

Notes from NW Event – Lyric Theatre – 3rd February 2011

David Millar, Chair of the H&F Neighbourhood Watch Association, welcomed all attendees to the meeting and introduced the speakers:

Chief Superintendent Kevin Hurley – Borough Commander, H&F Police

Councillor Greg Smith - Cabinet Member Residents Services, LBH&F.

Chief Inspector Wynne Jones – SNT Lead, H&F Police

Chief Superintendent Kevin Hurley

KH noted that crime in Hammersmith & Fulham over the past four years has shown a yearly downward trend. In that period there has been a reduction of nearly 50% in the three main crime types; burglary, motor vehicle crime and robbery. To put this into context, when things are going well the borough has approximately 3 burglaries a day, 1-2 street crimes and 5-6 car crimes. Despite this KH warned against complacency and asserted that the role of Neighbourhood Watch and the general public in assisting the police has never been more vital.

Despite the long term trend in crime reduction, this year has seen some significant spikes in offences, including a large spike in burglary offences at the start of 2010/11. This rise can partly be accounted for by the release of some prolific offenders onto the borough, who were committing a large number of offences until their detection and arrest. With the potential for significant spikes in offending rates the police need groups like Neighbourhood Watch to be an extra pair of eyes for them.

In terms of the future, the police are facing significant budget cuts of between 20 – 25% in real terms over the next few years. The greatest costs are wages. The police have already frozen recruitment of civilian staff, PCSOs and PCs. Natural wastage has since contributed to a lowering of staff numbers. The difficulty locally for the police is balancing public need against the necessity to make cuts. The police will be looking at several options to protect front line policing as much as possible. For example, there may be opportunities to “double up” some Sergeants’ roles over two wards.

KH concluded by stating the more members of the public who do their bit to help the police the safer the borough can be. He thanked all the Neighbourhood Watch coordinators for their efforts and exhorted them to continue their good work.

Councillor Greg Smith

GS opened by echoing KH’s sentiments and thank the coordinators for everything they do throughout the year. Neighbourhood Watch is an example of the Big Society in action, showing that neighbours can get together to do positive things.

GS reiterated that this has been an awkward year in terms of crime, with the borough likely to show its first overall crime increase in seven years. However,

in some ways part of this increase can be seen in a positive light. Extra police are funded locally by the council and police, such as the enhanced town centre Safer Neighbourhood Teams and dedicated Drugs desk. These are proactive resources which can lead to “police generated crime”, such as stops for possession of drugs that would not have been recorded incidents without the intervention of the police. GS said we should bear in mind that this accounts for a proportion of the increase.

GS stated that reducing crime and antisocial behaviour were still top of the agenda for the council, along with keeping the borough clean and providing good educational opportunities. This is with a background of a reduction in the central government grant to the borough of £65m over three years. To put that into context, currently the council’s annual budget (not including the schools grant) is £180m. GS assured the meeting that the council do not want to affect front line services, but instead work in different ways to try and save back office costs. Options for this include the tri-borough working proposals, as well as options to sell buildings and relocate services.

There is also the matter of trying to get the council's debt under control. As it stands it currently costs £15m p.a. to service the debt so GS feels it is important to reduce these payments.

Regarding crime and antisocial behaviour locally, GS wants to continue to support Neighbourhood Watch. It is important not only provide local intelligence to the police but to increase community spirit. GS then thanked his colleague Councillor Belinda Donovan for her work with Neighbourhood Watch.

The council will continue to fund police officers, but want to seek out efficiencies including increasing uniformed presence on the street by integrating some council and police functions. The council will expand the CCTV network in the borough, especially on housing estates, to give the tools to crack down on crime and ASB.

GS reported that the council’s licensing team were working to minimise the disruption that residents have at night time when public houses decant their patrons, as this causes a large number of complaints. The council will seek to take these problem premises to review and asked the meeting to make sure they reported premises that contributed to ASB in their area. There is a consultation ongoing at the moment to bring a saturation zone into the Shepherds Bush area. This is a tool in the licensing act which will limited the amount of licences and hours of operation of licensed premises.

GS concluded by saying that the council and police are straining every sinew to make the borough a better place. He thanked the police for donning their uniforms and patrolling and protecting the borough. Finally he remarked what a pleasure it was to have worked with Kevin Hurley, who retires from the police next week, and remarked on what an asset he had been to the borough.

Chief Inspector Wynne Jones

WJ gave a presentation on the recent consultation on the future of neighbourhood policing and the recommendations he would be putting in his report as a result. A summary of the findings and recommendations can be found in the presentation at the end of this document.

David Millar – Chair – H&F Neighbourhood Watch Association

DM introduced the members of the Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee to the meeting and thanked them for their work throughout the year. He asked that if coordinators want to become more involved in the work of the committee to speak with him after the event.

DM went on to say a few words about Neighbourhood Watch in the borough. Although we are pleased that there are 178 schemes in the borough, DM pointed out that Neighbourhood Watch is not a numbers game. Watches grow, but some drop off, and the police regularly audit schemes to ensure we have active watch schemes.

DM wants to seek to widen Neighbourhood Watch and give it a broader presence, for example on housing estates. He wants to ensure that Neighbourhood Watch has the best crime prevention information available and will seek to improve this provision in the coming year.

He ended by thanking all the coordinators for their efforts and opening the floor to questions from the panel.

<p>Question – A coordinator had asked her members for their comments before attending this meeting. The problems they overwhelmingly flagged up were dog fouling, litter, street urination and other environmental issues. How does this fit in with the crime reduction agenda?</p>

<p>Answer – WJ reported that he had recently “dip sampled” ASB calls to the police. Many of the ASB calls actually refer to crimes, such as smoking drugs. However, if there are “liveability” issues in a neighbourhood the SNTs can work with their partners in the council to deal with them.</p>

<p>Q – Crime sometimes is the result of desperate people driven to do desperate things. Can the council consider investing to save people from getting to this stage?</p>
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<p>A – GS agreed with the sentiment and pointed out that many councils have cut their voluntary sector grant by up to 50%, whereas H&F, although there has been a slight recent reduction, has kept its voluntary sector grant at over £4m p.a. since 2006.</p>
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<p>Q – The proposed Earls Court regeneration scheme (in 2018) will have a significant impact on the south of the borough and could potentially remove many of the facilities from the area. Is there likely to be any displacement of the police and result in impacts on their structure?</p>

<p>A – GS replied that regeneration is ongoing across London all the time. Westfield fundamentally changed the north of the borough and these changes</p>
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are a challenge that the police and council need to face. He also pointed out that the Earls Court proposals were still at a very early stage of consultation. WJ reported that one of his Inspectors has spoken with the developers and that the police's Crime Prevention Design Advisors would be statutory consultees for this type of development to ensure that there is no adverse impact on crime and disorder.

KH pointed out that the Empress State Building is in this area and is currently the secondary headquarters for police personnel in London. He does not envisage the police moving from the ESB in the near future.

Q – Are there any drugs dogs on the borough? If not should the borough have its own dedicated drugs dogs to support operations?

A – KH responded that the drugs dogs are a specialist resource, and whilst they were valuable they were expensive. This is why they are a resource that must be bid for from the centre. They are always booked to support drugs operations.

Q – Does the cost of the Westfield Policing Team come from council tax payers?

A – WJ responded that the entire cost for the Westfield policing team is met by Westfield themselves.

Q – Are there any follow ups from the police when vehicles are seen unsecured?

A – WJ The teams will try to trace the owner and speak to them.
GS – Council patrol staff and police also collect the registration details of unsecured or otherwise vulnerable vehicles. These are then checked against the Police National Computer and crime prevention letters sent to the registered keeper.

Q – Are the council going to reduce fees for street parties for the Royal Wedding in April?

A – GS replied that Councillor Donovan had bought some information on street parties that could be collected after the meeting.

Q – How are the police dealing with the rough sleeping issues in Fulham?

A – WJ replied that many of the street population in the borough were accessional workers from European Union states and that the police and council were working with the voluntary sector on operations to return them to their homes.

CI Wynne Jones



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Review of Safer Neighbourhood Teams



- Are the teams located in the right area,
- Are wards the right geographical boundary
- Is the structure right
- Are they delivering what the community expect
- Are they working when the community want them



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SNT Survey Results



- 75% said SNT were based in the right place
- 78% said they knew what SNT had done
- 78% said ward structure fitted
- 40% said current boundaries are fine with 26% saying they are not important just be where their needed
- 71% say focus on ASB
- 75% say focus on crime



SNT Survey



- Only 14% disagreed that the PCSO / PC balance was wrong
- Only 17% said we were out at the wrong times
- 71% say measures of success should be ASB
- 77% say measure of success should be crime
- Only 7% said community engagements events/contacts were important.



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Initial Recommendations

- All wards bar one to have a minimum 1 PS, 2 PC's and 2 PCSO's on each ward
- Ward boundaries remain but Inspector can flex resources across boundaries
- LA Enhanced teams to remain in Town Centres
- Moveable tasking Team to be created
- White City and College Park to increase to 3 PC's



Questions



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