London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Community Safety, Environment and Residents Services Policy and Accountability Committee

Minutes

Tuesday 28 June 2016

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Larry Culhane (Chair), Iain Cassidy, Sharon Holder, Charlie Dewhirst and Steve Hamilton

Other Councillors: Sue Fennimore

Officers: Richard Buckley, David Page, Claire Rai, Ann Ramage, Amber Burridge and Inspector Hannah Wheeler

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED
That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Cartwright and Harcourt who were attending a meeting of the Western Riverside Waste Authority and so could not be present.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Steve Hamilton was elected as Vice Chair for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT

Ann Ramage, Head of Environmental Health, explained that the service was required to document its work over the past year and set out its priorities for the future. She said that the document highlighted the very significant amount of work done by a relatively small department.

Councillor Dewhirst asked what action the council took to control the fox population. Ann Ramage said that the council did not take direct action to control foxes in most circumstances as foxes are not covered by the legislation that Pest Control enforce. Officers provide information to try to educate residents in what to do to deter foxes; action residents could take included ensuring that areas where foxes could build dens were not left unused and making sure that there was not a food source for foxes to eat. There were limited other options open to officers as culling was very political and had little effect on fox numbers owing to breeding patterns. Officers occasionally visited affected areas to give advice to residents. She noted that fox control was not a statutory function, unlike other pest control, which was covered by the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 and the Public Health Act 1936.

The Chair asked whether officers had noticed a change in business attitudes following a recent press release highlighting poor standards at Woody Grill, Shepherds Bush. Ann Ramage said that the press release had certainly sent a message to the borough's food businesses, however, prosecution was always a last resort. Officers would try to work with a business to improve their standards before taking enforcement action.

The Chair asked whether food hygiene star rating stickers had to be displayed by food businesses. Ann Ramage explained that the stickers were not compulsory, but that most businesses chose to display their ratings; she said that even if there was no sticker, ratings were published at ratings.food.gov.uk. Ann Ramage explained that the scheme will indicate the standards that were in place on the day of the inspection and a business could have improved since that time but would not get a new sticker with a revised rating.

6. NOISE NUISANCE PREVENTION

Richard Buckley explained that the noise nuisance team worked 7 days a week and that the times the service was open varied depending on which day of the week it was with a longer service from Thursday to the early hours of Monday morning.

The number of complaints about noise received during the day had risen by 14% largely due to increased construction. Officers had started to do more

proactive work to try to limit the number of complaints about construction noise, with more S.60 notices being issued and more enforceable technical specifications being included in these notices.

28% more complaints about noise at night had also been received, and these were generally about music. There were no real preventative options open to officers and so there had been a larger percentage increase in enforcement notices issued than for construction noise.

Councillor Cassidy asked whether the Council used a noise reporting application. Richard Buckley explained that noise had to be witnessed for officers to be able to take action, and so these applications were of little value to officers. Ann Ramage said that the council's telephone hotline was well known and well used.

Councillor Hamilton said that he was pleased that the sharing of the service had allowed longer service hours and for more officers to be available to respond. He asked whether there was demand for the service between 5am and the service restarting at either 7.30am or 9am. Richard Buckley explained that there tended to be few issues in the morning.

The Chair asked whether there were some parts of the borough which suffered more noise complaints. Richard Buckley said that there were more complaints in town centres, but that complaints were received regularly from all over the borough.

Richard Buckley moved on to explain that the council had introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order at Shepherd's Bush Station to deal with nuisance noise created by buskers. He explained that Councillor Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Residents' Services, had asked for the committee's views on three options to control busking in the borough. The options were:

- A Hammersmith and Fulham Busking Policy
- A Licensing Scheme for Buskers
- Joining BuskinLondon, a scheme promoted by the previous Mayor of London

Councillor Dewhirst said that he was concerned that licensing would be costly for both the council and buskers. He also felt that businesses, especially those in the borough's town centres, ought to be consulted on the options. Richard Buckley agreed that licensing might well be expensive, and added that the current fees for BuskinLondon were quite high, although it was proving effective in Kensington and Chelsea.

Committee members agreed that a Hammersmith and Fulham policy would be the most cost effective option and that it would allow officers to encourage people to busk well. Councillor Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, noted that there had been issues with amplified noise and asked that the use of amplifiers be restricted by the policy. The Chair suggested that some areas could be marked out as suitable for buskers and identified in the

policy, although he didn't think that buskers needed to be restricted to these areas.

7. POLICING & CRIME UPDATE

Claire Rai, Head of Community Safety, introduced the report explaining that the council paid for additional police officers on the borough's streets and that the current administration had increased the number of officers it funded from 36 to 44. The council funded police officers worked closely with council staff and were of real benefit to many services. The council's additional funding meant that the borough had eight constables who were each responsible for local policing issues in two wards as well as a crime prevention design adviser and a gangs outreach officer.

Police officers carried out joint enforcement of PSPOs and borough wide orders, such as the controlled drinking zone, each day. Each week joint weapons sweeps were carried out with the parks police and neighbourhood wardens service, whilst each month joint rough sleeping patrols were undertaken. Quarterly 'days of action' involving a wide range of partners took place focussing on the council's priorities.

The enhanced policing team helped the police to engage with residents better, with officers having attended over 100 community meetings in the past year. Officers also delivered monthly street briefings and supported the borough's neighbourhood watch schemes, of which there were now more than 200. Officers also attended the Safer Neighbourhoods Board.

The Chair thanked officers for their report. He welcomed the positive impact that the additional officers were having on the borough and thanked those additional officers for their hard work.

Councillor Holder asked where meetings attended by the police were advertised, as she felt that more could be done to promote these. Inspector Hannah Wheeler explained that meetings were advertised on the Metropolitan Police's Hammersmith and Fulham page (http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/Hammersmith). They were also tweeted and promoted in newsletters. Dave Page, Director of Safer Neighbourhoods, suggested that the council's website could also be used to promote police meetings and agreed to raise the issue with the council's communications team.

Councillor Dewhirst asked whether officers knew what the new Mayor of London's policing priorities were. Claire Rai said that his priorities during the campaign had been gangs and youth crime, however, a fuller picture was expected by early autumn. Dave Page explained that funding for existing projects was secure until March 2017. He also explained that the council had contacted the new mayor to explain their opposition to a proposed merging of the Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster borough commands. Councillor Dewhirst asked for a copy of the letter which had been sent on this issue. Dave Page agreed to pass this request on to Councillor Cartwright as the letter had not been sent by officers.

The Chair asked whether there was anything more the council could be doing to support the work of the additional officers. Claire Rai explained that the police already benefitted from the extensive CCTV network which the council maintained. The local knowledge of Neighbourhood Wardens was also a very useful resource, as was the professional witness service. She felt that the police and council worked very closely together. Dave Page explained that youth re-offending rates were quite high and that the council was trying to intervene to tackle a small group of regular offenders which he felt would be helpful to the police. He explained that he was particularly impressed with the work of the council's prevent team which was very active, and with the massive growth in the neighbourhood watch scheme over the past 8 years. Mr Page added that the council was looking to launch a digital section of neighbourhood watch to engage more people. Claire Rai noted that the police and council were very good at engaging children in schools and indeed elderly people but that more needed to be done to engage the working age population and she hoped that the new digital support for neighbourhood watch schemes would help.

The Chair thanked police and council officers for their helpful responses to the committee's questions.

8. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2016-19

Amber Burridge, Principal Intelligence Analyst, explained that the Strategic Assessment 2016-19 set out the priorities for the borough's crime reduction partnership. The priorities had been developed through analysis of the statistical evidence, however, the priorities were being brought to the Policy and Accountability Committee for their views and local insight. The priorities were intended to last three years with an annual refresh. The proposed priorities were:

•Theft and Handling offences: Focus on "Other Theft"
•Motor Vehicle Crime
•Violent Crime: Focus on Violence with Injury, VAWG, Youth Violence and Gangs
•Burglary
•Victims – Including Hate Crime, Prevent and Child Sexual Exploitation
•Anti-social Behaviour: Rowdy or Inconsiderate Behaviour, Rowdy or Nuisance Neighbours, Noise and Flytipping
•Adult and Youth Reoffending

Amber Burridge explained the statistical rationale for each of the proposed priorities, which can be found in the presentation appended to the minutes.

Councillor Hamilton asked whether gangs needed to be included as a priority as gang related crime in the borough was low. Dave Page explained that there were problems with gangs in boroughs to the north and south of Hammersmith and Fulham and that it woud be a risk to remove it as a priority as officers migh lose focus on the issue, undermining past good work. He

also explained that the council had developed a gangs strategy which would need the support of the partnership to be effective.

Councillor Dewhirst asked what the council could do to reduce motor vehicle crime. Dave Page expained that the council funded tracking devices and that these had been effective in reducing moped theft. He felt however that is was a difficult problem to solve as the borough had lots of expensive cars but very few garages. He explained that as most thefts were on residential streets the council's CCTV was not effective in tackling the problem.

Councillor Holder asked how the officers work to reduce youth reoffending was monitored. Councillor Fennimore explained that she was passionate about reducing youth reoffending and that she therefore kept a close track of the work of officers. She explained that the community safety team was working with children's services to review the work of the youth offending service and that she hoped to engage third sector organisations to try to break young offenders behaviour patterns. She suggested that Youth Crime and the Gangs Strategy would be interesting topics for the PAC to review.

The Chair thanked officers for their work on the report.

9. THE USE OF REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) AND CCTV IN THE BOROUGH

Dave Page, Director for Safer Neighbourhoods, explained that the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) was the legislation which governed how the council could direct surveillance and access communications data. He said that residents had understandable concerns about authorities 'snooping' on their private lives and that RIPA governed what officers could and could not do. Any action was required to be both necessary and proportionate considering the activity being investigated, which was further limited as the alleged crime needed to carry at least a six month prison sentence for the powers to be used. All applications made under RIPA had to be signed off by a senior officer in the council and then agreed by a district judge or lay magistrate.

There were two key powers available to the council under RIPA, the first of which was the collection of communications data which allowed officers to know who had contacted each other and when, although the content of the communications was not available. This had been used twice since July 2014, both in connection with car clocking.

The second power was that of covert surveillence. This either involved placing hidden CCTV cameras or covert surveillence carried out by the council's two professional witnesses. These powers had been used 18 times since July 2014 to identify perpetrators of ASB, criminal damage and drug dealing, investigate theft from parking meters and to investigate counterfeit goods.

The council had a non RIPA surveillance policy which sets out the circumstances In which officers could use surveillance techniques where the

crime threshold is not met, although the reasonable and proportionate test was still applied. The policy meant that officers could demonstrate that this activity was lawful and necessary in terms of the qualification in Article 8(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Non-RIPA surveillance had been used on 31 occasions to identify perpetrators of ASB, criminal damage, harassment, intimidation and drug dealing. The ability to carry out this surveillance was considered by officers to be important in supporting victims of crime.

Dave Page explained that the council maintained a substantial overt CCTV network with over 1100 cameras connected to the control room. There had been an increase of 300 cameras in the past two years, as well as a large number of upgrades having been made to the existing network. More mobile CCTV cameras were being bought as these had proven to be very successful. There had been 219 more arrests assisted by the CCTV team in 2015 than 2014. The team had also won the Met Police's 'CCTV Team of the Year'.

Councillor Dewhirst asked whether funding for the CCTV network was secure and said that he felt there was a good case for CCTV cameras on those parts of King Street not yet covered by the network. Dave Page said that he was aware of Councillor Dewhirst's desire for more CCTV on King Street. He explained that S.106 had been a good source of funding for additional CCTV cameras and that this seemed likely to continue, although the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy might have some impact.

Councillor Cassidy asked how many RIPA requests were refused by senior officers and the judiciary. Dave Page said that officers knew the thresholds for RIPA applications and so few were made which were not acceptable. He sent about half of requests back to officers for further explanation and justification. He was pleased to say that none of the applications made to the judiciary had been refused.

Councillor Holder asked whether mobile CCTV cameras could be used to reduce crimes on estates. Dave Page explained that mobiles were currently tasked to deal with anti-social behaviour, particularly fly-tipping, however future work could be directed towards housing estates. He said that it would be interesting to see if intelligence could be used to position cameras in areas where crime was predicted, rather than reacting to events.

Councillor Hamilton noted that upgrades were planned for CCTV on estates and asked what the process for engaging residents in this was. Dave Page explained that residents were consulted on the proposals. Claire Rai agreed to let Councillor Hamilton know which estates were scheduled for upgrades.

10. WORK PROGRAMME AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was noted to be 21 September 2016. The work programme was noted.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.45 pm

Chair .....

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