

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 20 April 2023

Venue: The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway,
Ealing, W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair), J Ball (Vice-Chair), L Brett, D Crawford, P Driscoll, S Kumar, M Rice, C Summers, V Alexander, C Anderson, H Haili, P Knewstub, I Nijhar and B Wesson

Apologies:

K Dhindsa

Attendees (virtual): Councillors

C Tighe

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dhindsa.

Councillor Wesson was present as a substitute for Councillor Dhindsa.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023

An amendment to the minutes was considered in relation to the second recommendation made by the Committee under item 5 and whether a reference should be made to phase 1 and phase 2 ecological and habitat surveys. The Committee discussed the matter, and it was proposed to defer the matter to the next available meeting to allow the recording of the meeting to be reviewed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023 were deferred to the next meeting.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were

agreed as a true and correct record.

6 Safer Ealing Partnership Annual Report 2022-23

Councillor Raza, Cabinet member for tackling inequalities and Chair of the Safer Ealing Partnership (SEP), introduced the report and explained that it outlined the performance of the SEP for the period 2022 – 23.

Following the introductory remarks of Councillor Raza, the Committee were invited to ask questions of the Safer Ealing Partners.

To the representatives of the Metropolitan Police, Superintendent Anthony Bennett and Chief Inspector James Herring, the Committee asked the following questions:

- To what extent did the findings of the Baroness Casey Review correlate with the experience of police officers? Were police officers feeling changes in their day-to-day work as a result of the Baroness Casey report? What was the timeline for implementing the 9-point plan which had been prepared following the Baroness Casey report?
- What was being done by police to tackle the disproportionate rate of stop and searches on black people in the Borough? What was being done to increase the positive outcomes of stop and searches? Were the police learning from other boroughs which had better outcomes in relation to stop and search? With regards to the Youth Scrutiny Panels which had been set up by police to review stop and search cases, how was the membership for these panels determined?
- What were the opportunities for engaging local communities with police officers? How were the police improving their relationships with diverse communities?
- How were changes in police resources impacting front line services and were new funding packages restoring the levels of funding for policing to past levels?
- Were the police seeing an increase in cannabis farms in the borough?
- Were the police and local authority seeing successes in tackling county line criminal activity and its link to child exploitation?
- What work was being done by the police to reduce reoffending rates?
- What work was being done by the police to combat retail crime and crimes like anti-social behaviour which impacted the business of retailers?
- Were police able to respond to reports of stolen phones?

- Were rates of domestic abuse growing and what was driving the changes?
- What was driving the level of missing children in Ealing and how were authorities tackling this?

Superintendent Bennett and Chief Inspector Herring gave the following responses:

- Police officers were feeling tangible changes in the Metropolitan Police resulting from the Casey report. There was a heightened level of scrutiny of officers' public conduct and officers were seeing colleagues being re-vetted.
- There was more work to be done to communicate the police response to the Casey Review. In terms of timelines, Superintendent Bennett noted that several strategies had already been initiated, for example new outreach programs to recruit underrepresented groups to become police officers and the re-vetting of existing officers for their conduct records. There were some strategies which were due to be implemented in the coming months, for example investment in local policing including increasing the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
- Superintendent Bennett recognised that the number of stop and searches on black people was disproportionate. He noted that the rates had been coming down in the previous 12 months and outlined some of the measures which the police were implementing to continue this trend. These measures included:
 - The introduction of Youth Scrutiny Panels to allow scrutiny of stop and searches by young people.
 - New training which included showing what police officers what it felt like to be stop and searched.
 - Stop and searches were only conducted by officers when there was reason for doing so. Speculative stop and searches were no longer permitted.
- In constituting the Youth Scrutiny Panels, the police were working with the local Youth Justice Service to try and involve young people who do usually interact with the police.
- Representatives of the West Area Basic Command Unit (WA-BCU) attended Metropolitan Police wide GOLD groups to share best practice on the use of Stop and Search.
- The increased investment in neighbourhood policing was aimed to increase the trust and confidence in police amongst diverse

communities. Another element of their engagement program was with young people. The WA-BCU had restructured their youth engagement site and this was supporting their police cadet program.

- Whilst the police were unlikely to return to the levels of funding seen in the early 2000s, new investments in neighbourhood policing were going to bring about great numbers of neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs. This was likely to lead to increased detection and sanctions for lower levels crimes. The increases in police numbers were going to be demand-led.
- There had been recent arrests in relation to cannabis farms in Ealing, although Superintendent Bennett did not consider that there had necessarily been an increase in their prevalence.
- The WA-BCU had a strong record for its anti-gang work. Preventative work was taking place in schools to stop children being groomed into gangs. Paul Murphy, Safer Communities Operations Manager, added that work in relation to county lines activities formed a significant part of the Council's contextual safeguarding. There was sometimes a sense of tackling the effect and not the cause, although there were some strong examples of preventative work being carried out, including through housing initiatives.
- Superintendent Bennett considered that there was more the WA-BCU could do to reduce reoffending rates. Superintendent Bennett welcomed the suggestion of doing more work with families as part of reducing reoffending.
- Retail crime was not something police officers should be ignoring; Superintendent Bennett confirmed that there was capacity to respond to reports of retail crime, although depending on the details of individual cases there might be some prioritisation which takes place.
- It was hard to comment on police response to stolen mobile phones without knowing the details of specific cases. These cases were sometimes subject to prioritisation.
- Domestic abuse cases were rising, although Superintendent Bennett noted that this might have been the result of increased awareness and reporting. Mr Murphy, Safer Communities, added that many domestic abuse cases were referred to the police by the Council's anti-social behaviour team because reports were often sent to them first.
- The number of missing persons was partly the result of factors such as mental health issues, exploitation of individuals by criminal gangs, and the population of the WA-BCU as a command unit covering a large residential area.

To the representative of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), Commander Tom Moore, the Committee asked the following questions:

- What was the impact of the report into the culture of the London Fire Brigade on staff morale? What other factors were impacting the morale of fire fighters?
- What were the next steps for the London Fire Brigade following the report into their internal culture?

In response to questions, Commander Moore made the following points:

- There were lots of factors which impacted staff morale in the fire service. Individual morale was impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, the difficulties posed by industrial action and the general pressures on public services. There were climate related peaks in demand on fire services, and there had been a physical toll on staff after the major fire related incidents over the summer.
- The LFB had accepted all 23 recommendations of the report into its internal culture. Amongst the immediate responses to the report, the LFB had created a new independent complaints service and it had implemented a new training program for officers which included equality and diversity training and leadership training. The London Fire Brigade was working to support those coming forward with complaints.

To the representatives of Ealing Council Safer Communities Team, Jess Murray, Assistant Director of Safer Communities, Paul Murphy, Safer Communities Operations Manager, and Mehmet Kiranel Violence Reduction Coordinator, the Committee asked the following questions:

- What was the progress of the new Women's Wellness Zone in Ealing and were there prospects for seeing more wellness zones created in the Borough?
- Did the findings of the Baroness Casey report undermine the effectiveness of any of the Council's policies to combat violence against women and girls?
- What was the day-to-day work of a violence reduction coordinator?
- How was the Council tackling the problem of retaining staff for food safety enforcement?
- How was awareness being raised of the upcoming test of the UK emergency text system to ensure that vulnerable individuals using concealed phones were going to be able to change their settings?

In response, Mr Murray, Mr Murphy and Mr Kiranel provided the following responses:

- The Women's Wellness Zone was designed to become a one-stop shop for services for women's wellness. The individuals who were currently eligible to use the services in the zone were those at the highest risk. Instead of looking to create additional zones around the Borough, officers were considering ways to expand the provision in the existing zones to individuals at lower risks.
- In light of the Casey report, council officers still felt confident that they could deliver on the Council's male violence against women and girls strategy. Changes in the way the Council worked with the police allowed more proactive work to take place: the council had increased oversight over crimes as a result of new notification procedures from the police, CCTV teams were proactively identifying predatory behaviour and they were getting fast responses from police teams when incidents were reported.
- Some examples were outlined of the work involved in the violence reduction coordinator role. A key aspect of the role was showing that many officers from diverse departments of the Council had a role to play in violence reduction.
- Food safety was a key issue in the context of Ealing's high number of food manufacturers. 2022 – 23 had seen the highest number of food safety inspections ever conducted by the council and officers were seeing increasing levels of compliance.
- There had been some recent investment in the food safety sector after some years of losses. These had led to professionals leaving the sector resulting in staff shortages. There were schemes to develop graduates, although officers considered this likely to be a long-term challenge.
- In relation to the UK Government emergency text message, officers had been working with agencies working with vulnerable individuals to ensure that people were aware of the upcoming notifications and how to turn them off.

Questions were raised in relation to the accommodation for Ealing RISE (Recovery and Intervention Service in Ealing). Insofar as the SEP was not a decision maker in this matter, it was requested that the matter be taken up separately to the meeting.

Councillor Raza was invited to make concluding remarks following the questions. Councillor Raza welcomed the input of scrutiny members in assessing the work of the partnership.

The Committee commended the report and thanked the Safer Partners for their detailed responses to questions.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Safer Ealing Partnership Annual Report.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 9.29 pm

Signed:

Dated: Thursday, 27 April 2023

Y Gordon (Chair)