

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 – KNIFE CRIME AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

MINUTES

Wednesday 14th November 2018

PRESENT: Councillors: Aysha Raza (Chair), Seema Kumar (Vice Chair), Praveen Anand, Jon Ball, Carlo Lusuardi, Rajinder Mann, Chris Summers, and Simon Woodroofe.

Co-opted Member:

Elly Heaton-Virgo - Chief Executive, Young Ealing Foundation

LBE Officers:

Harjeet Bains - Scrutiny Review Officer
Charles Barnard - Assistant Director Integrated Early Years, Preventative and Youth Services
Janine Jenkinson - Democratic Services Officer
Jess Murray - Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations
Paul Murphy - Operations Manager, Community Safety

External Representatives

Vlod Barchuk - Chair, Stop and Search Community Monitoring Group
Richard Kornicki - Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Ealing
Jack May-Robinson - Inspector, Metropolitan Police
Jean-Pierre Rossouw - Head of Services, Parkguard Ltd

1. Apologies for Absence

(Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Mahmood had tendered his apologies prior to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

4. Minutes

(Agenda Item 4)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2018 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

In the absence of Elly Heaton- Virgo, who had been delayed, the Chair agreed to take agenda Item 6, Tackling Knife Crime – Places, as the first item for discussion.

5. Tackling Knife Crime - Places

(Agenda Item 6)

The Operations Manager, Community Safety introduced a PowerPoint presentation to the Panel, which outlined the tools and approaches used by the Metropolitan Police, Parkguard Ltd, and the Safer Communities Team at Ealing Council, to manage public spaces and reduce the risk of violence and knife crime occurring.

The Panel was informed that in Ealing, the police response to knife crime was encompassed under the West Area's Operation Honey Badger. The Operation targeted individuals known to carry knives and the use of enforcement action to target people and premises of concern. Police officers engaged in the following actions to tackle knife crime:

- Prevention messages delivered through schools
- Test purchase activity with police cadets
- Weapons sweeps
- Hotspot patrols and targeted use of stop and search powers
- Targeting of habitual knife crime offenders
- Use of Section 35 Dispersal Orders where intelligence justified authorisation
- Use of Section 60 powers

Inspector May-Robinson explained that on 6 June 2018 officers from Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon had joined forces as part of the Metropolitan Police Service's introduction of Basic Command Units (BCUs).

The Panel was informed that police officers had powers to stop and search a person if they had 'reasonable grounds' to suspect that a person was carrying:

- Drugs
- Stolen property
- An item that could be used to commit a crime
- A weapon

Inspector May-Robinson said that before a person was searched, the police officer conducting the search had to state the following:

- Their name and the police station they were attached to
- What they expect to find as a result of the search
- The reason for the search
- Why they were legally allowed to search the person

- The process for how the person could obtain a copy of the details of the search

Inspector May-Robinson explained that as part of Operation Honey Badger two activity days had been carried out. These involved: search warrants, arrest enquiries, mobile patrols weapons sweeps and test purchases of corrosive substances. Members were advised that there were significant peaks in priority crime during the school half term and Halloween, Bonfire and Diwali periods. In response to this the West Area Command Unit put in place a number of measures to prevent anti-social behaviour by using powers and legislation to deal with offending behaviour.

The Panel was informed that the total knife crime data showed that in the last 12 months there had been an increase of 14% compared to the previous 12 months. Most wards had seen a rise over the year. However, the most recent three month data indicated that the rate of increase had fallen to 7.1%.

In the recent period, the majority of wards had shown some decreases in knife crime compared to the previous three months. The exceptions to this being in areas of Northolt and Greenford where there had been incidents of continued gang rivalry with groups in Harrow. There were also some localised hotspots in areas of Southall, Ealing and Acton, where the police had been tackling drugs supply and robbery.

With regard to knife crime injuries of victims under 24 years old, there had been a 13.6% rise in the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months. A large number of the offences could be attributed to the gang issues in Northolt and Greenford and drug related hotspots in Southall.

Overall, there had been a 7.1% reduction in knife crime in Ealing over the past three months, which equated to 10 fewer victims; this had been achieved through extra patrols by police officers. During this period Greenford Broadway and Greenford Green wards had seen the highest volume reduction (eight less victims); this had been achieved by ongoing targeting of individuals related to gang activity in the area and neighbouring wards. Ealing Broadway and Southall Broadway had seen the highest volume increase; the police had put in place actions to address this.

In relation to the use of stop and search powers, Inspector May-Robinson explained that if a police officer suspected a person or vehicle to be carrying a firearm, an unarmed police officer would not stop and search the suspect, rather specialist firearms officers would be alerted and asked to provide assistance. Police officers would then follow the suspect until armed support was in place. The Panel was advised that unmarked police cars were often used to patrol problem areas; the vehicles were often known to offenders and through a network, such as WhatsApp, others would be alerted to the police presence. High visibility patrol was used as a 'show of force' by the police and could have a positive impact in an area.

Inspector May-Robinson invited Members' to spend time with police officers on patrol in a police vehicle.

Questions

Councillor Summers asked why Section 60 was used.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that a senior officer could authorise the use of Section 60 to allow police officers to stop and search anyone in a specific area, when an incident of serious violence had taken place or it was likely a serious public order problem would arise. Knife crime was linked to gang membership and many people carried knives to protect themselves, in fear of gang related reprisals.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that the test to action Section 60 powers was now higher than it had previously been. In the past Section 60 could have been actioned if the police suspected an incident 'may' occur but now police had to be satisfied that an incident 'will' occur. Section 60 was authorised for a limited time and allowed officers to stop and search people without reasonable grounds. Section 60 powers had been used during the Notting Hill Carnival, based on intelligence information gathered by the police that indicated it was likely an incident would occur.

Councillor Lusuardi highlighted that the use of stop and search was contentious and asked if the data indicated that it was effective in reducing the number of knife crime incidents.

Inspector May-Robinson said he did not have data available to present to the Panel. However, from a personal perspective, he felt the use of stop and search did reduce incidents of youth violence.

Mr Barchuk said it was difficult to draw a conclusion from the data available that indicated a reduction in incidents. He reported that 3,000 - 4,000 annual stop and searches were carried out in Ealing, with approximately 30% of searches resulting in arrest. The majority of people searched were suspected of being in possession of drugs. Approximately 110 searches resulted in a knife being recovered.

Councillor Lusuardi asked if there were methods, other than stop and search, that the police could use which would be more effective in tackling knife crime.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that police received a daily briefing, including photographs and descriptions of habitual knife crime offenders. He said that many searches were carried out based on intelligence gathered and all searches were conducted in a professional manner. He explained that police officers wore body video cameras and that these had to be operated at all times. The only reason a camera would not be turned on would be if it had malfunctioned.

Councillor Kumar said handcuffing a person before a search was undertaken seemed overly aggressive and asked why it was necessary for the police to do this.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that a person may be carrying drugs and if not handcuffed the drugs could be swallowed and there would be a risk of drug overdose. If an officer suspected a person to be carrying a knife then it was reasonable, for the personal safety of the officer to handcuff a suspect. He explained that Section 117 (of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) allowed an officer to use reasonable force when conducting a search.

Councillor Ball said he had been stopped twice, once as a teenager and once in his early 20s. He said there appeared to be 'age profiling' and asked about the reasons for this.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations highlighted that the majority of knife crime victims and perpetrators were under 25 years old.

Councillor Anand asked what the sanctions would be for a police officer who did not record a stop and search incident on their body camera.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that if a police officer did not comply with procedure and failed to video record a search, the search could be deemed illegal. The police officer would be disciplined or dismissed and the police force could be sued by the person searched.

Councillor Mann asked what work was undertaken to stop young people purchasing knives.

Inspector May-Robinson said that police cadets were used to undertake test purchases. If a shop was found to be selling knives to people under 18 years old, the Council's Trading Standards Team would get involved in enforcement action.

Councillor Ball asked why more unmarked police vehicles were used in the UK compared to other countries.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that UK police officers were unarmed whereas it was common for the police in other countries to be armed.

Case Study

The Operations Manager, Community Safety presented a case study to the Panel.

Members were informed that the case study demonstrated that through partnership working, information from a number of agencies had been gathered to provide a comprehensive overview of a situation. This had enabled officers to successfully manage a public space within the borough.

The Operations Manager, Community Safety explained that incidents of low level anti-social behaviour had been occurring on a housing estate in the borough and officers had become aware of an older male 'AB', who had a criminal record of offending, socialising with younger teenagers. Officers felt these relationships were incongruous and suspected the teenagers were involved in criminal behaviour.

The Council's Housing Officers conducted interviews with two vulnerable residents and identified that their properties were being used to store and sell illegal drugs. Members were informed that this practice was known as 'cuckooing' and involved drug dealers turning the homes of vulnerable residents into drug dens. To remove the vulnerable residents from the situation, officers had offered them alternative temporary accommodation. Officers gathered information from a range of professionals and were able to build a picture of 'AB' and identified that he was using the teenagers to sell drugs. As a result of investigations, officers were able to support the victims and witnesses and put in place measures to tackle the perpetrator to reduce crime and protect the community. 'AB' received a Criminal Behaviour Order, which prohibited him from entering and associating on the housing

estate. As a result of disrupting his activity in this way officers were able to hinder his drug selling business model and protect the local community.

The Panel was informed that to address specific local areas of concern, the Council had implemented Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs). A PSPO had recently been introduced in Southall Broadway, as the ward had been identified as the most problematic for knife crime in the borough. A PSPO had been in place in West Ealing since April 2017. The Operations Manager, Community Safety reported that the implementation of a PSPO significantly reduced anti-social behaviours such as street drinking and the use of illegal drugs in an affected area and allowed residents to reclaim the public space.

Questions

Councillor Woodroffe asked if the use of a PSPO simply displaced issues occurring in one location to another location.

The Operations Manager, Community Safety said that the implementation of a PSPO had a ripple effect; it reduced crime and the fear of crime in both the immediate area and the wider surrounding areas.

In relation to 'AB' the subject of the case study, Elly Heaton-Virgo said that although his activities had been disrupted and displaced, he would in future be able to establish himself in another location.

The Operations Manager, Community Safety explained that officers adopted a pragmatic approach to disrupt and displace anti-social activity. He said that specific restrictions had been placed on 'AB' and if he breached these conditions, he could be sent to prison.

Councillor Kumar asked if the police use of 'stop and account' ever resulted in a 'stop and search' being undertaken.

Inspector May-Robinson explained that 'stop and account' was the term for police stopping and speaking to a member of the public. The Government had withdrawn the requirement for officers to make a record of stop and account encounters, with effect from 7 March 2011.

Parkguard Ltd

The Head of Services (Parkguard Ltd) provided an overview of the organisation and the type of work it undertook. He explained that the company was created in 2003 with the establishment of the Islington Parks Patrol Service. Ealing Parks Patrol commenced in 2012 and work with the Ealing Safer Communities Team began in 2014.

He explained that Parkguard provided a patrol service across all of Ealing's housing estates, parks and open spaces. Patrol officers undertook proactive patrols, gathered intelligence and dealt with people involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour; anti-social behaviour often being a pre-cursor to knife crime. The intelligence information collated during patrols was used to inform responses from a wide range of partners and Council departments. He explained that all patrol

vehicles had a computer installed and information was recorded on a cloud based system called CARMS (Crime Analysis, Reporting and Mapping System).

The range of information gathered and duties undertaken by patrol officers included:

- Patrols of Ealing parks, open spaces and housing estates
- Facilitating actions in relation to licensing, street trading, trading standards, noise enforcement and environment crime enforcement
- Homeless referrals to the borough outreach provider
- Identification and intelligence gathering for injunctions on persistent offenders
- Interventions in relation to anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder
- Weapon searches in a police support function

The Ealing Safer Communities and Parks Patrol Service deployment consisted of two double crewed patrol vehicles and operated seven days a week. Patrols started mid-afternoon and finished early in the morning. Each team was equipped with a general purpose dog, trained for article searching, and a dog trained to locate illegal drugs, firearms and cash. The dogs were used to search for weapons such as knives, as part of Parkguard's preventative role in reducing knife crime. Parkguard officers often visited schools to provide presentations regarding knife crime and the dogs were a useful tool to engage with school pupils.

The Head of Services (Parkguard Ltd) explained that patrol officers were typically from a police or armed forces background, which meant that they had appropriate training, experience and skills to intervene and tackle issues and anti-social behaviour effectively. He said that the work of Parkguard assisted the work of the police; because of reduced police resources the police were less able to focus on minor anti-social behaviour incidents.

The Head of Services (Parkguard Ltd) said that the number of knives recovered from parks had dramatically reduced. The reason for the reduction was unclear, but he said it may be because people were aware that Parkguard undertook weapon sweeps, and therefore chose to hide weapons elsewhere.

Questions

Councillor Ball asked if Parkguard patrolled Gunnersbury Park.

The Head of Services (Parkguard) advised that Gunnersbury Park was managed by Hounslow Council and was not patrolled by Parkguard.

Councillor Ball asked how the patrol dogs were used to locate knives.

The Head of Services (Parkguard) explained that the dogs were trained to identify human scent and track down weapons using sense of smell. He said the use of dogs was an efficient use of resources and significantly reduced the amount of time it would otherwise take to locate weapons stashed in parks. He said that although the

dogs were trained through their sense of smell to search for weapons, he also felt there was a visual element and the dogs were able to identify knives.

Referring to page 21 of the report, Councillor Lusuardi asked out of a total of 663 searches completed by Parkguard how many weapons were recovered.

The Head of Services (Parkguard) reported that roughly 5% of searches resulted in weapons being discovered. He explained that generally across London fewer weapons were being found in parks. He said it was difficult to know the reasons why fewer weapons were being hidden in parks. The Head of Community Safety, Regulatory Operations and Resident Services said it was likely that the presence of Parkguard and its activity of searching parks for weapons had disrupted this activity and had deterred people from storing weapons in parks.

Councillor Lusuardi asked how intelligence information was shared between agencies and if there were any issues in relation to data protection and trust, for example between a social worker and a young person.

The Operations Manager, Community Safety, said there was a tension in sharing information for safeguarding purposes and ensuring data compliance. He said it was a daily balance in deciding what information to disclose in a manner that did not expose a person's anonymity or compromise a relationship. He explained that appropriate 'checks and balances' were in place and the Council's legal services reviewed cases to ensure compliance.

Councillor Summers said in view of the significant budget cuts the Council was facing, could the Head of Services (Parkguard) explain the value of the work undertaken by Parkguard Ltd.

The Head of Community Safety, Regulatory Operations and Resident Services explained that Parkguard was jointly funded by the Council's Car Park department, Recreational Parks department and the Housing Revenue Account, which was separate from the General Fund. He said the value of Parkguard was that it was able to collate intelligence information regarding emerging areas of concern, and build a picture of what was happening in parks and on housing estates, particularly during the evening and night times when council services were reduced and police priorities may be diverted to responding to emergencies.

The Head of Services (Parkguard) said there were opportunities for the service to generate income for the Council, by allowing organisations to buy into the Council's service. He explained that various anti-social behaviours occurred in car parks and the police did not have the resources to patrol these areas.

Councillor Summers suggested that social landlords could be asked to contribute to funding the Parkguard service, as it was in the interests of landlords to ensure an area was safe and well maintained.

Stop and Search Community Monitoring Group

Vlod Barchuk (Chair, Stop and Search Community Monitoring Group) provided the Panel with an overview of the role of the Community Monitoring Group. He explained that the Group scrutinised the use of stop and search in Ealing. It randomly selected

and reviewed instances of stop and search, including written records and body worn video footage, and contributed to London wide discussions by attending meetings at the Greater London Authority.

The Group met quarterly and was made up of local residents. The meetings were attended by senior police officers who presented data in relation to stop and search in the borough, in the context of its use in other parts of London, England and Wales. A representative from Ealing Council also attended.

Mr Barchuk explained that a police officer had the powers to stop and search a person if there were reasonable grounds to suspect a person was carrying illegal drugs, stolen property, a weapon or something which could be used to commit a crime. He said that data collated by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) indicated that 55% of people stopped and searched were under 25 years old and that this reflected the age profile of perpetrators. In relation to the racial profile and ethnic appearance, the percentage of people stopped and searched was: 28% white, 30% black, 30% asian and 12% other. He reported that 31% of searches resulted in illegal items being recovered and this figure was the same for each ethnic group. With regard to the reasonable grounds to stop and search, he highlighted that a person's previous convictions did not constitute reasonable grounds. He reported that significantly fewer searches were conducted on females; approximately 5% of people stopped being women or girls, although 10% of knife crime was perpetrated by females.

Mr Barchuk explained that the Group engaged with hard to reach youths and provided guidance to people about how to conduct themselves if they were stopped and searched.

Questions

Councillor Summers said that given that females were less likely to be stopped and searched, more females may carry knives or be asked to carry knives for males. He asked why more females were not searched.

Inspector May-Robinson said that male police officers may be cautious about searching a female, given the increased risk of an allegation of misconduct being made. He explained that a police officer could opt to take a female to a Police Station to undertake a physical search, but this was resource intensive and time consuming. He said a police officer would have to make a judgement about whether a search was a priority and a good use of police time.

Councillor Kumar suggested that the police should consider recruiting more female officers to undertake stop and searches. In addition, she suggested that the Stop and Search Community Monitoring Group considered linking with the Your Life You Choose School's Anti-Crime Project to raise awareness of the initiative.

Councillor Raza highlighted the importance of engaging with primary schools pupils regarding knife crime, as by high school age it was more difficult and often too late to intervene.

A young person in attendance addressed the Panel and highlighted the importance of approaching schools to engage with hard to reach young people to involve them in the discussion about knife crime.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations suggested that the Panel reviewed the work undertaken in schools and the views of young people in relation to knife crime.

Resolved: That the Panel noted the information provided on the places aspect of tackling knife crime in the borough.

6. Overview of Young Ealing Foundation (Agenda Item 5)

Co-opted member Elly Heaton-Virgo, spoke in her role as Chief Executive of Young Ealing Foundation (YEF).

She explained that YEF was an independent registered charity established in 2017. It existed to support children and young people in the borough of Ealing. It worked with its members, partners and supporters to encourage, enable and support sustainable, high quality service provision for children and young people, focusing on key areas including funding, capacity building and partnerships.

The Panel was informed that a priority of the charity was to establish a Youth Council. The intention was to recruit a broad range of young people through the community rather than through schools. Members were invited to contact Ms Heaton-Virgo if they had any suggestions about how funds could be raised to facilitate the set-up costs.

Resolved: That the Panel noted the overview provided.

7. Panel Operations Report (Agenda Item 7)

The Panel noted the feedback from the recent site visits to Ealing Magistrates Court and a Your Life You Choose joint session which had been held at St Augustine's Priory, Durston House and Clifton Lodge Schools.

The Chair reported that she would be undertaking a visit to The Cardinal Wiseman High School, Greenford. Members were asked to contact the Scrutiny Officer if they wished to attend so that an identification card could be arranged.

Members discussed inviting Richard Taylor, Damilola Taylor's father and Baroness Doreen Lawrence, Steven Lawrence's mother to attend a Panel meeting.

Resolved: The Panel:

- I. received the feedback from the recent Panel site visits;**
- II. approved the agenda items and actions for the next meeting on 6 February 2019; and**

III. agreed to invite Richard Taylor and Baroness Doreen Lawrence to attend a Panel meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting
(Agenda Item 8)

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 6th February 2019.

Councillor Aysha Raza, Chair.

The meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.