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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 25 MARCH 2015

(19.15 - 21.05)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor John Dehaney,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jeff Hanna,
Councillor Russell Makin, Councillor Oonagh Moulton and
Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor James Holmes, Councillor
John Bowcott

ALSO PRESENT: Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Paul
Walshe (Parking Services Manager), John Hill (Head of Public
Protection), Janet Pinkney (Safer Merton Manager), Rebecca
Redman (Scrutiny Officer), David Palmer (Chief Super
Intendent – Met Police)

1 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST - SEE NOTE OVERLEAF
(Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Denis Popovs, Colin Powell and Simon Bennett.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2015 (Agenda Item 3)

Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting.

A Member raised concerns about the lack of a report from the Borough Commander responding to the questions raised and forwarded by the Commission, via the Scrutiny Officer, in February 2015. Information on the revised deployment rationale was requested. The Member added that the lack of a report did not aid effective scrutiny.

David Palmer explained that a verbal response was to be provided to those questions at this meeting and apologized that a written report had not been made available in advance. This was due to staff sickness.

A Member asked that this response be provided in report format following the meeting and sought reassurance that this would be actioned. David Palmer agreed to do so.

4 POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

David Palmer outlined that there are 331 officers, of which, 60 officers are in neighbourhood policing teams. All other officers are deployed in response to need. In addition there are 20 PCSO's allocated to Merton. The 60 officers are allocated across all 3 sectors and work on a 5 week shift pattern to ensure teams operate well. This approach is felt to be more practical.

The percentage of crime in each of the three sectors was outlined as follows: Mitcham (41%); Morden (28%) and Wimbledon (31%). The number of Police officers deployed is Mitcham (24); Morden (17) and Wimbledon (18).

Police officers currently not allocated to a home beat role have also been placed in Mitcham, and Pollards Hill. Mitcham coverage has been supplemented with 4 additional PCSO's to ensure a constant presence to reassure residents.

David Palmer explained that the Police are looking to develop a different approach, subject to consultation, operating in 2 sectors instead of 3. This would ensure officers were proportionately balanced. Senior Managers remain in support of deploying officers to where there is greater need. The process to move towards this model is not clear as yet. It would require the agreement of MOPAC and conversations are underway with stakeholders on this.

David Palmer highlighted that difficulties arise because a high number of new officers are coming through that need 10 weeks basic training and then paired up with an experienced officer. They are then posted to neighbourhood policing teams and on 2 years probation. Those that pass probation are then posted to a response team. The particular difficulties with moving officers and the impact on the team in that location, is that there are low numbers of experienced officers to utilise in each sector.

A Member asked about the constituencies that the two sector model would split. A Member asked about the format of the consultation. David Palmer confirmed that there would be split wards in Morden and that there is no clear consultation format as yet which has been agreed. There is agreement in principle from senior police officers and a report to take this forward is being formulated at present.

A Member noted the importance of maintaining a regular police officer contact in certain wards to reassure residents. David Palmer explained that this wasn't always possible due to budget cuts and the radical change programme that is underway which is changing the way the police operate all the time. The ability to post resources according to need has also diminished.

A Member expressed concerns that the data provided was too simplistic and that these figures did not represent the seriousness of crime committed. The Member asked for data and information on the nature of the review that has taken place and how the data has been interpreted to form a judgement as to how officers are allocated.

A Member asked about arrangements for tackling drug dealing. David Palmer confirmed that there is no specific drug team on street patrol. At a low level, neighbourhood officers would tackle this and at the higher risk levels a task force or the crime squad would deal with this.

A Member asked how many officers are required to go to court if they are at the scene of a crime. David Palmer stated that an officer is only sent to court when required by the CPS as a witness. Officers are only sent for the day they are giving evidence, not for whole case.

A Member noted the increase in violence in the data and, in particular, domestic violence. David Palmer explained that this is following the inspectorates review on the recording and classification of crime by the MET and concerns that were raised about accuracy, which have been responded to and reflected in the data.

RESOLVED: The Commission requested a written report to the next meeting to cover the review that has taken place, outcome of consultation with MOPAC and outlining responses to the questions provided to the Borough Commander previously.

5 TRANSFORMING REHABILITATION (Agenda Item 5)

John Hill introduced the item and explained that the report focusses on integrated offender management and summarises recent changes in legislation. Rehabilitation is concerned with reducing repeat offending. The Probation Service provides advice and support in this area. The Safer Merton Team work in partnership with the Probation Service and Police to manage offender rehabilitation with the objective of reducing opportunity for repeat offending.

John Hill explained that the introduction of significant changes to the probation system recently introduced by central government meant that opportunities have been created so that the rehabilitation of offenders can now be provided by a diverse range of providers for low and medium risk offenders. On an annual basis 45,000 offenders are released into the community nationally. The current system allows for offenders to be released without any rehabilitation plan in place to reduce the likelihood of repeat offending. The changes introduced by government will create a "Through the Gate" service to coordinate the resettlement of offenders sentenced to less than 12 months custody. In London this will apply to around 8,000 offenders per year. The resettlement plan will include accommodation, employment, financial and

health advice. This programme is intended to break the cycle of reoffending. The changes are currently being rolled out. Although early in the process, it is expected that the new initiative will have resource implications for all agencies involved in the rehabilitation process including the Council. John Hill added that he was happy to bring back an update report in due course on how the council have responded and how well they are performing in this area.

The Chair asked how many offenders would be under the councils care. Janet Pinkney explained that the numbers were not fixed as yet and that the demand on services could not be fully anticipated until this was the case. The council has no additional resource to rehabilitate and can only work with the probation service and police on this.

The Chair asked what length of time the council would be responsible for rehabilitation. Janet Pinkney explained that the council and police are involved in the assessments and meetings prior to release and for 12 months after leave, when an evaluation will be taken as to extending this supervision.

John Hill explained that the rehabilitation contract for London had been awarded to MTC Novo who have a long track record in rehabilitation and offender management. They tailor rehabilitation based on the characteristics of the offender.

A Member asked if employment was offered to those being rehabilitated. John Hill stated that this could be the case and that there are a number of opportunities that the council working together with partner agencies could explore to offer employment, for example, through apprenticeships.

A Member asked if youth offender management was separate. Janet Pinkney confirmed that this was the case.

Chris Lee explained that in relation to probation, the council are a partner and do not commission these services. Probation may be devolved to a London wide level in due course. The council does not have a statutory responsibility. Its role is to work alongside the probation service and police. Chris Lee suggested that the Commission may wish to bring MTC Novo along to a future meeting to look at their programme. The Chair agreed.

RESOLVED:

- Ask MTC Novo and Probation Service to a future meeting of the Commission.
- Janet Pinkney agreed to bring back information on the likely number of offenders the council would be working with to a future meeting.

Chris Lee introduced the report and explained that there had been investment in infrastructure and that the council had been looking at connectivity and potential financial savings. Across the 4 key areas in the action plan, significant progress has been made. This work has been supported by a consultant and £600,000 capital funding has been allocated to CCTV investment. This would involve investing in recording and monitoring equipment. This is out to tender at present.

Chris Lee added that these changes would establish a better and more reliable maintenance regime and connectivity, securing better value for money. The Manager post for the CCTV would also be filled shortly. Furthermore there has been effective partnership working between the parking team and police and better performance management data to inform where the service needs to focus. The Action Plan within the agenda resulted from a successful audit of the CCTV service which is showing progress.

A Member asked if CCTV was only in the locations shown in the report. Chris Lee explained that some sites not listed do have CCTV but that they are sites that are monitored by other organisations and not networked to the Council system. Chris Lee added that the contract between CHMP and the council for CCTV had not been cancelled by CHMP. CHMP have so far decided to stay within the contract and have their sites monitored via the Council control room and that if they choose to withdraw then CHMP would be solely responsible for monitoring CCTV locally on site and would lose connectivity with the council and its relationship with the police.

A Member asked if all CCTV was on the council's network. Chris Lee explained that the cameras are linked via the councils CCTV centre. The council are seeking to link other camera systems, generate income and increase community safety.

A Member asked what covert CCTV was in place and how its use was prioritized. Chris Lee responded that only 3 pieces of redeployable CCTV equipment were owned by the council and used by the environmental enforcement team. Chris Lee added that he would be happy to look into this further.

The Chair asked if this would entail acquiring more units. Chris Lee explained that 3 units had just been procured and that the CCTV Steering Group, attended by the Police, would look at whether more covert CCTV was needed.

A Member asked about low staffing numbers for the CCTV Centre.

John Hill explained that the council are managing sickness and absenteeism and that the new managerial post in the team will manage shift patterns, staff coverage and technical issues.

John Hill added that looking to downsize the number of CCTV mobile units will take place. Paul Walshe explained that the deregulation of CCTV vehicles has affected what can be enforced.

John Hill asked the Commission to record his and the Director of E&R's thanks to Claire Cuffie who has managed the CCTV team through its transition period during the last 18 months. Claire had done this in addition to her substantive role as ASB supervisor. During the period of time when Claire has been managing the CCTV service the team won 4 Metropolitan Police awards for helping to solve crime through the use of public realm CCTV.

RESOLVED: Commission notes the report.

7 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 (Agenda Item 7)

The Chair introduced the report. The Chair of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel asked that the pre decision scrutiny undertaken on Merton Adult Education be noted.

The Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel asked that the absence of the requested information from the Borough Commander having not been received be acknowledged in the report. The Commission agreed that the Annual Report was not the appropriate place to raise these concerns.

RESOLVED: The Commission agreed the report.

8 PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S 2015/16 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The Chair introduced the report and sought topics from the Commission. The Chair asked how much time Members felt should be allocated to budget scrutiny given that the November 2014 round of budget scrutiny did not provide a significant amount of information as expected. The Commission agreed that this should be considered at the time.

The Vice Chair informed the Commission that the General Purposes Committee stated that the Commission should look at information put before it when setting its work programme.

The Chair highlighted his attendance at the London Scrutiny Network and highlighted the session on Child Sexual Exploitation and, in particular, the cost of temporary social workers and the need for continuity of care of clients. The Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel agreed to add this to the list of topics for consideration for the Panel at the May 2015 workshops.

RESOLVED: The Commission noted the report.

