MINUTES OF
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8 January 2019
(7:00 - 9:10 pm)

Present: Cllr Jane Jones (Chair), Cllr Andrew Achilleos (Deputy Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah, Cllr Princess Bright, Cllr Ingrid Robinson and Cllr Phil Waker

Also Present: Cllr Margaret Mullane, Cllr Maureen Worby and Cllr Darren Rodwell

Apologies: Cllr Toni Bankole, Cllr Rocky Gill, Cllr Olawale Martins and Cllr Paul Robinson

22. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Minutes (20 November 2018 and 4 December 2018)

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 November 2018 and 4 December 2018 were confirmed as correct.

24. Tri Borough: What are the Police doing to address victim satisfaction and the perception of crime in the Borough?

The Chair introduced a report, explaining that representatives from across the Borough had been invited to attend the meeting by the Committee to hear and discuss the views of service providers who were working with victims of crime and the views of the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB), based on the information picked up via the ward panels.

Representatives from the Metropolitan Police East Base Command Unit (BCU) had also been invited to address the Committee on work that they were undertaking in relation to victim satisfaction and the perception of crime and respond to the points raised from the services providers and the SNB. The aim of the item was to help partners work together more effectively.

The Committee first heard from Steve Thompson, Chair of the SNB who advised that the main concerns from the SNB were in relation to communication and feedback levels from the Police. In particular, feedback on low level crime was not being received, which did not reassure residents and or address the perception of crime within the Borough.

Mr Thompson also raised concerns that there was a lack of support for the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT’s), for example there appeared to be no resources in place to cover officers when on long term sick leave. Mr Thompson also advised that he had attended a meeting where he was told that there was a proposal going forward to reduce the teams further, across London.

Kaljinder Johal, Enhanced Service Delivery Manager at Victim Support, supported
the comments on communication made by Mr Thompson, adding that officers working for Victim Support could get consent to liaise with Police on behalf of the client, however feedback was still not received. This was incredibly frustrating for both the service and the client.

The Chair of the BAD Youth Forum, Johami Mutuale, addressed the Committee advising of her concerns of reduced visibility of Police Officers in schools. Assembly’s with Police officers were no longer held, and it seemed that Police Officers were only present in schools when a major incident had occurred, rather than on a weekly basis. Ms Mutuale advised that children no longer felt safe in school nor did they feel safe walking or getting the bus home from school. While the Youth Zone would be positive for the Borough, Ms Mutuale felt that crime and disorder would not stop unless there was more police presence and the police spoke more to children.

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety addressed the Committee advising that a plan had been formulated to improve joint working in the face of austerity for partners including the Police and the Council. The Cabinet Member had been working with the Police closely to overcome the limited communication from the Police since the formation of the East Base Command Unit (BCU). For example, a summit on Serious Violence was being held the following week with neighbouring authorities and partners.

In response to the questions and comments raised during the discussion, the Committee were advised of the following by Deputy Superintendent John Ross, Acting Inspector Chris Hobro and Inspector John Goodwin:

- The Police were currently focussing on improving low level crime communication and working with Victim Support to find a single point of contact;
- The Police currently operated on two different systems which did not talk to each other. This had impacted on communication and follow ups/feedback and was currently being looked into;
- All secondary schools in the Borough had access to a Police Officer, however following Ms Mutuale’s comments a review would be undertaken;
- With regard to Mr Thompson’s comments on a reduction in police numbers, Deputy Superintendent Ross advised that formal communication regarding any proposal had not been received by the officer’s present. However, any changes would be in relation to an agreement under Section 92 of the Police Act 1996 (Grant from a Local Authority) with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) using the Met Patrol Plus Scheme to fund a team of police officers. This was previously (and informally) known as a “buy one get one free” scheme; and
- With regard to victim satisfaction, the Committee were advised that responses were reported every quarter and the latest statistics showed that 50% of residents were satisfied with their follow up from the Police and 50% had received an email or a letter within five working days.

The Leader of the Council addressed the Committee raising concerns that any changes to the agreement under Section 92 would reduce the amount of police officers in the Borough by a significant amount. While Council enforcement officers could take part in patrols with Police Officers, it would not help to keep police numbers at a sustainable level within the Borough.
In response to the comments made by Ms Mutuale, the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration advised that meetings had been held with children in secondary schools to work on anti-social behaviour hotspots. Children were asked to mark on a map of the Borough where they did not feel safe. The areas highlighted had been reported to the Police.

The Committee thanked all those present for their representations and the Chair advised that another meeting would be held to discuss progress on the issues raised.

25. How well are the Council's new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements working?

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration presented a report to the Committee on the Council’s new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements.

In Autumn 2017 the Council moved into its new structure which saw the creation of the Core, Care and Support and Community Solutions. As part of this new arrangement, the MASH was moved from the operational oversight of Children’s Social Care to Community Solutions.

The rationale for the move was to strengthen information-sharing; whole family approaches and ensure families got access to a range of targeted early help support.

Since the Ofsted focused visit during March 2018, there had been new leadership within Children’s Social Care including a new Director of People and Resilience, Director of Operations for Children’s Social Care and more recently, a new Head of Assessment and Intervention. The new leadership team had commissioned several independent and internal assurance activities to support greater understanding of the quality and impact of the local MASH arrangements, and the front door.

The Cabinet Member took the Committee through the report, which was welcomed by the Committee for its clarity in explaining the issues faced by the Council and the steps that were being taken to address gaps.

The Committee noted that 17 new posts for social workers had been created to bring caseloads nearer to the London average, however it was noted that there were large caseloads across the country as the pressures on social care were still increasing.

The Committee considered the how to reduce referrals to MASH and it was noted that by referring families into an early help offer, it stopped repeat referrals coming back to MASH and would reduce demand. However, to do this families would need to be identified before they got to MASH through the early help offer. The early help offer was still being developed and it was suggested the area be scrutinised in more detail later in the year.

The Committee resolved that as part of its quality assurance arrangement that MASH is considered annually by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Standing Order 7.1 (Part 2, Chapter 3, of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue beyond the 9pm threshold.

26. Work Programme

The work programme was noted.

The Chair advised that there was no in-depth scrutiny review currently listed on the work programme. A suggested list of topics for an in-depth scrutiny review had been tabled by the Designated Scrutiny Officer and the Committee were asked to consider which subject they wished to review.

The following three topics were suggested:

- Corporate Parenting;
- Company Governance; and
- Improvements to public realm.

While discussing the suggested topics, the Director of Law and Governance advised that an audit was currently taking place on company governance and it may be prudent for the Committee to consider the topic later in the year, once the audit report had been published.

The Committee resolved to undertake an in-depth scrutiny review on improvements to public realm and requested that a scoping report be provided at the next meeting.

27. Budget Monitoring

The report was noted.