

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 4 April 2023
(7:03 - 9:19 pm)

Present: Cllr Glenda Paddle (Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair), Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Cllr Paul Robinson, Cllr Phil Waker and Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf; Sajjad Ali and Richard Hopkins

Also Present: Cllr Syed Ghani

Apologies: Cllr Andrew Achilleos, Cllr Donna Lumsden, Cllr Fatuma Nalule, Cllr Muazzam Sandhu, Glenda Spencer and Sarfraz Akram

37. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

38. Minutes - To confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023

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

39. Metropolitan Police Service Turnaround Plan 2023-25 and Baroness Casey Review Final Report

The Metropolitan Police Borough Commander (BC) delivered a presentation on the Metropolitan Police Service Turnaround Plan 2023-25 and the Baroness Casey Review Final Report. This detailed:

- The contents of and context behind the Baroness Casey Review, which had been commissioned by the Metropolitan Police to review its culture, standards and practice, following the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving Police Officer, who had used his warrant card and his powers to abduct a female on the streets of London in 2021;
- How the review had been compiled, through considering Police data, outcomes and organisational processes, and Police Officers speaking with Baroness Casey to reflect the services provided by the Police, and its culture;
- The acceptance of the Metropolitan Police as to the outcomes of the review and its resolute stance to work towards improving these outcomes;
- Other influencing factors as to the outcomes of the review, such as austerity, demand on policing and incorrect choices around resources;
- Next steps, such as around addressing cultural issues within the Police, driving out discriminatory behaviour, identifying those officers who should not be a part of the Police and encouraging officers to come forward to report negative behaviour;
- The importance of listening to, and better connecting with local communities, to better understand their needs and with more work needing to be undertaken to address this;

- The further work that needed to be undertaken to protect women and children, with more work around making public spaces safer needing to be delivered;
- There were many good Police Officers in the service and work would need to be undertaken to both support and motivate them, as the community needed good policing; these officers would be instrumental in helping the Police to address poor behaviour;
- The Baroness Casey Review was an opportunity to bring about real changes within the Metropolitan Police, with the Police fully behind this;
- Some of the positive work that was already being undertaken to address issues, such as around violence against women and girls and increased vetting of Police Officers through the Police National Database;
- The Metropolitan Police Turnaround Plan 2023-25, which centred around nine key areas that the Commissioner wished to address and which also linked in with the areas of concern identified by Baroness Casey;
- How the Police planned to use the findings of the Baroness Casey review to have wider discussions around the Metropolitan Police Turnaround Plan, to provide a better policing service, safeguard victims, reconnect with communities and devise tailored borough-based approaches;
- Some of the positive work already being undertaken through the Turnaround Plan, such as the recruitment of Borough Neighbourhood Superintendents to support neighbourhood policing, and of 600 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) across London; and
- The importance of partnership working in addressing issues and to deliver a better service.

A Councillor emphasised the importance of the Police recognising and facing the issues that had been raised through the report, such as issues of the BAME community being profiled and stopped; these issues had to be acknowledged initially, before these could be fixed. There were many great Police Officers; however, everyone needed to work together to resolve problems. A Councillor also raised issues whereby another Councillor had raised other issues at a Safer Neighbourhood Team meeting, which had subsequently been taken and rejected as criticism of the Police, as well as occasions whereby they had raised issues with patrolling Police Officers and had been made to feel a nuisance as a ward Councillor raising these.

It was also felt that tri-borough arrangements had weakened communications with long-established communities, with more localised connections needed, as well as the idea that cuts had resulted in less Police Officers as part of the neighbourhood policing service. Members acknowledged the importance of close partnership working and utilising available resources, as well as highlighted the need for more consistent and better staffed police teams.

In response to questions from Members, the BC stated that:

- He had already had conversations around how the Police could strengthen their relationships with Councillors, as elected representatives of the community and who were pivotal in information sharing. Future Councillor involvement on Ward Panels, where information could be disseminated and

- decisions made around the prioritisation of resources, was essential.
- The Police did not currently have the mechanisms in place to really listen to what was going on in the community and bring this altogether to make decisions around policing; some of this was due to the Police's own practice and approach to problems, which needed to be improved. The Borough Superintendents would look to strengthen relationships with Councillors and the Ward Panels, to share intelligence and community information, seek advice and discuss priorities.
 - The Police Commissioner had acknowledged the issues outlined by Baroness Casey, including the cultures, behaviours and incidents underpinning these. How the Police engaged with its communities through the lens of race, faith and other demographics would be key, through listening to their needs.
 - Whilst there were less Police Officers than previously, the Police was working to try to ensure greater consistency within neighbourhood Police teams.
 - Police engagement with local communities recently had also been very positive so far, with many community members coming forward to speak to Officers around issues that they had faced and on which they wished for support.

In response to questions from the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum (BADYF) co-optees, the BC stated that:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) could include a lot of different things, including street harassment and making women feel unsafe. The horrific murder of Zara Aleena in Redbridge had taken place shortly after the BC began his role, with the BC and his team having worked since then to look at improving women's safety. This had included around 60 "walk and talks" with Police officers and women in town centres and hotspot areas, where Police Officers had asked women where they felt unsafe and why, and how the Police could look to change this. There had also been innovative work around communication plans, enforcement, installing public space protection orders (PSPOs) and the first fine for harassing a woman in the street, which had been undertaken by the BC and his team in Redbridge. The BC wished to replicate this in Barking and Dagenham.
- The Police had increased their visibility in the town centres of Barking, Ilford and Romford, with dedicated Town Centre teams in each. It was also working more closely with Partners to address ASB.
- In terms of welfare, Police Officers were better supported than previously; however, many were under heavy pressure. In East London, there was a welfare hub that officers could access, for example, if they had been assaulted on the job or had dealt with a traumatic incident. The Police would also look to signpost and offer financial and mental health support to support its workforce; however, the Police were seeing many of its staff suffering from mental health issues and the nature of the job could be very difficult. The BC was working with his team to ensure that staff were well supported.
- Over the next 12 months, the BCU was going to be focusing on public safety, particularly around women and around tackling knife crime, through

increased engagement with the community around problem solving and approaches to deterrence.

- In terms of current accountability, the Police had Safer Neighbourhood Boards, Ward Panel Chairs and the IAGs; however, it was felt that this was not working effectively enough and the BC was working with Partners to ask for advice around how to improve this. The Police also needed to communicate what it was doing better, to the public.
- In terms of recruitment, the Police was not able to fill all of the vacancies that it had, despite methods to address this, such as through Outreach teams in the community working to recruit local people. More work needed to be undertaken to ensure that policing was an attractive profession.

In response to further questions from Members, the BC stated that:

- Getting the basics right would play a large role in helping to rebuild trust within the community, as well as better supporting victims of crime who came forward to report these, with only 65% of victims stating that they felt satisfied with the support and communication that they had received. The Public Attitude Survey showed that the levels of trust and confidence in the Police in East London, were quite high; however, it was likely that this would decline following the outcomes of the Baroness Casey report. The Police was very keen to build trust within the community and would engage with local people in order to do this; the BC was also already taking steps, such as through engaging with Senior NHS partners around reducing waiting times for those experiencing health crises.
- In terms of Police visibility, the Police needed to get better at communicating to the public the work of the local ward teams and where these would be on specific days, in case the public wished to speak with officers.
- Police abstractions were an issue, with Officers being drafted to support other areas; however, this was not happening as often as the community likely thought. Police Officers were abstracted around 2-3 times a month to support emergency response teams, and to Central London functions, which the Metropolitan Police Commissioner had already started to reduce and was looking to reduce further.

In response to questions from the Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee, the BC stated that:

- The Macpherson Report had led to significant change in the Metropolitan Police upon publication and it was felt that the Baroness Casey Report went even further than this in advocating for change. The Baroness Casey Report needed to define policing in London for many years to come.
- Much work had been undertaken to put in place child protection measures; a data protection review was also underway, which would result in more resource also being channelled into this area of work. Public Protection Units were under huge pressure, with the Commissioner recognising that more needed to be invested in these; it was hoped that the BC would shortly have more officers here, which would provide a greater opportunity to ensure that the Police could effectively protect children.

- Higher standards and better neighbourhood policing were current key priorities. It was acknowledged that as the Police targeted discriminatory behaviour amongst its officers, more “bad news” stories and convictions would likely appear in the press; however, this should be taken to highlight that discrimination was being addressed.
- “Walk and Talks” had also taken place in Dagenham, but had been undertaken primarily in town centres, as this was where the majority of crimes had occurred. More “walk and talks” would be undertaken in the future.

The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working and improving the relationship between the Police and the local authority. It requested an action plan for the new London PCSO recruitment, including when these were expected and the timelines moving forward. The BC stated that these were to be recruited around the end of the financial year, would then need to be vetted and trained and would likely start in post around Autumn 2023. Whilst some London boroughs would not see an uplift in their PCSO staffing, it was hoped that this would not be the case in Barking and Dagenham. The Chair asked the BC to return in around six months’ time, to update on progress, steps taken by the Superintendent and engagement with the community, what else could be done, and future plans.

40. Pre-Scrutiny Briefing: The Development of the Corporate Plan 2023-27

The Director of Strategy (DS) presented an update on the development of the Corporate Plan 2023-27. This detailed:

- The context behind the former Corporate Plan and changes since this, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis;
- The principles behind the envisioned Corporate Plan in addressing challenges in how the organisation worked, such as the importance of breaking down siloed Council working;
- Leadership development;
- The approach and priorities, to best support residents across the Borough.

In response to Members highlighting the need for better relationships between officers and Councillors, the DS stated that this was essential in resolving issues. The DS also highlighted the need for officers to look at issues from a Council-wide perspective and not dismissing anything if it did not fall under their departmental remit; officers needed to understand their role in serving the community and culture change needed to encourage better cross-departmental working, as well as working with Councillors. Staff also needed to feel more empowered to be able to make decision and address issues.

In response to further questions from Members, the DS stated that:

- It was felt that previous performance frameworks had gathered too much information against objectives, which had made it hard to effectively monitor these. A new Performance Framework was currently being developed, that would gather the right intelligence, information and data and that would be able to monitor performance against the objectives.
- Service plans would contain data around how individual services were

being delivered and how effectively, and there needed to be transparency for backbench Members, as well as Cabinet Members, in terms of this analysis. A framework would be developed whereby this data would be reported to Cabinet and Assembly; however, outside of these reporting mechanisms, the DS would be happy to report particular trends or patterns as requested. Whilst there would always be restrictions around individual cases, this did not prevent meaningful conversations around service delivery, and he would work to ensure a system that was as functional as possible.

- Officers needed to be empowered to take responsibility, be accountable for their services and work with each other. Strategic Directors needed to oversee the drivers for their services' performance and have the time to think more strategically around what how their services needed to be shaped to tackle future work and issues.
- Whilst officers worked very hard to deliver positive outcomes for residents, society and its issues were always evolving and this necessitated organisational change to better align with objectives.
- Services needed to consider a number of aspects as part of service delivery, one of which was around equalities, diversity, fairness and inclusion. Data was used around this to consider who the Council was serving, how these communities' needs could best be met and the impact of the service delivery on these groups. As such, equalities data was essential in service outcomes.

41. Work Programme

The Work Programme was agreed.