

## SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

### MINUTES

**Thursday 19 September 2019**

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Dhadwal (Chair), Anand, Anjum, Chohan, Kumar (Vice-Chair), Mahmood, Malcolm.

#### **Ealing Officers Present:**

Harjeet Bains - Scrutiny Review Officer  
Elizabeth Snider - Democratic Services Officer

#### **External Presenters:**

Richard Ward (Member, Ealing Street Pastors)  
Michelle Parkes (Co-founder, Plogolution)  
Randeep Lall, (Founder - Nishkam SWAT), Kirpa Kaur (Volunteer, Nishkam SWAT),  
Hardev Thind (Volunteer, Nishkam SWAT)

#### **1. Apologies for Absence** (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Padda had tendered his apologies prior to the meeting.

#### **2. Urgent Matters** (Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest** (Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

#### **4. Matters to be Considered in Private** (Agenda Item 4)

There were none.

#### **5. Minutes** (Agenda Item 5)

Referring to item 5 in the Minutes, the Chair highlighted that the Ealing Council Neighbourhoods Research report which had previously been deferred from the first meeting to this meeting had been further deferred to the next meeting due to the unavailability of the relevant service officers to present it.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2019 were agreed.

## 6. **Street Watch Scheme – Ealing Street Pastors**

(Agenda Item 6)

The Chair invited Richard Ward, from Ealing Street Pastors, to present to the Panel on the Organisation's work. The Ealing organisation is part of a national organisation of 12,000 street Pastors and 300 groups, operating in various cities and towns for over ten years. The Street Pastors patrol the community between 22:00 and 03:00 and engage with a population that is not usually seen during the day or evening – an often vibrant and fun population.

**Outreach:** He explained that the objectives of Ealing Street Pastors were to care, listen and help through volunteers from local churches. The Organisation worked in a triangular partnership with the police and the local authority to identify how they could support vulnerable people in the borough, engaging with the policy duty officers every night to identify the areas to patrol while recognising that their role was not to police the area. The Pastors engaged with people suffering from alcohol and substance abuse, confusion due to excessive alcohol and those who were homeless or had nowhere to go, helping them find their way home or sign posting them to other services such as St. Mungo's or church shelter schemes. The presence of the Pastors had diffused and de-escalated illegal activity and the potential for violence. This is believed to be due to the perception of the Pastors as non-threatening to the age range of the young people encountered during the patrol hours given that, on average the Pastors were 50+ years old. However, the Pastors were trained and aware of when to involve the emergency services.

**Engagement:** Ealing Street Pastors had recently conducted a series of meetings with the Borough Commander and the Council to determine whether their presence was still needed in the Borough. The response had been very positive which encouraged the Pastors to continue their work. The number of 999 calls that did not require emergency response were highlighted during these meetings as these had and could be managed by the Pastors.

**Homelessness:** Ealing Street Pastors was a faith-based organisation and worked with organisations of many faiths. The organisation was open to working with anyone, citing the example of referring homeless people to Street Link and encouraging the homeless to remain in the same area so that they were found by the organisations they are referred to, many secured shelters for the night or long-term accommodation.

**Knife Crime:** Ealing Street Pastors have played a role in collecting weapons in response to the rise in knife-crime and carry knife containment boxes on patrols. The Pastors were also trained in finding and disposing of a firearm. The presence of the Pastors could diffuse an escalating situation between two people and protected those they perceived to be vulnerable. He cited an example of a young girl that they frequently encountered in vulnerable and natural situations. The Pastors were able to provide support and, eventually, involve the police when a situation required their involvement.

**Mental Health:** Several meetings with the Local Authority have indicated to the Pastors, who are trained to listen, smile and be helpful, that their patrols have often

resulted in the conversation leading to vulnerable individuals seeking help, whether that is in the form of sign-posting to other organisations, their doctors or families – transforming a life.

In conclusion, Mr Ward conveyed the Organisation's need to strengthen its volunteer base in order to continue its work and requested any recommendations from the Panel on how it could promote the Organisation. He also asked for support in the funding of the cost of their uniforms and equipment, which is often met by the individual volunteers and prohibitive for those who want to volunteer but do not have the means to do so. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of patrols across the borough since the Pastors do not own a vehicle and rely on foot patrol to reach their target areas.

The Chair thanked Richard Ward for his presentation and invited the Panel members to comment and submit questions.

Members:

- Enquired about the length of the training period for Pastors and whether it was daily and continuous for twelve weeks. It was clarified that the training was for one Saturday for twelve consecutive weeks in Central London, totalling twelve days of training.
- Enquired regarding the number of repeat service users or the number of instances of the same issue for one user and whether the service users obtained a resolution to their long-term issues. The response was that some service users e.g. rough sleepers were seen repeatedly but they were encouraged to seek help and referred to homelessness organisations for support. People who were frequently seen, were often referred to them by the licensees and doormen of the bars and clubs in the area, with whom the Pastors are connected by a Walkie/Talkie communication system. The Pastors have also developed a good relationship with the Ealing CCTV team.
- Queried the nature of the relationship with the police and advice sought on how other organisations could successfully engage with the police. Heard that there was daily engagement with the assigned duty officer prior to patrols to obtain information on where to be that night. However, given the absence of dedicated transport and the decline in volunteers, the patrol is restricted to that area for the duration of the night. Ealing Street Pastors meet with the Superintendent annually and conduct training for each Pastor, to establish boundaries on what could be done and ensure that the patrols are not acting in place of or as a hindrance to the police. Richard Ward invited the Panel to contact the Organisation's coordinator for further information.
- Enquired whether there were any patrols in Northolt, Greenford and Perivale. The response was that patrols were primarily in Central Ealing, Acton and Southall but other areas were being considered.
- Enquired about the faith guidelines for the Ealing Street Pastors. Heard that the role of the Pastors was to listen rather than preach of their faith. However, they

were happy to pray with people and talk about faith, if that is what the people they met asked for.

- On acknowledging that the Organisation undertook great work in the community, queried why patrols were restricted to Central Ealing, Acton and Southall. The response was that each area had specific issues – Central Ealing has seen significant gentrification because of the Dicken’s Yard development but generated revellers consuming excessive alcohol and, consequently, predators seeking intoxicated females. Acton reflected a greater emphasis on gangs and Southall service users were often involved in the sex industry. The Pastors engaged with and sign posted people towards help, the uniforms diffusing the potential outbreak of trouble. Sometimes, revellers lost sight of their friends and the Pastors tried to ensure they were not enticed into cars by predators.
- Noted that the Organisation had been operating for ten years and enquired into the perceived outlook for the next ten years, as well as whether the Pastors would still operate given the improvement. The response was that, while the area was improving, mental health issues could lead to an increase in homelessness and those on the streets with mental health issues were not always easily identifiable at a glance. In terms of improvement, the feedback from the police and the Council indicated that the Pastors still had a role as long as there were vulnerable people in the borough.
- Cllr Kumar stated that she had attended a patrol with the Pastors and witnessed the work they did. She asked whether the data gathered during patrols was provided to the police to assist them. The response was that data on the number of people encountered and of the volume of glass bottles collected on patrol (to reduce injury to barefoot revellers) was anonymous, given the confidential nature of the service. The Pastors discussed the challenges in the area with the Safer Neighbourhood Borough Commander and how these were managed.
- Questioned how aggressive behaviour was managed on patrol. Heard that, often, merely issuing flipflops and lollypops to people would be effective and, at other times, the Pastors would have to withdraw for their safety and involve the emergency services. It was much easier to manage a situation before it escalated than to attempt to manage one in progress.
- Enquired into types of fundraising initiatives that would be considered by the Organisation, to which the response was any and all types were appreciated, to avoid the self-funding of equipment and uniforms becoming a barrier to volunteering.
- Enquired into how the Panel could support Ealing Street Pastors going forward. Mr Ward indicated that it was a rare pleasure to make presentations and meet with other organisations, of which they would like to do more. The key challenge was effectively disseminating information on what the Pastors did and encourage volunteering.

- Enquired about the Southall patrols and whether there was engagement with the Interfaith Group to bridge cultural and language barriers in the area. The response was that Ealing Street Pastors worked with and sign posted to organisations of other faiths and those of no faith. Richard Ward undertook to raise this with the Organisation's Committee with a view of working with and attending a meeting of the Interfaith Group.
- Queried how language barriers were addressed. The response was that, while there were some bilingual Pastors on patrol, there were still language barriers so more and diverse volunteers were sought.
- Enquired into the communications system with bars and clubs. The response was that Walkie Talkies were given out to a number of venues and most of the venues knew the Pastors on patrol. Richard Ward undertook to refer the question to the Organisation's coordinator.

The Chair thanked Richard Ward for attending and commended the good work of the organisation. He reminded the Panel of the invitation to attend the three patrols on 25 October 2019, 22 November 2019 and 20 December 2019.

## **7. Plogolution** (Agenda Item 7)

Michelle Parkes, Co-founder of Plogolution, presented to the Panel on the origins of the organisation and how it had grown from 16 people taking part in one walk in Putney, to walks and runs worldwide, known as 'plogs'.

The project was active in Ealing; 70 people attended the most recent plog in Northala Fields and 25 people had already signed up for the next event on Saturday, 21 September 2019. The ploggers also worked with Hounslow, Kingston, Bethnal Green and Lewisham boroughs.

The most notable benefit that Plogolution had seen was the level of engagement with community groups such as schools, shops and corporates who had donated time and money to the project. Children involved in schools were being educated and made aware of the environment. Twenty schools were currently participating, uploading their litter statistics weekly. People who had become involved, commented on how the experience had given them an opportunity to engage with others, reducing their loneliness and potentially mitigating associated mental health issues. The Project has received support from the Council in Ealing and worked closely with the Parks team to identify areas for future plogs. The areas included a green space, roads and a litter 'hotspot'.

The Chair thanked Michelle Parkes and invited the Members to comment and ask questions.

Members:

- Questioned how litter could be effectively collected while running. It was clarified that a method of 'plog and roll' was adopted by runners, using the natural

environment to support the running and ‘forward-roll’ motions. The suitability of the area determined whether this was a safe option since the objective was not to ‘race’.

- Enquired about the engagement with schools and how other groups were encouraged to participate. The response was that it was done through social media and engagement with the Ealing Parks Department. There was some criticism that children were involved in clearing others’ litter but Plogolution considered the plogs to be a form of education on environmental issues for children and improving the local area.
- Enquired as to whether streets and roads were covered in plogs, how areas were selected and what could be done to broaden the areas. It was clarified that streets and roads were covered and there was regular engagement with the Parks team, who suggested the parks and roads to review and action.
- Enquired if Plogolution had considered presenting at the Ward Fora. The response was that there was currently work being done to obtain additional funding for staff to spread the word and coordinate outreach.
- Asked about the clearing of Canals. The response was that the project worked with Corporates by charging a set fee to fund kits for schools so that they could plog areas like canals.
- Suggested the potential collaboration with Park Run. It was highlighted that there was a perception of ‘competitors’ by other organisations that had led to minimal engagement. It was Plogolution’s desire to remove the misconception and engage with any organisations that would like their involvement. Cllr Malcom discussed the possibility of engaging with the Park Run organisers to connect them with Plogolution.
- Noted that Panel members had collaborated with the Canals and River Trust in association with the Territorial Army in Southall and recruited close to 100 volunteers, who also found weapons. Queried whether the ploggers had encountered discarded weapons. In response, it was explained that knives had been found during plogs and the project included a weapons disposal training as part of health and safety briefings.
- Queried whether the Council paid for the project’s activities in Ealing. The response was that there is an agreement with Ealing Council to pay for equipment, T-shirts and a small staff cost that was reinvested into the Schools programme. The same agreement was sought with Corporate entities in order to continue funding the school equipment. There was no charge for presentations to community groups, who may borrow equipment to run plogs themselves or run regular plogs under the Plogolution umbrella.

The Chair thanked Michelle Parkes for attending and commended the good work of the organisation. He reminded the Panel that there was a plog arranged for 21 September 2019 in Northala Fields which they could attend.

## 8. **Nishkam Sikh Welfare and Awareness Team – SWAT** (Agenda Item 8)

The Chair invited Randeep Lall (Founder), Kirpa Kaur (Volunteer) and Hardev Thind (Volunteer) from Nishkam SWAT to present to the Panel.

Randeep Lall presented on the Organisation's foundations in the teachings of the Sikh faith to serve humanity but clarified that, while the organisation was faith-based, it did not represent itself as a 'religious' organisation and had no political affiliations. It sought to balance the composition of its 1,500 volunteers toward 50/50 Sikh/non-Sikh (currently, 40% of volunteers were non-Sikh).

The Charity originated as a youth project to educate on the impact of drugs and alcohol in Southall, until it was approached for assistance by a homeless person in the community, highlighting the extent of the issue of homelessness in Southall. SWAT began supporting Southall by setting up a social media page to encourage clothing donations and provide signposting to immigration and health support. In 2012, in response to the Charity's work, the Council, faith leaders and the police met to formally address the issue of homelessness in the borough. This led to the expansion of services from Southall to other parts of London, with branded vehicles and uniforms to immediately distinguish volunteers. Today, there were 21 locations worldwide, with five more in the pipeline. The model also operated successfully in Africa and India and would be replicated in New York, supported by corporate entities in the hospitality, airline and financial industries.

The key aspects of SWAT's work included the provision of outreach in the form of food, clothing, basic healthcare and signposting clients to other organisations that provided the services which it did not.

**Homeless Project:** The Charity began as 10 volunteers and had grown into an international aid organisation. In the UK, SWAT operated in 19 locations and served food to the homeless 27 times a week, serving a vegetarian menu that could be offered to all and to facilitate adherence to Health and Safety requirements.

**Healthcare Project:** In addition to feeding the homeless, SWAT had a healthcare project that provided two ambulances and doctors, dentist nurses that provided basic treatment of injuries and pain-relief to people who could not or would not go to a doctor or hospital.

**Project Recovery:** Launched in July 2019, SWAT ran a project to take calls from people impacted by drugs and alcohol, stemming from the initial discovery that this was a prevalent issue among youth in the local community.

**Elderly Care Project:** Volunteers conducted outreach to the elderly at home and in care homes, transporting them to their places of workshop and providing simple beauty services, to combat the effects of loneliness on this group.

The Charity's aim was not to promote religious conversion but to help disadvantaged people. The Charity adhered to the principles of servitude, responding to abusive behaviour with compassion and empathy, leaving a place cleaner than they found it after a service, and promoting the values of 'passion' and 'compassion'.

The Chair thanked Randeep Lall for the presentation and invited the Panel to comment and ask questions.

Members:

- Enquired how clothing donations could be made. Mr Lall referred to the Charity's headquarters in Springfield Road, Hayes, where there were two large donation bins in addition to Sira Cash and Carry in Southall, who would take donations when the bins were filled.
- Queried the activities for the elderly that were offered by SWAT. Heard that SWAT offered the ability to transport the elderly to their places of worship, volunteers read to the elderly and offered beauty treatments for the female elderly, providing companionship to stave off loneliness.
- Asked about the addiction support provision. Learnt that SWAT partnered with rehabilitation centres and provided a helpline of advisors who assessed callers and connected them with the appropriate professionals. No SWAT funding is available to cover admission to the centres, which was currently borne by the individuals or their families, but SWAT was campaigning for fundraising to support those who are not able to meet the cost.
- Questioned regarding the type of healthcare provided and whether there was a charge for this. Heard that SWAT did not charge for healthcare services and the services were limited to immediate treatment of injuries and conditions while transporting to medical facilities and providing pain relief. Often the people who were treated had no homes to go to and therefore their health could deteriorate rapidly if left untreated.
- Questioned where food was served and if locations were posted on a website. Learnt that SWAT had mobile outreach services and relied on word of mouth, which had been very effective (particularly among the homeless, who were resourceful and passed on information about regular services). The locations of food drives were listed on the SWAT website. Donations were received from restaurants all over the UK and there were waiting lists for brands who would like to join the donor list.
- The Vice Chair referred to the recent site visit to the SWAT Headquarters, which she had undertaken with the Chair and asked about the meaning of Nishkam. Learnt that Nishkam meant 'selfless' to the degree that the server was considered as acting on behalf of a higher power. SWAT faith schools conducted interface work with other faiths and had presented to the UN on how a faith-based approach could bring about world peace. Food donors were asked to put positive energy

into the food that they prepared so that they could impart this energy into the lives of the people who received their donations.

- Asked about the SWAT locations. SWAT headquarters were in Hayes with seven other locations that operated through that hub, a warehousing facility in Colchester and a storage facility in Birmingham with its own kitchen.
- Questioned about the ambulance initiative and its availability for the general public. Received clarification that the ambulance service was in response to the reluctance of the homeless to visit hospitals. SWAT also worked with churches and St Mungo's to provide shelter during the Emergency Protocol for cold weather.
- Sought clarity about SWAT's engagement with Ealing Council. Heard that SWAT did not currently work with the Council but that was due to limited time to put together an engagement plan with other organisations. However, SWAT invited the Council to engage with the Charity.
- Questioned regarding volunteer training. Learnt that SWAT delivered a formal induction for all its volunteers and there were strict protocols to follow.
- Asked about the names of the SWAT outreach vehicles. Heard that there were 12 vehicles named after values, much like the Nishkam school classrooms where each child is given a 'passport for life' with words that they must learn in order to graduate to the next class, where they would be given new words and a new passport.

Cllr Malcolm recommended that the Charity could be nominated for the Mayor of Ealing's Charity, given its local connection and selfless objectives. Cllr Malcolm also noted that available resources, such as clean-up volunteers and Duke of Edinburgh nominees, could be referred to SWAT. Mr Lall indicated that SWAT would benefit from a steer by the Council on how the Council could support them, for example by allowing the Charity to use a vacant building as a shelter during the winter months would help them immensely in serving the rough sleepers. The Charity was setting up a community internet radio station to reach more of the community and engage with potential volunteers. There were no paid staff at the Charity; it is fully staffed by volunteers.

Cllr Mahmood asked the Panel to consider ways of supporting SWAT and revert at a subsequent meeting.

The Chair thanked the Nishkam SWAT representatives and commended the good work of the organisation.

Cllr Mahmood made his apologies for his early departure.

## **9. Scrutiny Review Panel 2 Work Programme** (Agenda Item 9)

The Scrutiny Officer presented this item asking if the Panel had any comments on the Work Programme.

Panel members noted that:

- The next Panel meeting, on 14 November 2019, would consider the Ealing Parks Foundation and the Ealing Council Neighbourhoods Research.
- Plogolution had extended a site visit invitation to the Panel and the Scrutiny Officer requested that the Panel attend the walks to observe the Project's work, which had received funding from the Parks Department.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**  
(Agenda Item 10)

The next meeting of the Panel is due to take place on 14 November 2019.

**Councillor Karanvir Singh Dhadwal, Chair.**

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.