

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Wednesday 22 November 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Nikos Souslous (Chair), Omid Miri and Sally Taylor

Other Councillors: Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety)

Met Police

Superintendent Craig Knight
Chief Inspector Tom Orchard

Officers

Neil Thurlow (Assistant Director of Community Safety, Resilience and CCTV) and Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trey Campbell-Simon and Andrew Dinsmore.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. POLICING IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM FOLLOWING THE CASEY REVIEW

The Chair remarked that further to the detailed discussion of the same subject at the last meeting, it was an opportune time for the Committee to review how the New Met for London Plan (NMFL) had been implemented locally. He welcomed Superintendent Craig Knight and Chief Inspector Tom Orchard to the meeting and invited them to give a presentation.

Superintendent Craig Knight briefed members that development of the NMFL model was ongoing as it incorporated local community views. The quarterly NMFL meeting held the day before in Shepherd Bush was a case in point. The Met, according to the Casey Review, had challenges in terms of culture, trust and confidence of the community, and gender issues involving women and girls. He said trust and confidence had been fundamental since 1829 when the Met was founded on the basis of policing by consent. He further noted that £530 million had been invested into policing under the NMFL Plan to bring about root and branch changes across London, including reviewing the right ways for effective responses to the reporting of crimes, and recruiting an additional 500 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). Superintendent Knight believed that with the command team in place in the next few months, local policing would be led in a more focused way.

Superintendent Knight further highlighted that the NMFL Plan aimed at uplifting public protection, safeguarding children and young people, and supporting crime victims, as enshrined in the legislation. The evidence-based practices of targeting the top 100 violence against women and girls (VAWG) offenders would help reduce those who caused much more harm than the average offenders. As regards the ongoing violence on the streets, the Met would review the proactive asset under the Basic Command Unit (BCU) and he believed H&F should have a fair share. Summing up his presentation, Superintendent Knight said he was pleased to receive significant positive feedback at the said NMFL meeting which would help the Met rebuild trust and confidence among the local residents they served.

Workforce recruitment, vetting and retention

In reply to Councillor Omid Miri's question about the team structure and tenure of the Met within H&F, Superintendent Knight introduced the hierarchy under the BCU Commander. Being a superintendent responsible for neighbourhood policing at H&F with Chief Inspector Tom Orchard as his deputy, he said that his current tenure in H&F was 2 years, after which he hoped to continue serving H&F while refreshing his skills set on operating policing and public order command. The post requirement for inspectors was one year and he expected they could work longer at H&F while maintaining their personal development.

The Chair asked about the steps taken to make the Met more diverse, in light of declining public trust and confidence. Superintendent Knight referred to the recruitment challenges and said that although the funding to recruit 500 additional PCSOs was in place, the issue of trust and confidence remained among potential applicants. Highlighting the challenging role as a PCSO with competitive salary, Superintendent Knight called on those interested to join this fantastic team. To

reflect the diversity of the city they served, he said that it was the Met's plan to reintroduce a London Residency Requirement for the Met's workforce, reflecting London's population, i.e. for a representation of 50% female officers and 30% from a Black and ethnic minority background. Black officers currently constituted about 3.7% of the Met. He also highlighted a tailored leadership programme aimed at encouraging more female and Black officers into leadership positions, the Positive Steps programme aimed to help Black and minority officers gain promotion through coaching and mentoring, the Infinity Network for Black officers supporting each other, and similar networks for female officers.

Chief Inspector Tom Orchard noted that the two recent NMFL meetings were attended by a lot of young people and children from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds who had asked questions about recruitment and the cadet scheme.

Responding to the Chair's enquiry, Superintendent Knight explained that based on the demand across London, 14 PCSOs had been allocated to H&F in the first round and he expected there would be some more in the next 2 years. He said that about one to two wards in H&F would be high-profile wards where a greater number of PCSOs and PCs would be allocated while a slight increase would be made for some standard wards requiring more support.

The Chair was concerned about conducting sufficient checks to guard against those who might likely abuse the powers of a police officer. Superintendent Knight assured that under the new vetting guidelines, existing officers would be subject to independent oversight and assurance of decisions made. As pointed out by the Commissioner, the robust model was devised with a view to rooting out those officers who were potentially high risk.

Councillor Sally Taylor asked about changes to the vetting procedures. Superintendent Knight said that the past vetting depended on the level of details provided on the related form, without necessarily going through other procedures like face-to-face interviews. Under the overhauled vetting and disciplinary processes, every member of the Met was risk-assessed and their vetting status reviewed.

In reply to Councillor Miri's question about psychological assessment, Superintendent Knight said the national Police Services had concluded that psychological profiling was quite limited in predicting individuals that might cause problems in the future. He said the Met now had a more stringent system in place to ensure that failure to maintain or achieve vetting status was grounds for removal. He further noted that the team of Professional Standards had grown 40% in size in the last 18 months, which gave them the capacity to conduct detailed and thorough investigation as required.

The Chair relayed the rare situation of officers being retained for more than 2 years, as highlighted by the Casey Review. Superintendent Knight referred to the restrictive conditions set under the Statute's Police Regulations whereby officers off duty could not ignore offences they witnessed, which made theirs effectively a 24/7 job. Those young in service might have joined the force for its lifestyle but left after finding the night and long shifts unmanageable. He further noted that between 2007

and 2015, the State, in balancing the books, had lost 22,000 police officers most of which were experienced officers. The Met was now facing a challenge with a great deal of frontline officers having only 1 to 3 years' experience. In addition to supervision challenges, this had also brought about strains on the skills sets, for example, there was not enough drivers in the force. Superintendent Knight looked forward that the Statute's Police Regulations could be revised to allow more flexibility on pay conditions. He also hoped to see officers could better utilise their potential so that more Londoners would consider joining the Met.

Promotion of positive messages

Councillor Taylor noted that media coverage on crimes or those discussed at ward panels usually reflected badly on the Police. She urged the Met to disseminate messages about the positive side of their work through effective platforms.

Superintendent Knight highlighted "The Met" series on BBC1 which had portrayed some of the challenges faced. He found it impressive to see the police officers took pride in their role and being incredibly proud to serve London. He offered to do an article bi-annually in the Council's quarterly publication for residents featuring the positivity of the Met. Chief Inspector Orchard added that residents might follow the Met account on the social media site X (formerly Twitter). He also briefed members on the details how they had ridden along a ward panel's scheme for residents to observe the work of its response team.

Residents' engagement and visibility

The Chair urged the Met to enhance its reach to the community as the aforesaid ward panel's scheme and the NMFL meetings might not be made known to many residents. Superintendent Knight responded that the Met had done as much as it could on a small marketing budget. While noting the impact of social media platforms might be quite limited in terms of demographic coverage, he considered meeting people personally was the best way to build trust and confidence. If there was such a forum in H&F requiring him, he would be pleased to attend on a regular basis.

In reply to Councillor Miri's enquiry, Superintendent Knight noted that every borough superintendent was required to hold a NMFL meeting each quarter. To facilitate local participation at the NMFL meetings, he had rotated the days and venues for each meeting and turned away organisations outside the wards in question to make more space for local community and charity groups. To collect residents' views at the H&F NMFL meetings, he said participants would be encouraged to leave their comments on the tablecloths.

Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety) asked about the follow-up actions taken after the meetings. Superintendent Knight explained that after the officers captured all feedback from the meetings and on the tablecloths, the command team would draw up an action plan and dedicate resources for prioritising the local issues. Information on corresponding actions undertaken to address the concerns would be emailed to those who had attended

the meetings and provided at the next NMFL meeting under the section of “You said, We did”.

On the main takeaways from the NMFL meetings, Superintendent Knight noted that questions like the issue of disproportionality during the use of stop and search were quite challenging. He remarked that internal work might be ongoing to address some of their concerns, for example, the introduction of a Stop and Search Charter. Chief Inspector Orchard said he would work for the next few months on increasing visibility at certain wards.

Addressing the Chair’s question about the extent of utilising the ward panel meetings in engaging residents, Superintendent Knight remarked that the team officers would report specific ward-level or street-level issues raised at these meetings back to the line management which would then task and deploy the resources among national, borough and ward priorities. He considered it important to ensure good attendance at ward panel meetings for local people to discuss local priorities. He said the Met would continue to disseminate information about these meetings on social media and consideration would be given to live-streaming them to boost attendance. Superintendent Knight welcomed the Chair's suggestion for councillors and other stakeholders to help increase attendance by encouraging members of the community to and join their local ward panels.

The Chair asked about approaches to improve visibility. Superintendent Knight remarked that visibility in policing was an art balancing the needs between public perception and detecting/preventing crimes in crowds. He found street briefings and open surgeries more effective and these would be considered, resources permitting.

Community crime-fighting

Councillor Harvey sought clarification on H&F’s share of the BCU resources in tackling street violence. Superintendent Knight said BCU assets were reviewed based on risk at monthly meetings. He assured that H&F would not lose out.

Councillor Miri referred to the UK Miranda Rights during the use of stop and search by Met officers. Superintendent Knight highlighted that the use of stop and search, backed by different legislation, was a necessary tactic to save lives. To address the concerns of disproportionality and discriminatory practices during its use, the Met had introduced a new process to deploy these tactics more precisely. Building on these pilot efforts in certain parts of London, he said the Stop and Search Charter to be introduced represented a new level of accountability of the Met to Londoners by setting out an agreed rationale and providing an annual account of its use.

Councillor Taylor was concerned whether reporting of low-level crimes such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) should be made to the Met’s ASB team or the LET. In response, Superintendent Knight noted that the ASB itself might be a low-level incident but its ongoing impact could lead to tragic outcomes. That was why the Met would risk-assess each individual case, in particular those with repeated reports. He considered that it was critical to report ASB incidents but it did not matter much to which party the reporting was made as the PCSOs and the LET team met monthly at

the Tactical Enforcement Group (TEG) and Tactical Tasking & Coordination Group (TTCG) meetings to gather intelligence on local policing and work on specific issues collectively.

On what would happen after the report was made to the Met's ASB team, Chief inspector Orchard said that Met officers on shift duty would review the insights and allow 24 hours to resolve ward-level ASB issues. The ASB officers would also act against repeated ASB incidents.

The Chair requested the LET to include details of the monthly TEG and TTCG meetings when it updated the Committee in February 2024.

ACTION: Neil Thurlow

VAWG and institutional sexism

Councillor Miri was concerned that an overwhelming majority of VAWG offenders were known to the victims and some of the VAWG offences were deeply rooted in the cultures. He asked about actions other than enforcement that could be done to integrate the Mayoral approach. Superintendent Knight agreed that a vast majority of VAWG cases was domestically oriented. He referred to the "Tackling VAWG Strategy" published by the Government in July 2021, ([Tackling violence against women and girls \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)) which led to VAWG action plans drawn up by 43 forces in England and Wales, including the one signed by Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). He agreed that VAWG was not simply a matter for the Police but a serious subject for the wider society encompassing the coordinated efforts of education, health and many other related agencies. Interested parties might follow the link to the Strategy to understand more about its operational delivery.

Members noted that part of the £530 million funding was allocated to improve the outcomes of survivors of domestic abuse and serious sexual assault such that they would receive better care and more victim-focused services. Councillor Miri believed making changes through training somehow reflected the existence of institutional sexism within the Met. Superintendent Knight said that according to some research findings, the internal culture was associated with the officers' trust and response to these victims during their reporting and there was a need for providing ongoing support to the survivors as they might undergo re-traumatisation during the process from reporting to court proceedings.

Superintendent Knight added that the Met, having learnt from some women's organisations and female colleagues that sexism was common in policing, had tried to improve the mechanism of support in the past few years and now more people did come forward to report officers' misconduct. He said personally he did not have direct experience in dealing with sexism at work. Chief Inspector Orchard also said that he did not see anything that caused his concern during his 6 months' time with the Met. He added that under the current culture, if an officer did not report something they witnessed which was potentially offensive, they were as guilty as the offender.

Councillors Harvey and Miri considered even the problem of harassment of female colleagues might be subtle and implicit, they needed to be tackled. Superintendent Knight said the Met was previously an organisation not receptive to such concerns, as highlighted in the Casey Review. As the element of VAWG had been built into every leadership training to ensure the frontline supervisors understand the process of reporting related cases and the network of supporting the victims, the Met was now in a better position to deal with institutional sexism within the organisation. He noted that the VAWG training, covering all officers, in particular the frontline sergeants, was aimed at increasing individual capacity for cultural change.

Conclusion

In response to the Chair's enquiry about top three priorities for the future months, Superintendent Knight said his priorities were ensuring more transparency and disseminating correct information, focusing on impacting crimes, and ensuring the right leadership for the borough and H&F residents. He advised that the next NMFL meeting would be held on Saturday, 24 February 2024 in Fulham.

The Chair thanked Superintendent Knight and Chief Inspector Orchard for attending and commended the Met's dedicated efforts in keeping H&F residents safe.

5. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meetings were noted:

- 7 Feb 2024
- 24 Apr 2024

Meeting started: 7.04 pm
Meeting ended: 9.10 pm

Chair

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