject to updates at subsequent meetings.

27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 11 January 2011.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.38 pm

Chairman

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