

External Services Scrutiny Committee

Third Report: Safer Neighbourhoods Teams

April 2007

Members of the Committee:

CIIr Mary O'Connor (Chairman) CIIr Shirley Harper-O'Neill CIIr Phoday Jarjussey CIIr Peter Kemp CIIr Eddie Lavery





Summary of Recommendations and Lead Organisation(s)

1. That Cabinet endorses the Committee's support for the work of the Police and partners in the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) in Hillingdon, in particular the success of the Police in improving public confidence, partly as a result of ensuring that SNTs are not abstracted to other duties. This stability is central to the success of SNTs and we ask whether officers should be expected to commit to a particular team for longer than a year (possibly two years) to ensure SNTs fully get to know their local area and local people get to know their SNT.

Lead Organisations: Hillingdon Council & Metropolitan Police

2. That the Police hold regular meetings (e.g. twice a year) to bring together representatives from all Hillingdon Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Panels. These would discuss common issues and challenges, share best practice, and ensure that performance reporting on the EPIC system is standard across all Teams. We suggest that these meetings are used to identify and then implement common performance measures to compare the work of SNTs. The Police may wish to invite ward Councillors to such 'stock-take' meetings and could potentially hold these at the Civic Centre.

Lead Organisation: Metropolitan Police

3. That Cabinet asks officers to ensure there is clarity about the respective roles of the Police, LSP Office and Community Safety Team, particularly whether a written protocol would help avoid duplication of work.

Lead Organisation: Hillingdon Council

4. That Councillors and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams consider holding joint surgeries as already happens in some wards.

Lead Organisations: Hillingdon Council & Metropolitan Police

5. That the Council and Police continue to ensure that positive publicity remains central to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and priority is given to the publication of joint newsletters highlighting local successes produced on a regular timetable.

Lead Organisations: Metropolitan Police & Hillingdon Council

6. That the Council examines proposals to raise people's awareness of their ward and therefore Safer Neighbourhoods Team. We suggest that the excellent facility on the Council's website that enables people to identify their ward by entering their postcode is made more prominent and that the results page from this search contains contact details for the local SNT.

Lead Organisation: Hillingdon Council

7. That the Police continue their work to develop representative Ward Panels and investigate how diversity on panels can be increased e.g. through informal meetings and holding panel meetings in a variety of locations. We also ask that the Council offers its expertise in engaging with certain groups, particularly young people, and that each Ward Panel reviews its membership annually to ensure that it is truly representative of its local community.

Lead Organisations: Metropolitan Police & Hillingdon Council

8. That the Police investigate whether SNTs could be used more flexibly e.g. through SNTs from different wards working together to address specific issues, and whether a greater variety of shift patterns could be used to reflect local need. However, any such flexibility must be carefully managed to ensure that the relationship between an SNT and local community is not undermined. We recommend that Ward Panels regularly monitor shift patterns and major cross-ward activity to ensure that SNTs continue to meet local needs.

Lead Organisation: Metropolitan Police

9. That the Police and Council approach Brunel University to investigate whether the University would be willing to contribute funding towards an additional PCSO to provide extra safety and reassurance to its students and also the wider community in Brunel ward affected by the University.

Lead Organisation: Metropolitan Police (& Hillingdon Council)

10. That the Police ensure that SNTs adopt a proactive approach to community development and continue to report issues such as graffiti to the Council and relevant agencies, and that SNTs encourage people to report underreported crimes including those driven by hate.

Lead Organisation: Metropolitan Police (& Hillingdon Council)

11. That the Cabinet endorses our view that each Safer Neighbourhoods Team should ideally be based in the relevant individual ward and expresses this view to the Police. We ask that the Council explores options to include SNTs in Council projects and programmes such as 'Building Schools for the Future' and Section 106 Agreements, as and when such opportunities arise.

Lead Organisations: Hillingdon Council & Metropolitan Police

External Services Scrutiny Committee: Third Report: Safer Neighbourhoods Teams

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Chairman's Foreword



Like many Councillors I have taken close interest in Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) initiative and fully commend the excellent work undertaken by my local SNT. A safe and secure environment is vitally important to us all and I am delighted to present this report that reviews the roll out of this excellent measure.

Safer Neighbourhoods Teams are a 'good news' story. They demonstrate the tangible outcomes that the Council and public service partners can deliver when working closely together. I was particularly struck by the level of cooperation between the Police and Council at both senior and more front-line levels and I strongly hope that this will continue.

Safer Neighbourhoods Teams are still in their infancy and clearly still evolving. We found no major problems at this early stage but we make recommendations to the Police and Council, which seek to ensure the existing resources allocated to SNTs are utilised to their full potential. We believe the recommendations should not require additional funding.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who attended our meeting, including both those formally invited as witnesses and those who came to listen and contribute to the debate more informally.

Cllr Mary O'Connor

External Services Scrutiny Committee: Third Report: Safer Neighbourhoods Teams

April 2007

Introduction

- 1. The External Services Scrutiny Committee was established after the May 2006 elections with a remit to scrutinise all non-Hillingdon Council organisations whose actions impact on Hillingdon residents. Given the financial difficulties that have faced Hillingdon Primary Care Trust (PCT) over recent years, it has been entirely appropriate to initially focus on this topic. Health services are of great concern to local people and we sought to understand the impact of the PCT's financial position on vulnerable Hillingdon residents and also the Council's own Social Services. We will continue to maintain a close interest in this issue. However we are keen to ensure that our work also covers a wide range of non-Council organisations.
- 2. The Committee is charged with investigating issues of concern to Hillingdon residents relating to non-Council organisations. Surveys consistently indicate that community safety is a key concern for local residents. Recent residents' surveys undertaken by the Council identify that a low level of crime is rated as the most important factor in ensuring a good environment in which to live (scoring 78% in 2003, 76% in 2004 and 74% in 2005).¹
- 3. Community safety is a very broad area and our first six months together demonstrate that our meetings can be most effective when focused on specific issues. We therefore decided to examine a particular aspect of community safety the roll out of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs).
- 4. The Committee are a key component of the Council's community leadership role and we are keen to engage with members of the community. We therefore decided to hold our meeting on this issue at Hayes Community Campus and were pleased that we had a higher attendance than an average Policy Overview or Scrutiny Committee meeting. We invited the following witnesses to give evidence to the Committee:

• Metropolitan Police:

- Supt. Bob Parkinson
- Chief Inspector Maurice Hartnett
- Sgt. Dave Hooper (West Drayton SNT)
- PC Kate Henry (Charville SNT)
- London Borough of Hillingdon:
 - David Brough (Head of Democratic Services)

¹ For full resident survey results see

Hhttp://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/consultation/satisfaction_survey05.pdfH.

- Mark Hankins (Community Safety Manager)
- Kim Gallagher (HIP Team Manager)
- Maggie Allen (Community Leadership Manager)
- Michele Ryan (Hillingdon East SNT Panel Member)
- 5. We heard about some tangible successes; Safer Neighbourhoods Teams represents a 'good news story' which demonstrates the benefits of community engagement and partnership working. In the following section we present the main issues that arose in our discussions and present recommendations to Cabinet and the Police. We believe these build on the excellent work already undertaken, and seek to maximise the impact of existing resources rather than commit additional money.

Background

- 6. Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) consist of one sergeant, two constables and three police community support officers (PCSOs). SNTs differ from previous attempts to introduce community policing, for significantly, the officers in each team are dedicated to working in SNTs and cannot be pulled away to other work except in certain exceptional circumstances such as a terrorist attack, New Year, May Day and the Notting Hill Carnival. Officers are expected to commit to at least one year in a particular SNT. This stability helps support and develop the community engagement and visibility that are central to SNTs; officers get to know their patch and local residents, while local residents get to know the officers in the team.
- 7. The Council has been highly supportive of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and has provided £100,000 to the Police to help bridge the gap in finding the resources needed to roll out Safer Neighbourhoods Teams across the Borough. This is being used to fund officers needed for specific tasks such as the prosecution of graffiti vandals, the management of the two CCTV vehicles and funding for SNT coordinators. In addition, the Council funding previously allocated for the employment of six extra Police Community Support Officers has been transferred to fund four Safer Schools Officers who work closely with SNTs.
- 8. Networking with local community groups is central to the concept of community engagement. SNTs are encouraged to work with local people to identify local priorities and tackle issues which local people want dealing with. This may often involve creative problem-solving and close cooperation with partners.

Real successes and tangible outcomes

9. SNTs have proved highly popular and have delivered practical solutions to address locally identified priorities. PC Kate Henry told us about some of Charville SNT's successes, including a reduction in anti-social behaviour. The team has been able to address graffiti, an important local issue, by working with schools and talking to teachers and students. Charville SNT has worked with the Council to put a dispersal order in place for Kingshill Avenue. This had been such a success that the order has not had to

be repeated and the Ward Panel has been able to identify new priorities. The Charville team has also worked with the Council's Parks Patrol to tackle the inappropriate use of off-road bikes and 'mini-motos'.

- 10. Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs) are a key part of the work of SNTs and represent successful partnership working between the Council, Police and other organisations such as the DVLA. Environmental Visual Audits seek to identify the physical problems causing crime, anti-social behaviour or other concerns. Once completed, the audit provides a range of actions for the Police, Council and other agencies to show how they can improve the local area. At the time of our meeting, EVAs had been completed in 18 of the 22 wards. We were delighted to hear that 70% of the actions arising from these audits had been completed and that there has been 100% success in one ward. It is now hoped to run these audits on a monthly basis. We welcome this, and we hope all partners are clear on how wards will be selected for audits and the order of wards benefiting from these audits.
- 11. These are just a few examples of the positive outcomes SNTs are delivering in Hillingdon. In addition to the Councillors on the Committee, many ward councillors attended our meeting and all said that their SNT was the best, suggesting that the successes outlined above are not isolated examples. SNTs are about local solutions to local problems and different teams will undoubtedly adopt individual solutions to address individual issues. However, we feel that it is important that successes, ideas, common issues and challenges are shared across SNTs. In particular, we heard that reporting on the EPIC (Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence and Communication) system varies, with reporting yet not standardised across all teams. However, we were pleased to hear that the Police are working hard to achieve this.
- 12. Centrally imposed performance targets could conflict with the emphasis on local solutions to local problems. However, we hope that a balance can be found so that meaningful common measures can be used to compare performance across Teams so that any emerging issues can be addressed.

Recommendation 1:

That Cabinet endorses the Committee's support for the work of the Police and partners in the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) in Hillingdon, in particular the success of the Police in improving public confidence, partly as a result of ensuring that SNTs are not abstracted to other duties. This stability is central to the success of SNTs and we ask whether officers should be expected to commit to a particular team for longer than a year (possibly two years) to ensure SNTs fully get to know their local area and local people get to know their SNT.

Recommendation 2:

That the Police hold regular meetings (e.g. twice a year) to bring together representatives from all Hillingdon Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Panels.

These would discuss common issues and challenges, share best practice, and ensure that performance reporting on the EPIC system is standard across all Teams. We suggest that these meetings are used to identify and then implement common performance measures to compare the work of SNTs. The Police may wish to invite ward Councillors to such 'stock-take' meetings and could potentially hold these at the Civic Centre.

Partnership working between the Council and Police

- 13. We were struck to hear David Brough, Head of Democratic Services, recall how the Council's engagement in the community safety agenda has dramatically changed in the last twenty years. Apart from the financial support referred to above, the Council has also appointed three Neighbourhood Coordinators to the new Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Office whose role is to ensure that all relevant Council departments are working together with the Police to make practical changes on the ground. This is in addition to the Community Safety Team managed by David Brough and led by Mark Hankins, which undertakes highly valuable community safety work.
- 14. We welcome these resources, and believe that they clearly demonstrate the Council's commitment to its role in addressing residents' concerns over crime and anti-social behaviour. However, we firmly believe that it is vital that these resources are utilised to their full potential. In particular, we note that there are now two separate Council departments involved in community safety (the LSP Office in the Deputy Chief Executive's Office and the Community Safety Team in Planning and Community Services). We hope that effort is not duplicated and all those with an interest in this issue are clear about their respective roles.
- 15. A clear example of this partnership working is the joint surgeries held by Councillors and SNT officers, such as in Barnhill for example. Councillors told us that these are highly worthwhile, for even if no members of the public attend the surgery, the sessions are useful in enabling an information exchange between the Police and Councillors. We commend this close cooperation to offer a 'joined up' solution to residents' concerns and hope that it can become common practice.

Recommendation 3:

That Cabinet asks officers to ensure there is clarity about the respective roles of the Police, LSP Office and Community Safety Team, particularly whether a written protocol would help avoid duplication of work.

Recommendation 4:

That Councillors and Safer Neighbourhoods Teams consider holding joint surgeries as already happens in some wards.

Communication and publicity

- 16. Safer Neighbourhoods Teams have therefore been successful in delivering tangible outcomes for local residents. However, SNTs are a new concept and 'brand'; as such people may not yet be fully aware of their existence or achievements. We believe that positive publicity is essential for SNTs. Successes such as the EVAs must be communicated to a wide audience for this will build people's confidence and show that SNTs are having a positive impact. Celebrating local successes will be crucial in winning the trust of the local community. This is likely to promote a virtuous circle in which good news reduces a fear of crime.
- 17. People often use the local press and *Hillingdon People* to gain information about the Borough. We note and applaud the recent spread in *Hillingdon People* on SNTs and ask that officers will continue to adopt a proactive approach to publicising the impact of SNTs. We heard that letters sent out on a street-by-street basis can be effective at dealing with specific very localised issues, such as racial harassment, and would encourage the use of these where appropriate. However, given the massive recent increase in flyers and unsolicited information distributed through the door, many people may ignore such information and put it straight into the bin. We therefore suggest that some of the excellent publicity that has been produced to publicise each SNT is placed where there is likely to be a 'captive' audience such as doctors' surgeries. In addition, we suggest that photos could be used to strikingly demonstrate the successes of SNTs such as the removal of graffiti or abandoned vehicles.

Recommendation 5:

That the Council and Police continue to ensure that positive publicity remains central to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and priority is given to the publication of joint newsletters highlighting local successes produced on a regular timetable.

18. Successful SNTs seek to be fully engaged with their local communities and are organised on the Council wards. However, we heard that this concept may affect the level of engagement with SNTs for many people do not know the Council ward in which they live. Whilst some Council wards, such as Harefield, have clear identities, others such as Townfield are harder to identify with. For many people the poll card issued for Council elections every four years is the only official Council correspondence that states their ward. We therefore ask whether the Council could do more to raise people's awareness of their ward and the contact details for their Safer Neighbourhoods Team.

Recommendation 6:

That the Council examines proposals to raise people's awareness of their ward and therefore Safer Neighbourhoods Team. We suggest that the excellent facility on the Council's website that enables people to identify their ward by entering their postcode is made more prominent and that the results page from this search contains contact details for the local SNT.

Ward Panels

- 19. Ward Panels are central to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and one exists for each ward. Ward Panels should represent the interests of local people and using their knowledge of the area and the views of the residents, employees and other relevant stakeholders, set the Team's priorities.
- 20. The Panel is intended to be representative of all sections of the community and we heard effort is being made to involve a new range of people rather than the 'usual suspects'. West Drayton SNT, for example, sent an invitation to all premises in the ward inviting people to be involved in the new panel. The Panels are in their infancy and we hope that further work can be undertaken to improve the diversity of membership. We note that that it is not possible to force people to attend a meeting, and as such formal meetings may not always be the best method for engaging with certain groups. We are particularly concerned about the engagement of young people, for despite the common perception that they are the cause of much anti-social behaviour, young people are actually most likely to be victims of crime.

Recommendation 7:

That the Police continue their work to develop representative Ward Panels and investigate how diversity on panels can be increased e.g. through informal meetings and holding panel meetings in a variety of locations. We also ask that the Council offers its expertise in engaging with certain groups, particularly young people, and that each Ward Panel reviews its membership annually to ensure that it is truly representative of its local community.

Flexibility to meet local issues

- 21. As stated earlier, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams consist of a standard complement of one sergeant, two constables and three police community support officers (PCSOs). This standard complement is positive in that it ensures SNTs are equally visible around the Borough and crime and anti-social behaviour is not displaced to other wards. However, we heard that certain wards in Hillingdon have special circumstances that place additional demands on the local SNT. Examples include Heathrow Villages SNT, which has the Harmondsworth and Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centres within its boundary, and the Uxbridge and Hayes (Botwell and Townfield) teams that face pressures arising from the busy town centre shops and pubs.
- 22. This is a particular issue for Brunel SNT. Wards with a resident population of over 16,000 people qualify for a larger team, however this formula does not take into account the large number of Brunel University students living in the ward who are potential victims or causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. We heard that the Police offer a

scheme under which organisations can contribute funding for additional PCSOs and suggest that this could be explored in relation to Brunel.

- 23. As stated earlier, we support the principle that SNT officers cannot be 'abstracted' to other duties for this helps develop relations with the community and provides reassurance to local residents. We heard that the Mayor of London recently told the London Assembly that SNT officers could be deployed in other wards as long as they remained within the same Borough.² We give this greater flexibility a cautious welcome for believe that it could enable SNTs to work across ward boundaries to address specific issues e.g. to undertake a 'one-off' operation on a Friday night perhaps.
- 24. We were keen to hear about the shift patterns for SNT staff. In particular, much antisocial behaviour occurs on a Friday and Saturday evening and we wanted to hear reassurance that SNTs did not simply work 'office' hours. We were pleased to hear that SNTs work to a variety of shift patterns, including early mornings and late evenings. SNTs are meant to address local issues and we hope that shifts are sufficiently flexible to respond to specific local circumstances. We were not able to examine this issue fully at our meeting and it is something that needs to be explored on a local ward basis.

Recommendation 8:

That the Police investigate whether SNTs could be used more flexibly e.g. through SNTs from different wards working together to address specific issues, and whether a greater variety of shift patterns could be used to reflect local need. However, any such flexibility must be carefully managed to ensure that the relationship between an SNT and local community is not undermined. We recommend that Ward Panels regularly monitor shift patterns and major crossward activity to ensure that SNTs continue to meet local needs.

Recommendation 9:

That the Police and Council approach Brunel University to investigate whether the University would be willing to contribute funding towards an additional PCSO to provide extra safety and reassurance to its students and also the wider community in Brunel ward affected by the University.

Community development and 'thinking outside the box'

25. Community engagement is central to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and we heard that SNT officers are already establishing excellent links with their local communities. Hillingdon has a fairly low level of race and other hate crime compared to some London Boroughs, but crimes such as racial harassment, homophobic abuse, and domestic violence are generally underreported. Such crimes stem from hate and we believe that education and increased awareness are central to addressing these crimes. Council and Police officers told us that it is vital such incidents are reported, even if insufficient

² Mayor's Question Time, Debate on the Draft Budget, Greater London Assembly, 30th January 2007

information is available to lead to further action, for it can be used to inform future SNT activities.

26. SNT officers, particularly PCSOs, spend a large amount of time walking around their ward engaging with residents and we feel that SNTs can, and do, play a vital role in community development and promoting community cohesion. We heard that people already approach PCSOs with information and we hope that this will increase as SNTs become more known. We were also pleased to hear that SNTs are encouraged not to 'walk on by' when they hear or witness an argument in a house for this could be an incident of domestic violence for example. SNTs are leading the way in getting public service providers into the community and directly witnessing and tackling the issues facing local people. As such SNTs are performing a vital role and we hope they will continue to take the initiative in reporting issues such as graffiti to the Council and relevant agencies.

Recommendation 10:

That the Police ensure that SNTs adopt a proactive approach to community development and continue to report issues such as graffiti to the Council and relevant agencies, and that SNTs encourage people to report underreported crimes including those driven by hate.

Future deployment of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams in Hillingdon

27. Throughout our report we reinforce the principle that community engagement and visibility are central to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams. SNTs must get to know their area and local residents, and the local community must get to know their SNT. The base for SNTs is therefore essential. A base within the ward will maximise the visibility of SNTs. Locating SNTs outside the ward may undermine this visibility, for officers spend time travelling between their office and ward. We were therefore concerned that not all SNTs are based within their ward. In particular, local Councillors have expressed their concern to us that the Northwood, Northwood Hills, and Eastcote & East Ruislip SNTs all share offices at Argyle House in Joel Street, Northwood Hills and that this may undermine the success of community engagement. We appreciate that resource and practical considerations may mean that all SNTs could not be based within their own ward from the outset, but hope that this situation will soon improve.

Recommendation 11:

That the Cabinet endorses our view that each Safer Neighbourhoods Team should ideally be based in the relevant individual ward and expresses this view to the Police. We ask that the Council explores options to include SNTs in Council projects and programmes such as 'Building Schools for the Future' and Section 106 Agreements, as and when such opportunities arise.

28. Apart from reviewing the early months of SNTs we also looked forward into future developments to SNTs. In particular, we were delighted to hear that 18 new PCSOs will soon be deployed in Hillingdon under the control of the Borough police. These additional officers will be ring-fenced to patrol local buses and will provide huge reassurance to passengers who have expressed concern about anti-social behaviour on local buses. At the time of our meeting the Police had not finalised where these officers will be based, but we were very pleased to hear that the response from the main bus company operating from Uxbridge has been very favourable to basing these officers at the bus station. We look forward to hearing more about the deployment of these officers at a later date, in particular the impact of their work.

Closing Word

- 29. The roll out of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams is a positive story and one that demonstrates the tangible outcomes that public sector organisations can deliver when working together. Safer Neighbourhoods Teams are undoubtedly making a positive contribution and we believe the recommendations above will enable the Council and Police to deliver even greater outcomes for Hillingdon residents within the existing resources.
- 30. Our final meeting of the year will expand on some of the themes of this meeting and will examine the work undertaken by the Council and partners to promote community cohesion in Hillingdon. We are determined to 'hit the ground running' in the next Council year and are starting to think about issues of concern to local residents to which we could 'add value'. In the mean time, our work programme for this first year together is attached to this report as an appendix.

Appendix: External Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2006/7

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
20 th June 2006	Overview of new structures, the Committee's terms of reference and relationship with the Social Services, Health & Housing POC
Theme:	Agree work programme and identify topics for review
Work Programme Planning	 Matters arising from 2005/6: Hillingdon PCT's financial position, including: NHS response to O&S review into deficit Single Strategic Health Authority for London
20 th July 2006	
Themes: Burns & Plastics at Mount Vernon Hillingdon PCT's	Scrutiny and consultation over the proposal to transfer burns and plastics in-patient activity from Mount Vernon to the Royal Free in Hampstead
Recovery Plan	Detailed scrutiny of the PCT's revised recovery plan
26 th September 2006 Theme: Voluntary Sector	Challenges facing health & social care voluntary sector groups in Hillingdon – including the impact of the PCT's financial recovery plan
5 th October 2006 Theme: Mental Health Services	Overview of mental health services in Hillingdon and Central & North West London Mental Health Trust foundation trust application
20 th October 2006 Theme: External Scrutiny Conference	Conference – 'Improving local services: the role of external scrutiny'

21 st November 2006 5pm Theme: NHS Scrutiny	 Performance updates and update on significant issues: Hillingdon PCT (inc financial position & Practice- Based Commissioning) Hillingdon Hospital (inc redevelopment) London Ambulance Service
30 th January 2007 6pm Theme: Safer Neighbourhood Teams	Roll out of Safer Neighbourhood Teams – aims and objectives; challenges and issues
6 th March 2007 5pm	Member development session – facilitated by Centre for Public Scrutiny
13 th March 2007 5pm Theme: Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check	 Annual Health Check Declarations: Hillingdon PCT Hillingdon Hospital Royal Brompton & Harefield Central & North West London Mental Health Trust
24 th April 2007 6pm Theme: Community Cohesion	Review of community cohesion and the work undertaken by the Council and partners on this issue (see Council motion passed on 29 th June 2006).