

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 December 2023
(6:15 - 8:27 pm)

Present: Cllr Glenda Paddle (Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair), Cllr Andrew Achilleos, Cllr Fatuma Nalule, Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Cllr Paul Robinson, Cllr Muazzam Sandhu and Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf; Sajjad Ali

Apologies: Cllr Phil Waker

28. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

29. Minutes - To confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2023 were confirmed as correct.

30. Metropolitan Police Update

Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell BCU Commander, East Area BCU and Superintendent David Rhodes, Barking and Dagenham Neighborhood Lead, provided an updated report on the work of the Metropolitan Police within the Borough.

The Metropolitan Police was undergoing a reform with policing in local communities to gain more trust from the public, reduce crime rates and increase high standards across the board. As part of the reform, ten commitments were established to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The commitments included:

1. Working to eliminate police perpetrated domestic abuse and sexual offences and we will improve the effectiveness of our response to these crimes.
2. Working to improve how we listen to those impacted by VAWG. We will take specific action to understand how we can improve engagement with minoritized women and girls.
3. Working to demonstrably prioritize VAWG.
4. Working to tackle sexism and misogyny in the Met.
5. Working to look outside the Met for ways to improve our response to VAWG.
6. Working to do much more to identify and tackle perpetrators of VAWG.
7. Working to make better use of police powers to protect women and girls from perpetrators, such as civil orders and protection orders.
8. Working to take action to improve support and care for VAWG victim survivors through the criminal justice process to ensure a consistent and compassionate service everywhere in London.

9. Working to identify high risk and high harm locations for VAWG, and target resources to those places to improve the safety of women and girls in London's public spaces.
10. Working to focus on preventing VAWG through our Strongest Ever Neighborhoods programme.

A new structure was introduced to the local Base Command Unit (BCU) with vacancies created. The vacancies were for ten Police Community Support Officers (PCSO), 3 Sergeants and 1 Inspector. Between 2024/26, it was hoped that there would be up to 20 new PCSO's. The current Sergeants were each spread across three wards, the introduction of three new Sergeants would reduce the number of wards down to two wards per Sergeant.

A new app was introduced to frontline responders which would allow victims to give instant feedback relating to the officers that had dealt with the victim. The feedback would be collated to see which officers delivered good services and address those giving poor services.

The Committee stated that it had seen significant improvement on the policing done within the Borough within the past six months: however, communication between the Police and Councillors needed improvement. It was suggested for the Safer Neighborhood Team (SNT) to give bi-monthly updates to Councillors.

A question was raised regarding what was being done regarding anti-social behavior on public transport. It was common for police to be called a period of time after an incident had taken place on public transport. This reduced the chance of police apprehending the perpetrator as either the perpetrator would be gone when police arrived, or it would be hard tracking down the specific transportation where the incident took place. There were additional Safer Transport Teams that worked on transport networks with high crime rate. Most Transport for London buses also had advanced CCTV cameras installed.

In response to a question regarding the movement of SNT officers around different wards, Superintendent David Rhodes assured committee members that officers would only have one joint day of action a month in which they would be abstracted from their wards and placed in another ward based on the crime rates.

Reported Domestic Violence (DV) had been on the rise; however, it did remain significantly under reported. Around 80% of DV reports, the victim was a woman. Often the perpetrator was either the partner of the victim or family members. There was a significant number of women who would refuse to prosecute due to pressure and the way proceedings took place. There were independent DV advisers that work with the police to support the victims in taking the case forward. The police had identified 100 men (VAWG 100) across London that had shown repeated bad behavior towards women and girls. Improvements were made on data sharing across all BCU's to build an index of perpetrators and the risks they imposed.

There was a suggestion that the Council funding for nine extra police officers and one Sergeant within the borough was under consideration due to the Council's significant financial pressures. The Council was in ongoing discussions with the Metropolitan police on what the future of the service would look like, however no

formal decision had been made.

The abstractions of officers across London were undertaken as fair as possible. The amount of protests that had occurred in Central London were perpetual and required a significant amount of policing. The last eight weekends, there was around 1000 – 1500 officers deployed on duty in which officers were sent off from their BCU to police Central London Protests. This had meant that SNT officers were abstracted from their wards to fill in for the emergency response role. If the number of officer abstractions was based on the crime rate of a London Borough, LBBB would have more abstractions compared to other London Boroughs. On average, an officer would work 20 days a month with 2.7 days of abstractions per officer.

Reported crime was more accurate for certain crime types. Crime types such as burglary, robbery and serious assault had more accurate reporting as there were more incentives such as claiming through insurance. Other crimes such as Anti-Social Behavior were under reported as there were no incentives. Underreporting crime had a lot to do with the lack of trust the public had with the police. Time and consistency were needed to build trust and confidence between the public and Police. The Cabinet Member for Enforcement & Community Safety assured the committee that the police worked jointly with the enforcement team to build trust with residents. There had been significant outcomes and success on joint operations between the Council enforcement team and the Police. Staff at community hubs were also trained to refer information onto Police and Council officials.

The Committee asked whether the Metropolitan Police had become too big and widespread to cope with looking after local areas. In response to the question, Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell explained the response time of the Metropolitan Police was faster compared to other police forces. London was a capital city that had a high demand and more complex challenges. There would still be the same challenges if the Police force became more localized. Localising police forces would mean that there would need to be a significant increase in the number of officers to maintain the same level of service.

Out of the 19 wards within the borough, 18 wards had two PCSO's. There was one ward with one current PCSO and a vacant position which the Police were actively trying to fill. Many of the new recruits were on a degree course where they would be abstracted at times to attend University.

A recent published report highlighted the Metropolitan's failings in its child protection services, such as sexual abuse, links to organised gangs and failing to search for missing children. A question was put to the Metropolitan Police on what would be done to improve child protection services. The Committee was informed that there would be a full inspection scheduled for March 2024. The Police conducted huge investigations to take out county line gangs. Recently, there were several county lines taken out within the local area. The Police did not grade a lot of missing children as high risk as most children usually returned; however, they had acknowledged that more work needed to be undertaken to see what happened to those children while they were missing.

A question was asked by the Committee regarding any milestone dates in which

the Metropolitan Police were expected to achieve their VAWG commitments. The committee was informed that many of the commitments would be hard to measure; however, there would be a quarterly governance meeting held with Senior Officers and partners to review the progress of the ten commitments. A meeting was held with a performance team to find measurable outcomes.

With regards to protecting VAWG, engagement stalls gave out alarms to women as part of the Metropolitan Police Walk and Talks. Barking and Dagenham were also exploring the Safe Havens Scheme which encourages residents needing help to attend public premises that have the Safe Havens sign displayed.

A question was asked on whether the Metropolitan Police would take a more active role in youth groups such as the Youth AIG and local cadet meetings. Officers had tried to attend as many schools as possible. Superintendent David Rhodes advised the Youth Forum to get in touch with the police and tell them the meetings, dates and times they would want officers to attend.

(Standing Order 7.1 (Chapter 3, Part 2 of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue beyond the two-hour threshold).

31. Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme and requested that the Metropolitan Police return in six months to update the Committee on their progress.