

Ealing Safer Neighbourhood Board

Wednesday, 29 October 2018

@ 7.00pm

Liz Cantell, Ground Floor, Ealing Town Hall, W5

Attendance:

PRESENT:

Richard Chilton
Don Tanswell
James Guest
Jags Sanghera
Martin Mallam
Beata Felinczak
Sarah Constable
William Hardman
Susan Lindo

REPRESENTING

Chair of ESNB - Community Member / ECPCG Rep
Acton Ward Cluster
Central Ealing Ward Cluster
Southall Ward Cluster
Greenford Cluster Lead / NW Sector
Victim Support
Youth Representative
London Chamber of Commerce
Independent Custody Visitors' Panel

COUNCILLORS

Cllr Seema Kumar

Also Present:

Ricky Kandohla - Superintendent, Met Police
Mark Hughes - Inspector, Met Police
Rob Bryan - Inspector, Met Police
Jess Murray - Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations
Paula Portas - Democratic Services Officer.
4 members of the public

Items for consideration

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

Councillor Joanna Camadoo, Sara Kumar, Andy Oliver, Andrew Rollings, Suzanne Fernandes, Rajat Nath, Alan Murray, Wendy Starkie, James Lawley-Barrett, Mohammed Ali, Jamila Bibi Sawar and Anu Khela sent their apologies.

2. Election of chair and vice chair

Board members were informed of the need to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair and asked to communicate a wish to stand for those positions to Jess Murray. There had been no other applications for the posts for the next year.

Action

It was agreed that the present Chair and Vice Chair, Richard Chilton and Sara Kumar, remain in the post for one more year.

3. Minutes of the meeting Held on 25.07.2018

James Guest requested that in Item 3, Gunnersbury Park Events, where the minutes noted that 'Board members' concerns had been allayed' be deleted. The following point should be incorporated:

- "This was the first year the event had been held in Gunnersbury Park and it was impressive to observe the way in which the police had progressively finessed their deployment across the three days of the event.
- The over-running by the organisers on Sunday night was unacceptable, as it meant that some 1,000 to 2,000 attendees were stranded outside the by then closed Acton Town Underground Station.
- There are a number of potential public safety matters/risks which needed to be addressed if the event is to return in future years. I offered to provide detailed feedback but haven't heard anything.
- Local residents have a number of ASB and general concerns.
- There is a risk that the organisers will seek to increase the number of attendees in future years. This would result in a number of unacceptable pressures.
- Liaison and Feedback with neighbouring residents needs to be significantly improved. The ESNB were subsequently denied a place at the Feedback Session which the organisers arranged with local residents.
- Both ESNB and HSNB must be actively included from a formative stage in the discussions about future events."

Resolved: That, subject to the amendments above, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2018 be signed as true and correct record.

4. Terms of office of Board members and terms of reference of Ealing SNB

The Chair suggested that the terms of office as community member for Alan Murray and himself, as well as, those terms for ward panel representatives James Guest, Jags Sanghera and Martin Mallam, that were coming to an end, should be extended for another year.

The Chair asked for volunteers to update the terms of reference of the ESNB to bring them into line with changes that have taken place and the way the Board works. Don Tanswell, Acton Ward Cluster representative, volunteered to update the Terms of Reference.

Resolved: That

- (i) The Terms of Office for the above-mentioned members be renewed.
- (ii) Don Tanswell to update the Terms of Reference for the ESNB.

5. Traveller Occupations and Illegal Waste Dumping

The Chair invited James Guest, ESNB member representing Central Ealing Ward Cluster, to address the board about an incident of illegal waste dumping in Northfield.

James Guest noted that:

- There had been problems of illegal waste dumping in one site in Orion Park, Northfield. However, this was not the first incident of this kind in the area.
- When neighbours became aware of the occupation of this site and the illegal activities being carried out they alerted the authorities.
- Orion Park became a dumping site used by organised criminals. These criminals had been leafletting nearby streets to advertise their activities.
- Historically, dealing with this kind of camps and activities had been left to private landlords to resolve in the Courts. Yet, strong powers had now emerged to interdict vehicles carrying illegal waste – powers which had been vested on local authorities.
- This site and the activities taking place in it had caused major distress to residents. A local supermarket had called the police on different occasions for shoplifting allegedly by occupiers of the site.
- There were rumours that landlords had paid illegal campers to vacate one site and move to other sites.
- Intelligence had been gathered about the situation on the site that could have been used to close it.
- There was understanding that, when this sort of situation happened in privately owned land, the response must be a joined up one. However, the feeling was that communication with residents had been lacking and needed to improve.
- It was unclear why powers under Sections 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 had not been used.
- Residents felt underwhelmed by the police and the local authority responses. There had been no confidence in the ward police. The overarching feeling was that events had been inadequately handled by authorities.
- Residents asked for representatives from the Police and the Council to hold a debrief session with them.

Other ESNB members noted:

- Southall had been a hotspot for illegal waste dumping earlier in the year. Authorities had acted swiftly to resolve incidents there. Compliments were given to the Southall police team and the Council for their response to these kinds of incidents in Southall.
- It was the impact on residents, not the type of property occupied, that was the key problem.
- There was a need to improve communications with residents' associations about what could be done in these cases.

- There was a need to put residents rights first.
- The confiscation of traveller's vehicles would serve to disincentivise these sort of activities.

Jess Murray, Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations at Ealing Council, noted that:

- If an unauthorised encampment was established on private land it was the private landowner's responsibility to address the situation. Private landlords had to manage their own lands.
- The Council was able to provide advice on how to secure the site and move intruders quickly.
- Ealing Council was working hard to manage the fast-growing number of unauthorised encampments in public land (i.e. from virtually no encampments to two or three a week).
- If private land was illegally occupied it raised tough choices for public authorities. Any resources invested in clearing private land would have to be taken away from the provision of other public services. The situation at the Northfield site was comparatively not as grave as that of other camps, let alone compared to the knife crime crisis that authorities were trying to solve with limited resources.
- In this context it would have been an inappropriate use of public resources for Council officers to evict those encamped from private land.
- Any eviction involved a legal process where local authorities had to demonstrate in Court that due process had been followed.

Ricky Kandohla, Superintendent, Met Police, noted that:

- Police neighbourhood teams would have reassured residents about the situation on the site. However, there could have been an element of failed communication between the Police and residents. The ward sergeant would examine whether there had been any oversights from neighborhood teams.
- The encampment had taken place on private land.
- There had been no reports of burglaries or crimes in the area because of this illegal encampment.
- There was a good procedure in place to deal with traveller encampments in the BCU and it was being followed. The procedure was fit for purpose.
- A document on the Police process to deal with these matters could be shared with the ESNB.
- There had been an increase in traveller communities settling in London. However, the situation was comparatively worse in other London boroughs.
- Site barriers were being used to prevent illegal encampments from happening in the first place. However, once these communities had settled into land it was more difficult to resolve the situation.

- Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 provided very severe powers. As police Superintendent he needed to be fully satisfied that their use was ethical and proportionate. Any deployment of such powers had to take the communities' Human Rights into account.
- In his view holding such a debrief was not a priority.

Actions:

- (i) ESNB members to hold a private meeting with the police.
- (ii) The police to send documents explain the procedures to deal with illegal encampments to the ESNB.

6. Violent crime

The Chair invited Ricky Kandohla to address the board.

Ricky Kandohla made the following points:

- The Crime Capability Assessment involved police officers examining all information in relation to the perpetrators of a crime, possible CCTV images, medical evidence, etc, and then holding conversations with victims if there was a belief that a satisfactory resolution of the crime was at that stage unlikely. If evidence were to come to light subsequently, then the investigation would be reopened.
- Response team officers carried out the Crime Capability Assessment. However, their supervisors would also check these assessments. It was a procedure with internal checks and balances.
- Knife crime with injury happened only in a third of offences. Typically knives were used as threat.
- Gun crime was a rare occurrence in Ealing borough.
- Youth violence was down 6%.
- Most criminal activities were linked to drug and gang offences in the areas of Southall, Acton and Northolt. Many victims knew the perpetrators which made it difficult to gather reliable answers about events in investigations. The Police often struggled to assist victims due to this issue.
- The night life economy contributed to some criminality on busy Friday and Saturday nights. Altercations were often caused by drunk youngsters that were likely to refuse assistance.
- Many victims of crime did not fit the 'innocent' victim image.
- Police was dedicating resources and efforts to tackle knife crime. He had led 'Operation Honeybadger' aimed to clamp down on knife crime.
- Next challenges included policing Diwali, Bonfire night and Halloween.
- A historical gang problem had flared up in Northolt and Hanwell in recent months.
- Violent crime was being prioritised, ahead of burglaries and other non-violent crime.
- The BCU had hit 85% of its targets since its inception.

Comments and questions:

ESNB members:

- Asked what percentage of violent criminality was related to gang activity. Heard that the police were examining those connections. The theme that was emerging was that there was indeed a link between violent crime and drug/gang activity.
- Suggested that the police could send messages to reassure the public, emphasizing that the likelihood of violent crime affecting them was very small. Heard that the police focus had been to get that message across to wards via the usual communication mechanisms.
- Suggested that it could be helpful to have a commentary from the Police on what was happening on the ground, as a routine sharing of information.
- Asked about shift work and police time availability, particularly at night. Heard that the majority of contacts from the public with the police happened between 9am and 5pm. Other shift patterns, including late night hours, could be organised when needed. For instance, officers would work until 2am during Bonfire night.

7. Police Update, including OWL, Implementation (MPS).

The Chair invited Rob Bryan to give an update on OWL.

Rob Bryan noted:

- OWL was the official messaging tool for police and the public to manage Neighbourhood Watches in Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon.
- Joining was simple, neighbours could sign up using owl.co.uk and clicking on “Join a Watch”. They needed to fill in their name and address plus contact details. It was important to include an email address but not a phone number.
- A series of slides were presented showing OWL’s interface.
- A person’s details would be loaded to the secure site and they would be emailed a password to access the site.
- They would need to log in once to verify the account and then OWL messages would automatically be emailed to them as and when they were sent out.
- OWL was run by NHW coordinators that sent out real time messages – these could be to individuals, streets, watch areas or wards. The Police would also send out messages too, including the whole Borough if needed. Messages could highlight a recent incident (i.e. burglary) and what to look out for. They might give details of a recent serious incident or they could be a local police newsletter or offer details of an upcoming police drop in surgery.
- So far nearly 13,000 people had joined OWL in Ealing.

- Nearly 1400 messages had been sent out by police or NHW and these had a quarter of a million views.

ESNB members:

- Highlighted that some of them had experienced difficulties in signing up, for instance some had found the signing up process overly complex and others had experienced delays in receiving the initial response from OWL.
Heard that the Police had not received complaints about difficulties signing up. However, the system of uploading new users was a manual one. Therefore, slight delays would be inevitable.
- Queried whether victims of crime were being asked to sign in to OWL.
Heard that police constables were advising victims of crime to sign up to OWL. However, there could be difficulties for non-English language speakers in signing up.
- Asked about the variation in signing up numbers from ward to ward, particularly the low numbers in Southall was noted.
Heard that some wards had an initial low take up. OWL was being grown organically and there was a degree of moving from one ward to another, as there would not be capacity to respond to a high number of residents' signing up simultaneously. Noted that there was the aim of translating OWL to other languages to help with its take up in Southall.
- Noted that some forces in the North had considered that OWL was an expensive service. Asked whether that was a decision likely to be the view from the BCU.
Heard that such issues depended on who funded the roll out of OWL, which might be different in London from other parts of the country. The BCU intention was to try to keep OWL live as it was seen as bringing benefits to residents and the Police. They would be making this argument to MOPAC. Yet MOPAC might not wish to maintain its funding indefinitely.
- Commented that language was unlikely to be the barrier in taking OWL up in Southall, as there were many second and third generation residents. It was possible that legacy issues were playing a part, as addresses could have been imported to OWL from elsewhere (i.e. Metro, ward lists, etc).
- Noted that the cost of OWL was not excessive and the ESNB could consider funding it as one of its projects.

Ricky Kandohla said, in relation to the BCU update, that the Southall site would be closing but not the Ealing one. More details would be forthcoming over the following weeks.

8. Crime Statistics.

It was noted that the crime statistics had been dealt with in previous items.

It was agreed to choose one area in the statistics to have as item for the next agenda.

9. 101 service and digital crime reporting engagement.

Andy Oliver had circulated a report on the 101 service. Questions should be sent to him.

The Chair noted that there was a recovery plan and it seemed that the service was beginning to improve.

10. Progress report on ESNB projects.

The report had been circulated by Sara Kumar and queries should be sent to her.

Members enquired about the budget available. The Chair noted that in addition to the budget for projects there was £5,200 for administration.

11. Any other Business

Jess Murray noted that there would be a consultation on the possibility of implementing a borough wide PSPO, to be ready by early summer 2019. There would also be a policy on the late-night economy and licensing (including special policy areas and policies on off-sales) drafted by then.

ESNB members:

- noted the positive impact that the removal from the streets of Southall of one individual known for drug offences had in the area. There was a need to be able to deal with these known individuals. He noted the London Mela had been a positive and family friendly event.
- There was a potential issue with new scooters on the market which did not need a registration plate.
Heard that there had been no increase on reports of nuisance due to scooters made to the Police.

It was agreed that in future questions would be collected and sent to the police for them to provide a brief on the matter.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

Richard Chilton, Chair