

Public Document Pack

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 February 2013 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Kevin Bonavia (Vice-Chair), Jackie Addison, Obajimi Adefiranye, Christine Allison, Abdeslam Amrani, Paul Bell, Amanda De Ryk, Julia Fletcher, Carl Handley, Stella Jeffrey, Darren Johnson, Chris Maines, Jim Mallory, John Muldoon, Marion Nisbet, Sam Owolabi-Oluyole, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Philip Peake and Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Janet Daby, Aileen Buckton, Gary Connors, Salena Mulhere, Barrie Neal, Mark Andrews (London Fire Brigade), Graham Norton (London Ambulance Service) and Graham Price (Metropolitan Police Service, Lewisham)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vicky Foxcroft, Councillor Pauline Beck, Councillor Suzannah Clarke, Councillor Vincent Davis, Councillor Patsy Foreman, Councillor Ami Ibitson, Councillor Pauline Morrison, Councillor Stephen Padmore and Councillor Alan Till

1. Minutes of the meetings held on 6th February 2012, 28th March 2012 and 28th November 2012

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings on the 6 February 2012, 28 March 2012 and 28 November 2012 as a true record

2. Declarations of Interest

3. Emergency Services in Lewisham

3.1 The Chair introduced the item and noted that:

- all members recognise the value of the emergency services, and the essential role the different emergency services play in keeping the community safe and well
- whilst the Greater London Assembly (GLA) carry out scrutiny of emergency services across London, members of Lewisham Council felt it important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee carry out a review of emergency services in Lewisham specifically
- given the face of challenging financial times for all public services, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would oversee a review of all local emergency services, to enable members better understand the particular challenges facing each service locally, and to consider any potential impact (of those challenges) on local services for people in Lewisham.
- Accident and Emergency provision, including at Lewisham hospital, would also form part of the review
- Members welcomed the attendance of the local representatives of the emergency services at this meeting.

3.2 The Chair invited Graham Price, Superintendent, Lewisham Metropolitan Police Service to address the Committee. The key points to note were:

- The recent consultation event held in Lewisham outlined the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) outlined the proposals for Lewisham borough. The proposals in relation to front desks in Lewisham are that Lewisham station remains 24 hours, Deptford and Catford station offer a reduced front desk service and Brockley and Sydenham front desk service cease. Brockley front desk is currently staffed by volunteers and has an average "footfall" of 2 people a day.
- Any subsequent building disposal would be a matter for MOPAC and is not something that Superintendent Price could comment on at this stage
- The Met police force faces a number of challenges, MOPAC has set a challenge for the force of "20/20/20" by 2016 which is: to cut crime by 20%, to increase confidence in the service by 20% and cut costs by 20%
- The MOPAC proposals for change in Lewisham would result in extra officers in Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) in Lewisham and less management costs
- The current sergeant to PC ratio is 1-4.4 and the aim is now for a 1-6 ratio
- The ambition behind the proposals is to be a more flexible force that can be deployed where most needed
- SNTs are to be retained with at least one full time officer and a named sergeant per ward and a total of 109 extra officers working within SNTs and an additional 54 PCs in Lewisham than there are currently
- Services will be focused on communities, not buildings. The Metropolitan Police currently has a large estate and some of the buildings are very old
- MOPAC will make the decisions about the front desks and the use of buildings, traditionally people went to police stations to report crimes and contact the police, a lot more people now phone when they want to report crimes or contact the police and some make contact by email

3.3 In response to questions from the Committee, Superintendent Price advised:

- Lewisham, Bromley, Sutton and the Public Order Centre at Gravesend are funded under a PFI contract
- There is still a parade each day at Lewisham station and SNT teams have a mini-parade with briefings and updates for the day
- Lewisham, Deptford, Brockley, Catford and Sydenham stations are all currently SNT bases – a decision on location of teams is not directly linked to the front counter consultation and the proposals for the buildings, above and beyond the front counter services, also rests with MOPAC
- Options for public access to their SNT have been explored but there are no plans at this time to provide a shop front in every ward as Bromley has done. The Police would be happy to work with the Council to discuss working together and explore joint location options when planning public access to SNTs
- The building in Perry Vale ward is not used by the boroughs police service, it is used by a specialist service
- There will be a named sergeant for each ward, the number of wards each sergeant will be responsible for, and therefore the proposal for the total number of sergeants, will be provided to members. Each ward will have a dedicated PC and PCSO support with access to more officers to "flex" across the borough as and when needed
- The 123 model (of one sergeant, 2 PCs and 3 PCSOs) has been successful but is difficult to maintain as some wards need more resource and some wards need less

- Buildings don't catch criminals, police officers do and a large number of buildings are very expensive to maintain and manage
- Travel time for SNT officers from their base to their ward would be taken into account in any changes to base location
- There are no plans to make any PCSOs redundant, and although some SNTs will be reducing to 1PCSO this is to be achieved via natural wastage. PCSOs are encouraged and supported to become sworn officers if they want to apply
- PCSOs play a key role in providing a visible presence that is welcomed, but there is a plan across London to reduce PCSO numbers and increase the numbers of sworn officers and putting them into the front line and SNTs. Reductions will be made from senior ranks, Lewisham is reducing from 3 to 2 superintendants with a vacant post not being filled
- There are three call centres based in Lambeth, Bow and Hendon. If the call is in relation to an emergency, officers are dispatched. If it is not an emergency and a person would like to report a crime or make a statement an offer is made to contact them within 24 hours
- There is a service that provides for officers to go to people to take reports of crimes rather than requiring people to come to the police at a station. Officers can go to peoples home, workplace or another place of their choosing. Officers are sensitive to the fact that some people would not be keen for police officers to come to their home or place of work
- The police service in Lewisham works well with the Safer Transport teams, who are not directly affected by these proposals but will likely go through their own reorganisation in due course
- The schools officers are very well valued but not all secondary schools in the borough have one dedicated officer as they are allocated on a need basis, some schools have one officer shared between two schools. They are not part of local SNTs they are part of the local policing model and managed under the partnership portfolio – the managing partnership superintendent feeds their input into the ward teams
- A lot of training with officers regarding the use of stop and search has been done. There are no targets for stop and search, it needs to be appropriate and targeted
- More special constables have been recruited and are integrated into day to day service alongside full time officers – efforts are made to encourage specials to continuously engage effectively.
- There are three cadet units in Lewisham and they are used for test purchasing alcohol and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. A certain number of volunteers are needed to provide the cadets service and achieving enough volunteers can be a challenge

3.4 The Chair invited Mark Andrews, Borough Commander London Fire Brigade to address the Committee. The key points to note were:

- The LFB needs to save 45 million over the next 2 years and continue to provide safe and effective services to Londoners
- The 5th Draft safety plan was planned to go out to consultation and sets out how the brigade proposes to deliver services over the next 4 years.
- The proposals include reducing the estate by 12 fire stations and by 18 appliances from 112 stations and 169 appliances to 100 stations and 151 appliances – in Lewisham there is a proposed loss of two stations, Downham and New Cross
- A large part of fire fighters time was spent on engagement and prevention work across the borough

3.5 In response to questions from the Committee, Mark Andrews advised:

- All fire brigade responses are co-orientated at a centre in Merton so there is no borough control about the dispatch of engines to emergency calls, the centre in Merton co-ordinates all call outs and allocates engines to attend. The Fire brigade is a pan- London resource and engines and resources are deployed strategically from the Merton centre ensuring there is always cover across London, not always from the closest station
- The Borough commanders role is prevention and protection and fire safety. Prevention and fire safety is a key part of the proposals, the large reductions in the number of fires over recent years is due to effective prevention work and partnership work the brigade and fire fighters do, not because of fire fighters fighting fires
- 520 fire fighter jobs are proposed to be lost within the proposals
- Response target times are for the first appliance to arrive within 6 minutes and a second appliance, if necessary, to arrive within 8 minutes – these targets will still be met within the proposals. This has been extensively modelled and the modelling shows that with the reduction in stations and appliances the target attendance times can still be met
- The scale of buildings in the boroughs and the types of buildings and services such as schools have all been taken into account in the modelling
- A key focus for the brigade is peoples behaviours and preventative action, making sure people have smoke alarms and they are working, making sure fire risks are known and taken into account within planning and enforcement activities
- LFB are keen to explore sharing premises with other emergency services, this happens in other areas outside of London quite regularly
- Some brigades have started using innovate approaches to transport fire fighters to get first fire fighters on scene quicker than is possible in a large fire engine, with some brigades using land rovers and people carriers
- Lewisham is also served by a number of fire stations in the surrounding boroughs, the modelling provides guidance that “notionally” with the revised arrangements any emergency call in London could be reached within 6 minutes.
- Stations are buildings and the engines and the crews are the assets, GPS shows where the engines are at any time and they are deployed on that basis, not on the basis of station location and borough boundaries.
- Buildings are hubs where engines are parked and where fire fighters train and drill and rest
- There are plans to charge for false call outs to Automated Fire Alarms (AFA) and lift release call outs
- There are significantly less fires in London now than in recent history, 7% of LFB time is spent dealing with fires

3.6 The Chair invited Graham Norton, London Ambulance Service (LAS) Operations Director Lewisham to address the Committee. The key points to note were:

- LAS receives 1.6 million calls a year with over 700,000 people transported to hospital.
- Calls are categorised with “category A” calls being life threatening or potentially life threatening such as cardiac arrest or major trauma. Category 1-4 are categorisations of calls below category A. Demand has risen by 10% with category A calls increased by 14% over the last 2 years.
- Category 1-4 calls are assessed with category 3 and 4 calls sometimes being more appropriately dealt with over the phone rather than automatic despatch of an ambulance

- LAS needs to save 53 million pounds over 3 years. 890 staff reductions have taken place so far, primarily backroom support staff at the headquarters
- Discussions are ongoing with commissioners about future funding needs given the increased demands on the service
- LAS works closely with all hospitals, particularly at the point of transfer of patients from the Ambulance service to the hospital A&E department

3.7 In response to questions from the Committee Graham Norton advised that:

- He would estimate that a journey from Beckenham Hill to Woolwich under blue light would take 7-8 minutes and 12-15 minutes in normal traffic
- The closure of A&Es is a concern for LAS and they ensure they interact with the processes for planned changes and carry out mapping of the potential impact on their services
- A lot of work across health providers and commissioners has gone into advertising and educating people as to when to call an ambulance and when to seek an alternative route to health care, dependent on their needs – however people have different personal views about what is urgent and an emergency, as well as having differing pain thresholds – the key is to continue to educate people about services and appropriate healthcare choices
- There is a triage process in the control room and is very robust and work is underway to try and open up more appropriate care pathway options for LAS staff like calling a community team to provide assistance and assurance.
- Mapping work, on the impact of the changes to Lewisham A&E as a result of the TSA recommendations, is ongoing – when crews take patients to hospitals such as Kings and Woolwich they are then out of the borough when they are “green” to take a call again, but travel time back to the next incident from the hospital location has to be taken into account – discussions with commissioners are ongoing
- Since 2 years ago LAS no longer employs emergency medical officers, they only employ paramedics or apprentice paramedics
- LAS has robust divert policies if A&Es are full and unable to take patients

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to:

- Note the content of the report
- Note the information provided at the meeting by officers and partners present
- Agree the proposed terms of reference for the review and the potential allocation of responsibilities to the select committees

4. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to refer the views outlined at section 3.X to the Mayor and Cabinet.