



## **MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 9 February 2012 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Van Kalwala (Chair) and Councillors Harrison, Hirani, Naheerathan and RS Patel

Also Present: Councillors Beswick (Lead Member for Crime and Public Safety), Butt (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources), Cheese and S Choudhary

Apologies were received from: Councillors Clues, Brown and HB Patel

### **1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None declared.

### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 December 2011**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 December 2011 be approved as an accurate record.

### **3. Matters arising**

None.

### **4. Policing priorities in Brent**

The Chair welcomed Matthew Gardener (Brent Borough Commander, Brent Police) and Councillor Beswick (Lead Member for Crime and Public Safety) who were present to give an update to the committee on policing issues in Brent, including the use of Stop and Search in the borough.

Matthew Gardener thanked the committee and stated he would welcome any invitation in the future from the Committee. He also gave special thanks to Councillor Beswick and Genny Renard (Head of Integrated Community Safety and Development, Strategy Partnerships and Improvement) who he had built a strong working relationship with.

Matthew Gardener stated that the current London Metropolitan Commissioner had put Stop and Search high on the policing agenda. He informed the Committee that Brent carried out more Stop and Searches per officer than any other borough in London and most likely the rest of the UK. He noted that this also raised the question as to whether the right approach was being taken in terms of using this

power. In terms of outcomes resulting from Stop and Search, Brent police had performed well, with 20% of all Stop and Searches in the borough last year resulting in a positive outcome and 13% resulting in arrest. These were the highest success rates in London although, Matthew Gardener recognised that therefore meant 80% of people stopped were not formally sanctioned. In response to this view point, he stated that it was very difficult for the Police to always correctly identify those who had committed a crime and those who had not. He explained the difference between an arrest and a positive outcome, where an arrest meant someone was taken to a police station and detained, where as a positive outcome included giving someone a street warning, which significantly reduced the amount of paperwork the police officer had to complete. He gave the example of the police stopping an individual who was over the age of 18, searching them and finding them in possession of a small amount of cannabis that was deemed to be for personal use. Instead of arresting that individual the police could give a street warning, which would be deemed as a positive outcome from the Stop and Search.

Matthew Gardener then presented a chart to the committee which showed the success rates of Stop and Search in each borough from January 2012. Brent's success rate was over 25% which was higher than any other borough. Matthew Gardener commented that he believed that the police's main priority was to arrest and remove criminals from the community. A number of those who the police dealt with had already been attended by a number of other services including schools, social services and the NHS and those who had continued to offend needed to be addressed by the police. Matthew Gardner informed the committee that Brent and Lewisham police had attended a recent meeting with the Deputy Commissioner for Cumbria, who was the ACPO lead on Stop and Search. They spoke about Stop It, and also about sanction detections, which meant proactively finding criminals, in key areas at key times. Matthew Gardener also spoke about the performance regime he had implemented at Brent. He assessed all of his officers based on their sickness, their training, the complaints made against them, their arrest rates and Stop and Search success rate amongst other factors. He also set up a monitoring and review practice with his inspectors whereby they were assessed every four months on their statistics.

Matthew Gardener informed the committee that the use of Stop and Search in Brent was intelligence led as much as possible. He stated that last year he had become wary that the use of sanction detection could create a culture of officers wanting to get a quick arrest, and quantity could replace quality. Therefore he conducted a review of a 100 arrests and 84% of people arrested had a previous criminal record, 49% had four or more criminal convictions, 72% were stopped in the four highest crime high areas in the borough and 60% were arrested between 6.00 pm and midnight. He stated that this proved that outcome rates were still doing well despite the rise in quantity of Stop and Searches. Members were advised that Stop and Search was used to detect crime, those carrying weapons to commit crime, and those possessing drugs. It was also explained that every time a positive outcome was recorded, it was identified as a crime, and as a result the crime rate had increased in Brent by 6%.

Matthew Gardener explained that he was constantly reviewing the training Brent police officers received to improve Stop and Search. He had identified the three highest performing officers in the Borough and asked them to establish a ten point plan for all other officers to follow. He also stated that the three officers were to

become mentors for the fifty lowest achieving officers. The committee noted that the BBC has planned a documentary in Brent on how Brent police officers use Stop and Search, due the success rates in the borough. Matthew Gardener concluded that although they were succeeding in Brent in regards to the success rate of Stop and Search, a lot of work needed to be done to improve people's perception of Stop and Search. He informed the committee that a new App was being designed which would allow those who have just been stopped and searched to give their feedback on how they felt they were treated and would be piloted in Brent in February 2012. He stated he welcomed this tool, and had supported its introduction when he had attended a recent Stop and Search Youth Forum.

Councillor Beswick then addressed the committee and acknowledged the challenge the police faced in trying to change the perception of Stop and Search. He stated that the public needed to be educated about Stop and Search and then their attitudes may change towards the use of it. He informed the committee that he had been to 15 different wards since August 2011 and had gathered feedback from local people on their opinions of Stop and Search. He explained that the council worked in partnership with the police and ward councillors should be encouraged to liaise with local police officers on behalf of the community.

Members then discussed this item. Councillor Hirani sought clarification about the difference between the terms Stop and Search and Stop and Account, as the terms had been used interchangeably. He enquired what numbers of Stop and Searches were based on intelligence and what numbers were based on appearance. He then asked, in regards to quality assurance, what measures had been put in to place to ensure that Stop and Search/ Account did not alienate the community in Brent. Councillor Hirani stated that street drinking was a problem in Neasden and asked if this was a problem elsewhere in the borough and what was being done by the police to tackle street drinking. He also asked if a ward by ward break down of the deployment of PCSO's in the Borough was available.

Councillor Naheerthan asked if Brent's highest Stop and Search success rate mean that Brent that it also had the highest crime rate in London. He also enquired how the Borough Commander and the police worked with each part of the borough, specifically the northern part that is shared with Harrow, as there was a concern that there was little Brent police presence in these areas.

Councillor Harrison enquired how many of these arrests from Stop and Search resulted in a caution and how many actually progressed to court. She also asked what the Police were doing to deal with low level crime such as feuds between neighbours. Councillor Harrison then stated that the she had become aware that some of the safer neighbourhood teams were below strength in terms of numbers, and enquired what plans the Borough Commander had to bring them back up to promised levels.

Councillor RS Patel enquired what steps the Borough Commander had taken to ensure that enforcement and prevention were co-ordinated and did not impede the progress of each other. He then enquired what the Borough Commander believed the balance between enforcement and prevention should be, and what one should take precedence.

The Chair commented that there was an issue in certain parts of the borough with youth violence and he asked how the police had engaged with cross borough projects in South Kilburn and Westminster's Mozart estates, and how were the police dealing with youth violence generally. He enquired what, apart from national challenges such as the Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, did the Borough Commander envisage were the key challenges for Brent in the coming financial year. The Chair asked the Commander to report back to the Committee when he had finalised the areas that Brent Police would stop performing due to budget cuts. The Chair also asked if the likely staff numbers as a result of the Resource Allocation Formula were known and enquired how the Borough Commander planned to deliver 'Total Policing' within a decreasing budget. He also asked what the timescales were for bringing numbers back up to desired strength.

With the approval of the Chair, Councillor S Choudhary addressed the committee. Councillor S Choudhary asked what was being done to tackle modern crimes, including telephone scams and cyber-crimes.

In reply to the questions raised, Matthew Gardener explained that Stop and Account was when someone was stopped and questioned as to why, for example, they were in an area known for crime during unsocial hours. If the police did not receive an adequate response to these questions, this then gave them grounds to search that individual. He explained that elsewhere in the country they did not record Stop and Account statistics, but the Metropolitan Police believed them to be important. He stated that the intelligence given to police officers prior to Stop and Search being conducted is given to every patrol before they start their shift. Matthew Gardener acknowledged that people were stopped unnecessarily at times, and to try and minimise that, his officers required further training. He stated that he believed that the new App being trialled in Brent would help them to obtain better feedback and make the process more robust. He did state however that confidence in Brent police was 36% which reflected a 7% increase over the past two years. Matthew Gardener believed this could be attributed to the positive relationship with the media in the Borough. With regard to the level of crime in the Borough, Matthew Gardener informed Members that Brent was compared to those areas deemed to be in a 'similar family' to Brent. These included areas such as Lambeth, Hackney, Haringey, but also Brighton and Hove. Matthew Gardener informed the committee that Brent police were working more closely with neighbouring forces, officers were being deployed across borough boundaries to maximise police resources and they had better technology, including linked in radios. Matthew Gardener agreed to provide Members with arrest figures from Stop and Search that resulted in court proceedings.

Matthew Gardener advised that until recently the Met did not have a dedicated gang strategy or department. He stated that 19 of the 32 boroughs in London have known gangs in their boroughs, and Brent now has a specific gang unit that is made up of approximately 40 officers. He stated that the work the unit was doing included diversion activities and giving the gang members an exit strategy. Matthew Gardener then stated that he believed there should be a balance between enforcement and prevention of crime by the Police. He believed that redesigning areas could help prevent crime as had happened in the Stonebridge area. He explained that the police's primary role was to keep the peace and prevent crime, however he was aware that a lot of police time was spent dealing with crimes that had already happened as opposed to preventing future crime. He then informed

the committee that although Brent did not have its own unit to deal with cybercrime, Scotland Yard did have a computer crime unit. The police could only proceed with investigating these crimes once the banks had decided to pursue the crime, however Matthew Gardener recognised that it may be helpful to educate people who were particularly vulnerable to this type of crime. Matthew Gardener stated that anti-social behaviour in communities and between neighbours could be dealt with by the Safer Neighbourhoods Team and these could be escalated to County Courts as civil disputes.

Matthew Gardener explained that Brent should have 658 police officers and 75 Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs). However Brent actually had 641 Police Officers and 55 PCSOs, and 20 PCSOs were to be recruited as police officers, with no plans to replace them. Therefore Brent would only have 35 PCSOs in future but will hopefully be at full strength for Police Officers. Matthew Gardener stated that they were currently looking at what they could stop doing to save resources. For example certain front offices in Police Stations around the borough may close as they are not used that often. He stated that the Metropolitan Police had concluded that London did not always need 32 of the same unit in each borough and they could centralise some of these resources. He informed the Committee that once the recommendations around this had been finalised he would let the committee know. With regards to the upcoming Olympics, Matthew Gardener believed that the public perception was that Brent would lose police officers during this time, however he stated Brent would actually gain officers from the rest of the country, due to events being held in Wembley. In addition, Brent police officers had had all leave and rest days cancelled and therefore Police coverage was likely to rise during this period. Matthew Gardener informed Members that 84% of the Metropolitan Police's budget was spent on salaries and its budget was being cut by 20%, which would mean a corresponding reduction in wages, however it was not expected to affect front line staff number. He also advised that although the Metropolitan Police had not yet agreed a final formula for resource allocation, it was believed that it would favour Brent more than it had in the past as an element of the formula would include the number of arrests made.

Phil Newby (Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) added that the resource allocation was based upon Office for National Statistics data and therefore would not be based upon an accurate reflection of the population in Brent. However, it was hoped that crime demand would be factored in accordingly.

Councillor Beswick commented that the Youth Engagement Team could help improve the perceptions of the police and help them liaise with the community.

Genny Renard (Head of Community, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) commented that neighbourhood problems could be dealt with at Local Joint Action Groups, which could provide a multi-agency solution to the problem. In response to the question related to street drinking, Genny Renard informed the committee that there had been a rise of overall in the borough. She stated that there were a number of complex problems related to street drinking, and therefore it required in depth cross department working, but reassured the Committee that it was being looked at.

The Chair thanked Matthew Gardener for attending and indicated that he would be welcome at future meetings.

5. **Community safety update**

Members agreed to defer this item to a future meeting of the committee due to deteriorating weather.

6. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 29 March 2012 at 7.30 pm.

7. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Z VAN KALWALA  
Chair