

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Wednesday 24 July 2024

PRESENT

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

Officers:

Neil Thurlow (Director of Public Protection)
Jayne Bacon (Programme Lead, CCTV Upgrade)
Adrian Rutkowski (CCTV Manager)
Mo Basith (LET Manager)
Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety) and Andrew Dinsmore.

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Councillor Lucy Richardson and thanked Councillor Trey Campbell-Simon for his contribution in the past years.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. CCTV SERVICE UPDATE AND THE ANNUAL REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S USE OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS

CCTV updates

Neil Thurlow (Director of Public Protection) introduced the report. He outlined the progress of the Council's £5.4m investment into CCTV upgrade programme which was at its midterm point (running from April 2022 to March 2026). Under the programme, the ageing infrastructure across the network would be replaced and a number of cameras replaced and upgraded to assist in tackling crimes and anti-social behaviour (ASB). He added that the programme was progressing well.

Neil Thurlow said that Jayne Bacon, the Programme Lead for the CCTV Upgrade was intrinsic to the delivery of this complex work programme highlighting key elements of delivery such as replacing of the infrastructure, replacing and laying new underground cables (in excess of one mile in length at times) as well as upgrading technology with the new system.

Neil noted that the upgrade would also support the LET with officers' body worn cameras and its CCTV van being included as part of the upgrade which, together with other deployable cameras, allowed streaming of images from the CCTV van assigned to the areas of most need. Neil also took the opportunity to welcome Adrian Rutkowski, the CCTV Manager, who was also giving a lot of support to the upgrading work.

Neil Thurlow referred to the stated priorities in using the CCTV system (page 11) and highlighted the key outcomes of the service for the last two years. Over 1,500 arrests had been made with 535 over the last 12 months allowing the Police to take offenders off the street. Neil further noted the service ran a traded offer with two neighbouring boroughs, the Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and Westminster City Council (WCC). The service launched for WCC the day before was covered by ITV. It was hoped that the service would continue to build on its successes and reputation with a view to receiving further interests.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked about the ownership and storage of the CCTV data. Neil Thurlow advised that the data were owned by the respective councils (i.e. H&F, WCC or RBKC) or businesses having direct access into the control room and vice versa. All footages from these data sources coming through the control room located in H&F would be retained for 30 days and automatically deleted according to the retention policy if no enforcement activity was required.

As regards the communication with the Police in utilising the footages to tackle crimes, Neil Thurlow said that officers at the control room had direct contact with the Police through the Met Police radio. Once a crime was detected, the CCTV control room officers would call and/or send the footage to the MET control room. The two sides would then work together in locating the victims and tracking down the suspects through the police radios and the live images patched to the Police from CCTV. After the CCTV upgrade, the LET could share the footages with the Police

digitally through a system with digital stamps similar to Dropbox instead of downloading them onto a disk for signing out/off.

Neil Thurlow highlighted the strong working relationship with the Police and their positive feedback on CCTV officers' communication skills and responsiveness. An example of the support of the Police in tackling crimes was given via the sharing of a month's CCTV data in and around the area of the recent tragic double homicide in the borough. In response to Councillor Richardson's further enquiry, Neil noted that after bringing WCC on board, the minimum staffing per shift at the control room, excluding the management presence, had increased from two to three officers who worked around the clock all year round. .

Highlighting the benefit of the exclusive access in using DVD disks, Councillor Omid Miri was concerned about accessing the digital link and the Dropbox-like system. Jayne Bacon (Programme Lead, CCTV Upgrade) reassured that an "evidence locker" was used to capture the footage for safe sharing and this system, which was only accessible to named officers within a time limit, ensured that there was a full audit process and accountability process in place. All access and watermarked downloading were recorded and hence auditable.

Given H&F had the highest number of cameras per head of population, Councillor Miri asked about the average number of officers working at the control room during the office hours, and the division of labour among the partnership.

Outlining the layout of the control room, Neil Thurlow said that in addition to the CCTV Manager, the usual staffing at the control room would be three to six officers with three being the new minimum when CCTV staffing was at full strength. These officers had been highly trained and experienced. Neil noted that the CCTV officers knew very well the problematic areas and the key times for when an incident might occur. These officers would impart local knowledge to officers who were new to the CCTV control room. As such, there was no inflexible designation to any borough but, noting that there were close to 2500 cameras across the three boroughs now officers were assigned to focus primarily on one but, should an incident occur, officers were assigned based on risk and need. Neil remarked that it was imperative to deploy all asset to address the issue of public safety which was CCTV's core remit at the times of heightened need.

On benefits of the partnership, Neil Thurlow noted that the contract sums paid by the WCC and RBKC for the H&F service shall help relieve some of the pressures on the Council's general fund. There were also shared objectives and benefits among the three partnered councils which were under the same basic command unit (BCU) of the Police. Neil then elaborated on the roll out of the 100 wireless deployable cameras mainly for WCC and expected to see more multi-faceted benefits over the next 6 to 12 months.

Councillor Sally Taylor expressed concern about officers' well-being under these stressful postings. She asked how officers were being looked after having witnessed something dreadful. Adrian Rutkowski (CCTV Manager) stressed that if officers were emotionally affected or feeling disturbed after seeing the footages, they could seek help from the Employee Assistance programmes or communicate with the

management which might deal with the particular needs of the operating officers on a case-by-case basis.

The Chair noted on several occasions that some of the CCTV cameras were not operational. Jayne Bacon explained that the current CCTV upgrade mainly sought to replace the old infrastructure which had been failing and causing the mentioned challenges. The power issues had also affected camera operation. After the upgrade, the number of faulty cameras should be greatly reduced. When the cameras were down, the new system could track the location and flag them for fixing by the engineers. Jayne added that when the power had gone off somewhere, the uninterruptible power supply shall come to support the network for up to 4 hours during which the new system would send alerts to enable problem shooting and resolution.

On the progress of the upgrading work raised by the Chair, Jayne Bacon noted the original plan was to start the programme in Hammersmith, then moved to Shepherds Bush followed by Fulham. However, because of the challenges of the old network becoming more problematic in another area, a decision was made to move the focus. This saw Shepherds Bush upgrade completed first (this was now completed), then the upgrade moved to Hammersmith, where work was almost completed with upgrade work moving to Fulham later this financial year.

Regarding residents' request for installing cameras in a specific area, Neil Thurlow advised that the community safety officer for that area would review the request in consultation with the Safe Neighbourhood team, LET and ASB teams. If there was a pattern of issues, consideration would be given to allocating one of the deployable cameras for temporary installation at that area for a maximum of 6 months. Normally, it took 4 to 6 weeks to install the camera.

Councillor Miri highlighted the deterrence function of CCTV which was probably in residents' mind when they made the request for camera installation. Adrian Rutkowski responded that in addition to deterrence, there was also displacement. Both happened regularly when a new camera was introduced to an area. They were measured by looking at the changes in the rates of crime and ASB to determine whether the deterrent had worked, or it just displaced the issue elsewhere.

Noting the claim that there was not a single incident of drug dealing for 6 months since the installation of CCTV camera in a specific area, Councillor Miri was concerned about the thorough review of the footages. Adrian Rutkowski said officers also relied on the advice of residents, councillors, community safety officers and LET officers for a clear picture of the issue before deciding to review the footages for any irregularities. Neil Thurlow added that after the system upgrade, officers could also rely on the help of the built-in AI to locate a certain person by describing their characteristics.

Councillor Miri was concerned about the ethical standards in deploying AI or similar technology. He asked in addition to using it for recorded clips, whether AI would be utilised for the live footages. Neil Thurlow stressed that AI would be deployed in the highest ethical standards and in regard to all relevant legislation.

In response to the Chair's enquiry about using live facial recognition (LFR) technology, Neil Thurlow noted that it was not being used in H&F's CCTV system. The Police had used LFR in Hammersmith Broadway the weekend before last and arrested within a few hours a dozen offenders on the watchlist. It was believed the Police would use the technology going forward to track down high-harm offenders of violence and sex. The Chair agreed with Councillor Richardson's suggestion of discussing with the Police on the use of LFR at a future meeting.

ACTION: Neil Thurlow

Noting that some 45 businesses within the Hammersmith BID area had direct access to the control room, the Chair sought elaboration on the operation and asked if it also involved the Charing Cross Hospital. Neil Thurlow gave an account of the contact between the businesses' security guards and control room through the BID radio. When an issue was reported, control room officers would help track the suspect and call the Police if necessary. Neil undertook to provide information in respect of the Charing Cross Hospital.

NOTE: Updated information has been provided

On Councillor Taylor's concern about frequent shoplifting on the North End Road, Neil Thurlow noted that the businesses on that road were not part of the Hammersmith BID. He understood that the new government was putting more pressure on the Police to lower the past threshold of police intervention of £550. Neil said while the Council was helping people to tide over the cost-of-living crisis, officers would pass the footages to the Police should they identify repeated offenders of theft. If the shops on North End Road called them for assistance. CCTV officers might help to check the footage and take further action as appropriate.

Annual Report on the Regulatory Investigation Powers Act (RIPA)

Mo Basith (LET Manager) introduced the annual report which provided an oversight of the Council's work in regard to RIPA. He briefed members on the previous inspections in April 2020 and August 2023 as well as their outcomes, and outlined the Council's use of the powers (paragraph 44) from May 2023 to June 2024:

- Direct surveillance
- Non-RIPA Surveillance
- Communications Data

He also noted that there were no breaches in respect of the new statutory error reporting requirements for RIPA.

Responding to the Chair's question about the next inspection, Mo Basith noted that in addition to H&F annual returns, the investigatory powers commissioner's office (IPCO) had conducted in-person inspection about once every three years since 2020. The IPCO was pleased with the regime that H&F had put in place.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

5. **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAM**

Mo Basith (LET Manager) introduced the report (December 2023 to May 2024), highlighting the number of patrols particularly those in housing stock and parks, the number of service requests and the reactive or proactive actions involved, meeting the Police in several forums of different levels every month, working closely with the partners servicing the homeless, operation of PSPOs and actions taken against VAWG. He also shared the LET's responses to several incidents that happened in the borough and the service compliments received during the period.

The Chair was pleased to note that the LET service had taken on board this Committee's suggestion and arranged all officers to receive mental health training in February 2024.

Rough sleeping

Councillor Omid Miri was concerned if there was a pastoral element in mind instead of just enforcement when LET officers handled the rough sleepers. Mo Basith stressed that enforcement was never the first step they used with rough sleepers. After obtaining the rough sleeper's background information from the rough sleepers' coordinator, LET officers might offer assistance to help them change their lifestyle or refer them to temporary accommodation. Councillor Sally Taylor expressed appreciation on the compassionate way of the LET Manager and his team in dealing with rough sleepers.

The Chair asked about the protocol in removing the homeless person who was also begging, using drugs or engaging ASB in busy areas such as Hammersmith Broadway. Mo Basith noted the LET had tracked some familiar faces with frequent appearance in recent weeks/months and found that they actually lived in council properties. To deter them from undertaking these activities, the LET had served them warning notices. In case of continual non-compliance as captured by CCTV cameras, enforcement actions would be taken, such as imposing fines. In reply to Councillor Miri's follow-up question, Mo advised the LET officers would be patrolling in their uniform so that they could do their job with the protective equipment (PPE).

PSPOs

Councillor Lucy Richardson referred to the complaints she received against dangerous dogs and asked about the training that had been received by the LET officers in dealing with dangerous dogs and their owners. Mo Basith noted dealing dangerous dogs was a matter for the Police. However, LET officers were trained to enforce the responsible dog ownership protection order (PSPO) which had been put in place more than six months' ago to support responsible dog walking in public spaces. LET officers were empowered to take enforcement against those people whose dogs were out of control or fouling.

Noting that there were now altogether seven PSPOs enforceable in the borough, Councillor Miri was concerned about the capacity of the LET's patrol officers in being well-versed in every single PSPO. Mo Basith referred to the LET A to Z which stated

that LET officers were authorised to enforce PSPOs, and issued fixed penalty notice to anyone who breached a specific Order. Ongoing training would be provided to the LET officers who could also obtain support from the senior if necessary. They might also be partnered up so their joint knowledge and experience could be utilised during the patrol to resolve the issues on the spot.

Noting that over the period of this report three joint operations had been conducted in Bishops Park with the local Police team, the Chair asked if the joint operations in respect of the Thames Path PSPO could cover areas further north. Mo Basith apologised and clarified that the joint operations covered the entire Thames Path. Under the PSPO, the LET officers would inspect the Path daily during the lunch and after school hours from 13:00-18:00 to tackle speeding and dangerous traffic behaviours.

Councillor Miri asked for an update on Shepherds Bush Green which was a crime hot-spot and a priority area under the Community Safety Plan. He noted that the measures taken by the Police might have displaced some issues to the surrounding residential streets.

Neil Thurlow updated members that the Council had added lighting and high-specification cameras on Shepherds Bush Green and closed down some drug properties via the closure orders issued by the Police. Neil understood that Councillor Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety was going to discuss with Christina Jessah, the new BCU Commander about strategic issues of drug supply and demand/dependence and ways to stop young people and other drug users being exploited by the drug dealers. In reply to the Chair's enquiry, Neil said this was the BCU's fourth Commander in three years while Craig Knight remained the borough's superintendent.

Mo Basith noted that to address the displacement issue, the LET worked closely with the Police after the expiry of the closure order. The alternating patrol by both sides helped sustain a visible footprint over the neighbouring wards. Upon residents' complaints about ASB or other issues, the LET would deploy the CCTV van there in order to disperse people causing the nuisance.

Councillor Richardson asked about the length of the PSPOs. Neil Thurlow advised that it was usually three years which was long enough to allow meaningful evaluation of the PSPO's effectiveness before the next consultation for its continuation.

Councillor Richardson expressed concern on the LET's capacity constraints and asked about the ways to assess PSPOs' effectiveness against other measures in addressing specific problems. Neil Thurlow explained that the PSPOs were made because the Police also faced capacity constraint. For example, the Police was the only authority under the Highways Act to enforce against cycling on the pavement. A PSPO was introduced to ban the antisocial use of e-scooters etc and it was enforceable by authorised officers. Neil further noted that PSPOs could be used to encourage greater engagement. For instance, the Alcohol Consumption in Public Spaces Protection Order allowed officers to engage with people of alcohol dependency, issued them a community protection notice/warning instead of a fine notice and encouraged them to seek treatment for alcohol addiction.

Neil Thurlow advised that there was work to do in aligning PSPOs and that, where there were longer term solutions possible work should be explored to seek alternative solutions e.g. via the use of bylaws. Neil offered to further brief Cllr Richardson on PSPOs which was welcomed. A briefing note and offer of follow up discussion would be made outside of PAC.

ACTION: Neil Thurlow

The Chair noted the increasing number of ebikes being left unattended on some of the pavements and caused accessibility issues to other pedestrians particularly wheelchair users. Although the LET officers had removed the abandoned bikes proactively, it did not make any difference to the situation. Mo Basith noted that the LET officers would move aside those bikes parked in the middle of the pavement. They would also report this to the Council's transport team which worked directly with the bike companies to remove the unattended bikes.

Emails

The Chair reflected the residents' request for LET to operate a hotline after 5 pm. Mo Basith referred to the Council's emergency out-of-hour phone number that residents might call for life and limb situations. Mo highlighted the 24/7 email service run by the LET. It had an average response time of 5 minutes even in small hours unless the inbox manager was busy during the patrols. Depending on the location of the patrolling officers, the deployment time was between 15 and 30 minutes upon emails receipt. The LET would also call the residents who asked for a phone call in the email. Councillor Taylor noted the quick response received by the residents in her ward.

Councillor Miri suggested deploying dedicated officers to monitor the inbox so that instant help could be provided to residents in need. Mo Basith advised that the inbox was monitored by an administration officer during the office hours. Outside the office hours, the senior LET officer assigned to look after the inbox was also required to take up patrolling duty in small hours when emails were rare. It might cause some delay in responding to emails if the inbox manager was servicing the residents. Councillor Miri considered if capacity permitted, another administration officer could be allocated to monitor the email inbox outside the office hours.

In reply to the Chair's further enquiry about the ward inboxes, Mo Basith noted that all emails of the ward inboxes would be forwarded to the central inbox. The mail would be dealt with instantly if a quick response was needed. Otherwise, the related ward officer would take the matter up in the next office hours. Mo added that although the number of ASB over the reported period had been reduced, the number of email reports on ASB to the LET had increased. This might be due to residents diverting their reports from the Police to the LET which put ASB on top priority.

Councillor Miri noted that in addition to pastoral and enforcement functions, the LET officers also had an environmental function. An example was cleaning up the junction of Wulfsan Street with residents and partners. He urged the LET, capacity permitted, to spread the messages and raise this awareness among residents and

councillors via emails. Mo Basith outlined the environmental tasks undertaken by a LET officer such as liaising with the landlords, clearing up lands and turning them into community gardens.

Councillor Richardson commended the work of that LET officer and suggested running a story in the Council's newsletter. Councillor Miri proposed including it as a case study in the emails to be sent to councillors. The Chair recalled that emails about the LET and officers' patrol duty were sent to all councillors about two years ago. He considered now an opportune time to update councillors on changes and expansion of LET's duties and functions.

ACTION: Mo Basith

The Chair expressed appreciation to the LET officers and everyone who went above and beyond to bring safer and more inclusive communities in H&F.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

6. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the following dates of future meetings:

- 20 Nov 2024
- 4 Feb 2025
- 30 Apr 2025

Work Programmes:

- Briefing by the Met Police – to invite Christina Jessah, the new BCU Commander and Superintendent Craig Knight to update members on the implementation of the New Met London including the regular community meetings, and Met's engagement with disabled people, in particular people with invisible disability such as autism without learning difficulties (20 Nov 2024)
- Budget (4 Feb 2025)
- Third Sector Investment Fund

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.47 pm

Chair

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