

Hammersmith & Fulham Neighbourhood Watch Association

Annual General Meeting – 10th June 2014

Welcome & Introductions

David Millar (DM) welcomed all attendees to the meeting. He introduced the new Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Gideon Springer, to the meeting.

Borough Commander's Presentation

GS thanked DM and the Neighbourhood Watch Association for inviting him to the meeting. He gave a short presentation about crime in the borough.

He opened by saying that crime has been steadily decreasing in H&F for the past 4 years. Total offences fell by 13.1% from 21782 in 2012-13 to 18938 in 2013-14 and last year H&F Police received an award from the commissioner for the largest reduction in crime in the MPS area in the last financial year.

GS spoke briefly about the priorities set for the police by the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime. The "MOPAC 7" crimes that the police have been set targets around are Burglary, Criminal Damage, Theft of Motor Vehicle, Theft from Motor Vehicle, Violence with Injury, Robbery and Theft Person. All these offences have seen reductions in the past year, aside from theft of motor vehicle which has remained static.

From 2012-13 and 2013-14 burglary reduced by 12.1%, criminal damage reduced by 12.2%, robbery reduced by 26.3%, theft from a vehicle fell by 21%, theft person fell by 19.8% and violence with injury fell by 7%.

In the year so far there has been an increase in residential burglary, against last year's record low figures. The police are currently using a number of operational tactics to tackle this. There have been 20 additional theft of motor vehicle crimes in the financial year to date thus far and a slight increase in theft person. Violence with Injury has also shown a slight increase, which GS contended is likely down to a recent change in Home Office categorisations of crimes. There has been a 12% reduction in incidents of ASB, with a 15% reduction in repeat ASB calls.

GS also presented to the meeting recent figures on confidence and satisfaction. The first measure relates to confidence that the police are doing a good job, the latter is satisfaction of victims in the service they have received from the police. Current satisfaction levels are 83% whilst confidence levels are at 76%. Both these figures place H&F police in the top quartile in the Met.

Association Chair's Presentation

DM introduced Councillor Cartwright to the meeting. Cllr Cartwright is the Deputy Leader of the new administration at LBH&F. He also introduced Councillor Donovan, a long-time supporter of Neighbourhood Watch in the borough.

DM updated the meeting on the local policing model, which was introduced over a year ago. This moved neighbourhood officers away from traditional SNTs to allow more flexibility in their deployment. DM recognised that there are benefits to this approach but that it has reduced the number of officers available on particular wards. DM stated that he personally found the officers on his own ward very good and that they provide regular, useful information to the community.

DM spoke briefly about the new Safer Neighbourhood Board which was convened in March 2014. SNBs are a MOPAC initiative which are replacing the old Policing & Crime Consultative Groups. They are an opportunity for the community to help set crime priorities and monitor and hold the police to account. The SNB consolidates a number of disparate police monitoring groups. The activities of the SNB will include:

- Monitoring complaints against the police
- Monitor the system of Independent Custody Visiting
- Work to encourage submissions to community payback
- Over the work of the borough's Stop & Search monitoring group.*
- Ensure that young people have an input into monitoring of policing.

*On the issue of Stop & Search DM informed the meeting that Inspector Dave Healy was seeking people to volunteer to be on the monitoring group, and any interested parties should contact Inspector Healy.

DM spoke briefly about the new administration at the town hall. He pointed out that in their manifesto they had indicated that they would like to support Neighbourhood Watch.

Q & A Session

Unless stated the response are from the Borough Commander

Q – We receive an excellent local newsletter. The local team always promote immobilise. However, some of my neighbours won't put immobilise stickers in their windows as they fear it will inform potential burglars that they have valuables to steal.

A – (Dave Hinton, Crime Prevention Officer, responded for the police) – I have never heard of criminals targeting properties because householders are using immobilise. In fact it's the opposite; it's more likely to deter criminals.

DH briefly explained how the national database works and it was agreed that he would provide a note for publication about immobilise for the NHW website.

Q – There has been a lot of development in the borough, and with a number of

children's playgrounds being developed there are less places for young people to go, consequently leaving them to hang around on the streets. Is it true that the borough schools office is now concentrating on engagement within schools, rather than in the evenings?

A – Officers still engage with young people outside of school hours. There has been a change of emphasis with officers concentrating on work within secondary schools. But officers are working to develop out of hours youth projects and are working with the youth charity OC London to set up youth engagement panels, particularly with young people living on large estates.

Q – When we receive crime information from the neighbourhood teams, it would be useful to have more detail about incidents, for example, the exact locations.

A – The police and the NHW Association will work together to ensure there is a consistent level of communications from the police to NHW and similar organisations. However, there are circumstances where we have to “sanitise” the information, for example to protect the identity of victims.

Q – Previously the police used to photocopy and deliver leaflets for our NHW scheme. Will they start to do this again?

A – No. Printing is not a basic role of the police and especially with the funding cuts the police are facing my officers focus should be patrolling the streets rather than doing administrative tasks.

Q – Whilst the satisfaction levels are good in comparison to the rest of London, they don't compare as well with the rest of the country. Is this reassurance gap due to visibility? Additionally, could the borough commander commit to supporting NHW?

A – NHW is a partnership. The police aren't the lead agency, the public are. We will continue to engage with individual schemes and the Association.

Q – How are the police organised to support NHW at a neighbourhood level? Our ward officer has recently left and his replacement has not contacted us yet.

A – There should be a level of standardisation. However, things sometimes do go wrong, as in any organisation. I will ask the neighbourhood Inspector to look into the specific issue raised.

DM added that the NHW committee would look to develop an agreed service standard with the police to support new and existing schemes.

Q – The newsletters from the local teams are an excellent opportunity to positively promote police activity. Additionally, what are the reasons behind the reductions in offending?

A – All contacts on each ward should get a newsletter once a month. However, officers need to ensure they communicate in the interim, for example where warrants are executed locally. Please let us know if that isn't happening. In terms of crime reduction, there are a number of factors. Intelligence led policing enables us to concentrate on identifying and dealing with those people who are involved in crime. Additionally the police work in partnership with the council to tackle crime generators in our neighbourhoods, whether that be licensed premises or problem residential premises. Further the police deploy a number of plain clothes units to deal with emerging crime hotspots. This may lessen policing visibility overall but it does have a significant impact on offending levels.

Q – With the cuts that the police are having to make locally, how can we ensure that relationships with local communities are continued?

A – Although the old SNT model is no longer in place, each electoral ward will have a dedicated PC and PCSO, with a shared Sergeant. There is less dedicated resource but there is still support there.