

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Wednesday 20 November 2024

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Nikos Souslous (Chair), Omid Miri, Lucy Richardson and Andrew Dinsmore

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

Met Police:

Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah
Superintendent Craig Knight

Officers:

Neil Thurlow (Director of Public Protection)
Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sally Taylor.

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 July 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. UPDATE REPORT ON POLICING IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM

Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah gave an update report on policing in Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F), including an update further to the Baroness Casey Review on the work done in the last few months after she had taken up the position as the Chief Superintendent of the Central West Basic Command Unit (BCU) which also covered the Westminster City Council (WCC) and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC).

Chrissy highlighted the training initiatives in respect of enforcement and prevention had been undertaken and noted that all officers in H&F - from supervisory to PC levels - had attended a 3-day training workshop held across London.

Chief Superintendent Jessah also mentioned about adopting recommendations from the latest HMIC FRS report and enhancing the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) programme by training staff to be active bystanders.

Notwithstanding the above, Chief Superintendent Jessah was regretted to note there were ongoing issues with some officers' misconduct leading to criminal charges with a further news story released the week of PAC.

Superintendent Craig Knight - who was responsible for H&F neighbourhood teams – briefed the Committee on the operational priorities and challenges faced at a local level.

Craig advised that there was a 6% reduction (FYTD) in overall crime in H&F, with notable decreases in robbery (10%), residential burglary (9%) and theft from motor vehicles (47%). Besides, actions had been taken in conjunction with the British Transport Police to tackle theft of mobile phones. He further noted that it was positive to see more people were reporting anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents bringing the FYTD figure to 552 more, and collective actions had been taken alongside individual groups/ organisations to keep people free from ASB.

Chief Superintendent Jessah referred to the significant financial challenges with a projected £450 million budget gap for the Metropolitan Police. Superintendent Knight said the potential budget shortfall would have an impact on frontline service delivery.

Non-crime hate incidents

Councillor Andrew Dinsmore asked about non crime hate incidents, their recordings and impact. Chief Superintendent Jessah noted all non-crime hate incidents were recorded as they might be precursors for crime and contain vast amount of intelligence. There was a dedicated unit within the H&F neighbourhood to deal with these incidents and additional staff training had been provided to improve performance of handling disability or racial hate crimes. In reply to Councillor Dinsmore's further question, she said no team was completely ring-fenced under the current budget situation.

Councillor Omid Miri was concerned about the difference between non-crime hate incidents and hate crime. Chief Superintendent Jessah explained that during the process, the police officers recorded everything and the interpretation would depend on the officer's investigation, the voice of the victim and most importantly, the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service. She agreed with Councillor Miri that both should be taken as the same kind of phenomenon.

Councillor Dinsmore asked whether a repeated offender of non-crime hate incidents would be tipped over into criminal eventually. Chief Superintendent Jessah confirmed that once an incident was recorded, it would stay in the system. While an individual was definitely a cause of concern for having involved in hate incident reports repeatedly, people were however entitled to free speech and opinions.

Stop and Search

Members noted that Stop and Search experienced a decrease in use of 17% across London. In reply to Councillor Miri's question, Superintendent Knight reported that his neighbourhood teams had carried out 117 stop and searches in the past month (versus 22 in January 2024) which represented a 40% increase (FYTD) specific to H&F.

Craig advised that the increase was made possible because the officers using the tactics understood local issues and ward/borough priorities and tackled things that mattered to local people. Having been assured that police officers were properly trained, the local residents now understood the tactic's value of reducing/preventing/detecting crimes and had more confidence in its use. As regards the decreased use of stop and searches across London, Superintendent Knight considered that this might be led by the media's perception on the disproportionate use of the tactic as police officers might be worried about losing their jobs.

Chief Superintendent Jessah highlighted the precise delivery of Stop and Search in H&F, for example, the tactic was frequently used in some crime hotspots like Shepherd's Bush Green which saw a higher number of Stop and Search.

On the Chair's concern about the outcomes of stop and searches, Superintendent Knight noted that the overall outcome rates across London was about 30% (which was 20% or lower some 4 to 5 years ago) versus 31.2% for the H&F neighbourhood teams. Positive outcomes included anything leading to a community resolution to the problems detected. He remarked that there was no KPIs for stop and searches as it was individual officers' on-the-spot decision to use the tactic.

The Chair was concerned about ASB which was one of the top priorities in the H&F wards. Superintendent Knight noted that the power to stop and search was set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act which had outlined, among others, the types of stop and search powers which however did not cover ASB.

As regards the ethnicity of people being stopped and searched, Superintendent Knight said according to the overall statistics, it remained disproportionate in terms of the Black/ethnic minority young men being stopped and searched. He noted the figures for H&F varied depending on the types of crime under investigation and

confirmed the outcomes remained broadly similar irrespective of the ethnicity. He also assured the Committee that the Stop and Search Charter which set out what the public could expect during the use of the tactic was underway.

Chief Superintendent Jessah said she and her teams were very mindful in deploying the tactic and made sure it was done according to procedural justice and with some serious level of respect regardless of who was being stopped, including a briefing on why they had been stopped and how they could challenge it formally.

Given the tactic of Stop and Search carried the important function of uncovering crime evidence, Councillor Miri considered police officers should conduct them without fearing vilification/losing their jobs. However, if this powerful tactic was carried out in a wrong approach and made the individuals uncomfortable/inconvenienced, he asked about the recourse available to them.

Chief Superintendent Jessah assured members that an independent supervisor would review the footage recorded on the officer's body worn camera to make sure relevant information was provided to the individual before the search. If necessary, training and support would be provided to the officers who displayed deviation from the normal procedures. While the individuals could lodge direct complaints, any third party who felt impacted after watching the videos on social media might also raise complaints. She added there was a team within the Met that scanned social media for such videos and took follow-up actions proactively.

Superintendent Knight said the number of complaints related to stop and searches in H&F was few. He referred to a Black man who had previously been stopped a number of times had changed his mindset after viewing the body worn videos as a member of the community monitoring group and become supportive of the tactic.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked whether the mental health training received by the police officers included autism awareness and its correlation with the operational side of police approach. Superintendent Knight referred to the close collaboration with the National Autistic Society of which the specialist trainers had co-produced a training package with the Met Police for delivery during the initial recruitment programmes as well as the yearly supplementary training. The police officers shall learn how to do a stop and search slightly differently for people with autism. In addition, the Met Police had recently launched the autism alert card, which was not currently linked to any database, should be completed, printed off and showed by individuals with autism when they were being stopped. The card explained the cardholder's autism and how best the officer could respond. Responding to Councillor Dinsmore's concern about possible abuse by people claiming having self-diagnosed autism, Superintendent Knight said he had never come across abuse despite it was possible.

Councillor Richardson was concerned about the protection of vulnerable adults such as autistic residents with learning difficulty or social communication disorder as they might fail to carry the autistic alert card and be made to go through the criminal justice system unfairly. She urged that information of vulnerable adults in the borough should form part of the database linked to the emergency service like the Pegasus system used by Nottingham police and a number of other forces. The

autism alert cards should be issued by the system with a pin to deter abuse. Separately, consideration should also be given to extending the opening hours of the safe space for vulnerable adults until the small hours.

While giving his support and undertaking to reflect the need for a shared database like the Pegasus,' Superintendent Knight pointed out that it would be a major procurement across London for use also among other forces/agencies. As regards safe space for vulnerable adults, Superintendent Knight referred to the Police's 24/7 front counter in every borough where staff had been trained to respond and call out the relevant agencies and service accordingly. Councillor Richardson said she was pleased to note there were more joined up services in the borough.

ASB and related crimes

Councillor Dinsmore was concerned about the specific groups involved in ASB. Superintendent Knight referred to the hotspots for ASB which were the same spaces/ cuckooed addresses where violence and street-based drug trafficking were happening. The specificity was geographical in nature.

Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety) referred to the recent joined-up working between the ASB team of the Law Enforcement Team (LET) and the Police which had done a lot of work together to focus on a specific area the result of which was a significant reduction in drug-related ASB around that part of Shepherds Bush. Local residents - who had been very concerned about the situation previously - showed positive feedback.

Regarding the Chair's concern about the strategy adopted to tackle drug-related activities, Neil Thurlow (Director of Public Protection) remarked that the Council's approach was to be driven by a new Drugs Strategy. The strategy was being developed after reviewing a lot of data including formal complaints, reporting of increased visibility of drug dealings in the borough, complaints received in surgeries and police data and taking into account the current drug intervention offers and the Police's 4E model. The Strategy and its plans for the next few years would be considered by the Cabinet in the coming months.

The Strategy would encourage reporting on drug dealings (reporting might remain anonymous if so wished) and delineate the responsibilities and interventions of the local authority and the police.

Neil noted that drug dealing was a complex supply-and-demand situation across London. He outlined how the victims, including some young people, were targeted and exploited by the dealers which needed to be factored in to the approach. Neil also advised that the Council's Public Health team had been commissioning very good drugs and alcohol services which had some of the highest success rates of recovery in the country.

Superintendent Knight appreciated the work of Public Health which, in his opinion, had a better value for money than enforcement. He noted the proliferation of street-based drug dealing had led to increased retail crime such as shoplifting. While no efforts had been spared to target at individuals supplying Class A drugs in H&F

communities, the approach, for young people, linked to the victim/offender approach and consideration to trafficking so Police, Council and others all work to ensure the young people were supported through conversations and education instead of being focused solely on criminalising. The Police was now gathering meaningful intelligence reviewing the socio-economic nature of those hotspots for street-based drug supply with a view to putting a more proportionate and effective response over a longer-term.

Noting addicts would shoplift repeatedly to fund their drug habits, the Chair asked about the control measures and specific steps in place to deal with shoplifting which had become a matter of grave concern. Superintendent Knight referred to the proactive operations carried out against retail crime, in particular shoplifting. The visible operation held together with the retailers two weeks ago had led to a number of arrests which would help encourage more retailers to take part in joint operations. He noted that similar retail operations had been planned for in the next 5 to 6 weeks.

The Chair highlighted that unlike some offences which had experienced FYTD reduction, sexual offences including domestic abuse had increased 13%. He asked about the causes and measures taken by the Police to address them in addition to the Council's implementation of a Street Harassment Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to improve residents' safety on streets.

Chief Superintendent Jessah considered more cases of sexual offence indicated an increase in people's confidence to report them and their trust in police's further action. She elaborated that the team assigned to deal with sexual assault was now in full strength comprising detective constables who had possessed the required skill set. The BCU had also changed to focus investigations on the offenders rather than resting the burden of proof on the victims. She added that the increased reporting also helped drive up this BCU's positive outcome rates as the number of people being charged or referred to support agencies had also increased considerably. Superintendent Knight noted that the 13% increase was equivalent to 37 more victims. He considered the PSPO introduced by the local authority to curb microaggression on the streets was a groundbreaking initiative which had attracted significant media interest. As ending VAWG remained an important priority of the Police and the borough, he expected to receive more reporting so that the Police could respond and deal with people committing sexual offences.

Neil Thurlow said he was proud to present the Street Harassment PSPO which was the first borough-wide PSPO of its kind and it was believed to be the first to have been enforced by a local authority officer. The powers for the PSPO were also enforceable by police officers too.

Neil highlighted the campaign which encouraged people to report incidents of street harassment and victims might report to the local authority should they prefer to do so. The first fixed penalty notice (PFN) was issued by the LET after the victim reported the case to them and explained what had happened. Neil further outlined the promotion under the 16-Day of Actions commencing 25 November to end VAWG, relevant information and QR code on website, joint engagement session at football clubs, the work of the commissioned special domestic abuse court, experience sharing via walk-and-talk, training received by LET offices on helpful and

sensitive conversations, and bystanders training for residents to undertake meaningful interventions.

On activities to be held for the 16-Day of Actions, Superintendent Knight remarked that a blog by young people about VAWG would be launched at the West Youth Zone. Proactive operations would take place alongside partner agencies to ensure the safe use of public spaces and licensed premises by women and girls.

Recruitment and retention

The Chair asked about the recruitment of PCs and PCSOs newly allocated to H&F about a year ago. Superintendent Knight said as an organisation, the Met was struggling to recruit and was in short of 1,500 officers at the moment (or 2,000 by the end of 2025) which did not match up with the need. However, H&F was doing better than RBKC and WCC in terms of neighbourhood policing staffing position, with promises to fill 2 PCSOs and 1 DWO vacancies shortly. He undertook to provide information on the numbers of PCs and PCSOs in H&F.

ACTION: Superintendent Craig Knight

Chief Superintendent Jessah reassured that in addition to H&F neighbourhood teams, officers from other parts of the Met would support operations in H&F, e.g. those associated with the use of live facial recognition in Westfield and other parts of the borough.

On the Chair's further question about the retention rates, Chief Superintendent Jessah noted that while the attrition rate had slowed down, retention remained a challenge because of the London pay and its cost of living.

Casey Review and New Met for London

Councillor Miri referred to the recent case where two officers from Central West BCU had been charged with alleged sexual assault while off duty. The assault took place last April which was three years after the murder of Sarah Everard. During this period, the New Met for London (NMFL) plan had been implemented with necessary training conducted for all staff. Councillor Miri said he was shocked to learn about the case happened to Central West BCU and asked whether it reflected a success or otherwise of the schemes and proposals being put in place.

Superintendent Knight remarked there were bad people in every organisation and industry. He considered the Met system was good in rooting bad people and removing those found guilty while at the same time ensuring procedural justice. Chief Superintendent Jessah also considered the case was a success as people now were more willing to report and had confidence in the Police's support for the victims. The Met had made it absolutely clear to the workforce that this kind of behaviour would not be tolerated, and it needed time and effort to rebuild public's trust and confidence.

The Chair asked about the recommendation of restoring visible neighbourhood policing in the Casey Review report. Superintendent Knight noted the increase of

about 10% of PCSOs had been directed into more foot patrol based on ward priorities. The recent success in bidding for additional resources would be used to bring more visibility patrolling, including walk-and-talk operations for ending VAWG. Superintendent Knight said he was supportive of high visibility patrol but some operations were covert in nature or needed to be done at the desk. Chief Superintendent Jessah referred to the murder in the borough at the beginning of the summer. She said the visible presence of uniformed officers in the area had helped to restore confidence and trust in the local community.

On the outcomes of the quarterly NMFL meetings held with local residents, Superintendent Knight outlined the attendance of these meetings which had dropped due to capacity constraint of the venue as a result of funding cuts. His team were looking at potential free venues to hold the next NMFL meeting around February/March 2025. Chief Superintendent Jessah expected the Met to do better in strengthening the representation to these meetings, particularly the youth voice.

As regards the partnership between the LET and police officers, Neil Thurlow said the LET's areas of priorities generally aligned with police's ward priorities and the two sides shared information and latest position on certain crimes. This had enabled good community engagement as the LET could provide information readily when being asked.

In addition to formal crime fighting meetings between the LET community safety officers and the ward officers, Neil said he and the two attending officers exchanged information regularly to keep each other and Councillor Rebecca Harvey abreast of all key developments. Neil undertook to provide more details of the proposed crime summit mentioned by Superintendent Knight earlier at a future meeting.

ACTION: Neil Thurlow

Superintendent Knight briefed members on the Live Facial Recognition (LFR) technology which had been used for three occasions in the borough and led to positive arrests. Responding to Councillor Miri's enquiries, he confirmed that the Police-owned technology would scan faces against a watchlist which only included the photos of 12,500 people who were wanted throughout London.

Craig explained how the system worked and advised that, when the LFR was "triggered" it went to an officer(s) on the ground, they then engaged with the person identified and undertook further checks to verify their identities there and then which might lead to further action, or not.

While agreeing to provide information on the frequency of false positives, if any, identified by the LFR technology, Chief Superintendent Jessah said councillors were welcomed to observe its deployment.

ACTION: Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah

On the feasibility of combining the LFR technology with other systems, Superintendent Knight said he understood that the LFR technology could match images fed by CCTV footages. Councillor Dinsmore considered there was no

fundamental difference on the consent given to the use of CCTV camera with or without built-in LFR technology. Chief Superintendent Jessah was concerned about the community's response on privacy. Councillor Miri cautioned about the use of automatic AI systems like the LFR which was immensely powerful and needed to be used in moderation.

Summing up, the Chair thanked the attendance of the Met Police and appreciated their good performance as reflected in the statistics. He looked forward to the next updates on operational achievements in respect of drugs, VAWG, shoplifting and so on.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

5. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the following dates of future meetings:

- 4 Feb 2025
- 30 Apr 2025

Work Programmes:

- 2025 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Third Sector Investment Fund

Meeting started: 7.01 pm
Meeting ended: 8.50 pm

Chair

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