

Committee Overview and Scrutiny	Date 5 th October 2010	Classification Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No. 9.2
Report of: Chief Executive Originating Officer(s): Mohammed Ahad Scrutiny Policy Officer		Title: Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) - Scrutiny Challenge Session Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the Scrutiny Challenge Session on the Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) held on 20th July 2010.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and agree the outcomes of the scrutiny challenge session.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background papers

Name and telephone number of and address
where open to inspection

None

N/A

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides a summary of the scrutiny challenge session held on the Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) which provided members with an opportunity to learn more about the work of the newly formed THEOs and how they help create a cleaner and safer environment.
- 3.2 The session was delivered together with the Tower Hamlets Partnership and was attended by 15 resident steering group members from the various Local Area Partnership (LAP) steering groups. Members that also attended included Cllr Lesley Pavitt (Chair), Cllr Ann Jackson, Cllr Abdal Ullah, Cllr Zenith Rahman, Cllr Anwar Khan and Cllr Stephanie Eaton.

4. Purpose

- 4.1 Challenge sessions are designed as a quick way for a group of members to get to grips with key policy issues and ensure a robust check on the Partnership's policies.

The purpose of this scrutiny challenge session was to:

- Increase Members and residents understanding of the work of the THEOs;
 - Consider and evaluate the Council's approach to dealing with ASB, which is still a key concern for residents as highlighted in the Annual Residents Survey;
 - Develop a greater understanding of resident concerns;
 - Develop recommendations to strengthen the role of the THEOs in the borough through increasing their profile and visibility;
- 4.2 As part of the preparation for this session Cllr Pavitt spent a morning shadowing the THEOs to understand and experience first hand their role. The morning was spent travelling around the borough in the THEOs CCTV van which is a major tool used by the Council to tackle ASB. The van is fitted with four high-visibility colour cameras that can take high-quality images, even in low light conditions. This includes a roof-mounted rotating camera, which can be controlled from inside or even remotely from the CCTV control room at the Town Hall. In addition with an on-board transmission system means that the position of the vehicle and the live feed can be transmitted back to the CCTV control room and, if required, on to the police.
- 4.3 Cllr Pavitt travelled to hotspots around the Whitechapel and Altab Ali Park areas as part of the THEOs Operation Heat Wave programme which tackles ASB in parks and open spaces. She spent some time on foot patrol around the Whitechapel Drink Control Zone whilst Officers confiscated alcohol from known trouble makers. In addition she also went to the Collingwood Estate which has a history of drugs misuse amongst young people. The THEOs are currently delivering Operation Stairwell on this and other estates which tackle drugs use on block stairwells and Cllr Pavitt saw the impact of this operation on a housing block known for attracting ASB.
- 4.4 The visit was helpful in setting the scene for the challenges session as it allowed the Chair to vividly experience the work the THEOs undertake and the contribution they make in tackling ASB. It also allowed her to seek areas for improvements which

could be discussed at the coming challenge session and increase discussions on the THEOs.

4.5 The challenge session was structured as follows:

- Cllr Abdal Ullah (Lead member, Community Safety) and Andy Bamber (Service Head, Community Safety) introduced the background to the THEOs and the reason for their inception in November 2009;
- Gavin Dooley (Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention) went further in-depth and updated participants on the current work of the THEOs, their successes and some of the challenges for the near future;
- Members and residents split up into three groups to discuss possible recommendations to strengthen the role of the THEOs within the borough and identify priority areas.

5. Background

5.1 Crime in Tower Hamlets has fallen for the 6th year running however it still remains the top priority for residents in the borough as set out in the annual resident's survey (2009/10); in particular it is suggested the fear of crime is the main concern for local residents. Low level ASB is not always a priority for the Metropolitan Police; this could be seen as a reason for residents to consider crime as a major priority.

5.2 The Council recognises that low level crime is a serious issue for the community and this is reflected through National Indicator (NI) 21 which is included in the borough's Local Area Agreement (LAA) set, which looks at satisfaction of the Police and Council in dealing with crime and ASB. In addition NI 42, drug use and supply, is also a LAA indicator and looks at the impact upon perceptions of ASB.

5.3 The THEOs were introduced last year as part of the Council's response to dealing with anti social behaviour and environmental issues and are based in the Community Safety Team of the Council. The priority areas for the THEOs include:

- Youth related ASB
- Street drinking and ASB
- Dog Fouling
- Littering, Graffiti and fly posting
- Illegal street trading

5.4 The team currently consists of two team leaders and 14 Officers. The two teams operate within a 5 day shift pattern, providing a service between the hours of 8am and midnight. The officers are deployed across the borough equipped with overt body CCTV cameras and patrol the streets either on foot, mountain bikes or a mobile CCTV vehicle.

5.5 All officers undertake the Metropolitan Police Services Community Safety Accreditation Scheme course before commencing their role with the Council. This allows them to be equipped to perform primary functions of engagement and education and enforcement. They are trained to instigate legal investigations, report people for relevant offences, issue fixed penalty notices, provide professional

evidence statements, compile appropriate court files and where necessary attend court to provide evidence. In addition to this, as well as other aspects, the accreditation also provides the THEOs with the following powers under the Police Reform Act 2002:

- Require name and address (relevant offence)
- Require name and address for ASB
- Require under 18s to surrender alcohol
- Seize alcohol in designated place
- Seize tobacco from under 16s

5.6 The performance figures for the THEOs since their inception in November 2009 to March 2010 are as follows:

Interventions and actions	Monthly stats 11/02/10 – 07/03/10	Running Total since inception 18/11/09- 07/03/10
Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) issued	68	177
Warnings issued for offences	26	174
Prosecutions (not FPN)	11	41
Arrests resulting from THEOs interventions	0	16
Persons submitted for ASBO	2	3
Persons submitted for Acceptance Behaviour Contracts (ABC)	3	6
Community safety accreditation Scheme Powers		
N & A for FPN offence	0	0
N & A anti-social behaviour	108	160
Alcohol seized from under 18	0	0
Tobacco seized from under 16	3	12
Alcohol seized in DCZ	48	90
Intelligence reports submitted	192	410
Environmental issued identified	31	176

5.7 As part of its partnership working and to identify the key hotspot areas of the borough where ASB is at its highest, the Community Safety Team undertakes what is known as joint tasking. This brings together the key enforcement agencies as well as data gathered through various means such as the ASB hotline and police records. The agencies triangulate this data to identify the areas which are most prone to ASB. Greater resources and time are then spent on these more volatile areas until the status quo is preserved. This occurs on a fortnightly basis so priority geographical areas are continuously subject to change depending on the needs of the community.

6. Key discussion points and Recommendations

6.1 At the meeting Members and residents were given presentations by Cllr Abdal Ullah (Lead Member, Community Safety), Andy Bamber (Service Head, Community

Safety) and Gavin Dooley (Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention). Information was presented on the background to the THEOs, why they were introduced to the borough - with the context of ASB and the fear of crime still being the key priority for local residents. Members and residents were informed of the core approaches to tackling ASB including some of the key enforcement programmes they were currently delivering as well as some of the successes and breakthroughs they had encountered in the past 6 months.

- 6.2 The THEOs were tackling low level crime that the Police and Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) do not deal with including noise, environmental issues and drugs use on stairwells. Challenges that the THEOs faced included service integration and financial constraints in the current climate. A major aspect here included the need for a shared database with relevant partners to increase intelligence around problem areas and reduce duplication.
- 6.3 Enforcement Officers have also been implemented in other local authorities, most notably in the London Boroughs of Southwark and Hillingdon. Whilst Tower Hamlets has 16 Officers, Southwark have 64 Officers on the streets tackling low level ASB. In addition to this, it was highlighted that recently the London Boroughs of Hackney and the City of London had approached the Council to learn best practice methods in implementing Enforcement Officers to tackle low level ASB in their respective boroughs.
- 6.4 Members and residents were impressed with the work of the THEOs, their impact and key achievements to date in tackling low level ASB and were keen to see that the concept of the THEOs was extended and integrated with the work of other enforcement services in the borough. The session was an opportunity for non-executive members and residents to consider the role and challenges of the THEOs since their inception and explore areas for improvement.
- 6.5 Following the presentations residents and Members split up into three groups focusing on the key themes of raising the profile of the THEOs, increasing community engagement and the impact of the THEOs. They were joined in the discussions by a number of THEOs who were present. This provided a really useful platform for residents and members to discuss their priority concerns with the THEOs.

Raising the profile of the THEOs

- 6.6 A comprehensive communication campaign was used to launch the THEOs which included billboard posters at local tube/DLR stations in the borough and on the back of local buses. Furthermore, a double page spread in the East End Life was also published detailing the work of the THEOs and an interview was undertaken on the Bengali Media, Channel S. The communication campaign has also included road shows and the distribution of call cards and leaflets.
- 6.7 Members and residents raised concerns about the role of THEOs and how they differ to other enforcement provisions such as the Safer Neighbourhood Teams in terms of their powers and their priority areas. Some residents and Members had also suggested that they hadn't seen the THEOs on the streets around their locality.

It was felt that the communication strategy of the THEOs needed to be strengthened further and in particular greater communication had to be implemented around neighbourhoods where residents live under a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) as it was noted that the THEOs do not patrol these areas due to a Service Level Agreement (SLA) not being in place.

- 6.8 Discussion also centred on the need for greater community engagement by the THEOs; particularly as Members felt that some residents hadn't seen or heard of them. It was suggested that more education towards the community should go hand in hand with enforcement. Residents felt that although there was one off road shows by the THEOs in some areas of the borough, there should be a permanent display at IDEA Stores and Flagship supermarkets which advertised their work. This would give residents a greater opportunity to find out more about the THEOs in their own time.

Recommendations 1

That the Community Safety Team undertakes a new publicity campaign to raise the profile of the THEOs. This should include publicising their roles, responsibilities and achievements in local media such as the East End Life, RSL newsletters, Estate notice boards and BME media. This should also include permanent displays at Idea Stores, Leisure Centres and Supermarkets.

Community Engagement

- 6.9 At the session Members also felt that the THEOs needed to engage more with other local service providers and stakeholders in order to increase joined up and partnership working as well as sharing intelligence. This included attending Local Area Partnership steering group meetings to discuss with residents their priority concerns within their localities. In addition to this both residents and Members felt that Schools and Community / Youth centres needed to be engaged more in order to tackle local issues – particularly ASB amongst young people. Residents from the various LAP areas were concerned that there was a concerted effort of enforcement around the Whitechapel area and Altab Ali Park which was strongly being publicised but felt that other areas of the borough were at the same time being neglected.
- 6.10 It was suggested that in order to engage the community fully the THEOs needed to build a workforce that reflected the community which includes Officers from the various local BME Communities as these groups make up a high percentage of the local population. Members felt that this would aid in building bridges with some sections of the community and could generate greater intelligence which would in turn build a safer Tower Hamlets. In addition to this a workforce to reflect the community is still a Council priority with increased employment amongst the BME communities also being a key equalities aim for the Council.

Recommendation 2

That the THEOs develop relationship with the Local Area Partnership, Schools and Community / Youth Centres through presentations and visits highlighting their work and noting community concerns

Recommendation 3

That the Community Safety Team explores methods of making its workforce consistent with the Council's Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy

Impact of the THEOs

- 6.11 During the presentations, members learnt about the THEOs work on reducing ASB in the borough. A number of Members and residents were not aware of the exact remit of the THEOs which includes the ability to apply for Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). It was highlighted that there was a need to publicise the impact of the THEOs within the community and the difference the THEOs have made and could make in tackling ASB. Residents felt that the THEOs should leave signs or stickers in hotspot areas that they have visited. This would firstly allow residents to know what work is being carried out and secondly could also act as a deterrent for those that commit and are involved with ASB within the area.
- 6.12 Residents discussed at length the fact that the THEOs do not have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with RSLs and hence only patrol areas that are managed by Tower Hamlets Homes which it does have an SLA with. Members and residents felt that this was an area which should be looked at in order to improve the role of the THEOs as well as making the entire borough a safer place to live for residents. It was highlighted that projects such as Operation Stairwell could not be implemented in all hotspot areas of the borough if the THEOs didn't have access to RSL owned residential buildings. Whilst this area of work is looked into there was a need to share greater intelligence with RSLs, in particular neighbourhood managers, and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams in order to increase collaborative working.
- 6.13 Andy Bamber highlighted that the service was actively looking at developing an integrated IT system between the various stakeholders who are involved with tackling ASB locally. Although it was noted that joint tasking works well in the borough, Members felt that this was needed to improve shared intelligence and better mapping of ASB issues around the borough. It was suggested that joint intelligence reports should be disseminated and discussed at LAP steering group meetings in order to identify and resolve local issues. This would in turn actively engage residents in both identifying community concerns and also empowering them as community leaders to resolve them.

Recommendation 4

That the THEOs leave stickers in locations they have worked in to show their impact in dealing with the issue and to advise residents of what they can do if problems persist

Recommendation 5

That the Community Safety Team set up an integrated IT system to improve shared intelligence and better mapping of Anti Social behaviour issues around the borough. Joint intelligence reports should be disseminated to LAP steering groups in order to empower local community leaders to resolve issues locally.

Efficiency and working under financial constraints

- 6.14 The new national government has made it clear that there will be significant reductions in public sector funding to reduce the public sector deficit. Independent experts expect this to mean unprecedented cuts of up to 20% in local government funding – a reduction of £1 in every £5 we currently spend. This will undoubtedly affect the way that the Council operates and in turn a number of its services will be looked at. With this Members were keen to look at how the THEOs could continue to operate under such financial constraints and it was suggested that greater partnership working with other detached and outreach organisations and the monitoring of budgets against performance and comparing this against other enforcement agencies to promote value for money would be the way forward.
- 6.15 More inter-service working between the different outreach and detached services within the Council was discussed by Members in order to both promote efficiency and partnership working. This included the THEOs working much closer with those such as the Rapid Response Team which is part of the Youth Services and tackles issues such as gang violence. This would aid the notion that the THEOs are not just for enforcement but are also involved in education and intervention. In addition to this it was also suggested that the THEOs could also work more closely with other local agencies that are deployed on the streets of Tower Hamlets to tackle crime and ASB including the Safe Exit programme run by the Toynbee Hall which looks at reducing prostitution in the borough. It was considered that greater partnership and inter-agency working was crucial in the current financial climate.
- 6.16 Members had an opportunity to consider the THEOs weekly rota and discussions followed. It was highlighted that the THEOs do not have a presence on the streets on Mondays. There were concerns that this is an area which should be explored in order to increase the visibility of the THEOs and reduce ASB on a daily basis. Members felt that although with financial constraints it would be difficult to increase the hours the THEOs worked it would be useful to spread their existing hours over 7 days if possible.
- 6.17 Although Members noted the useful work the THEOs were undertaking in tackling ASB and in particular around the Whitechapel area some members were concerned that the THEOs may not be value for money in terms of the projected total annual costing of the programme measured against the programmes outputs. Members were keen that this should be monitored on a 6 monthly basis in order to ensure that value for money was being delivered, particularly in the current climate of fiscal

tightening. It was also suggested that, if possible, this should also be measured and bench marked against other enforcement agencies to see how the THEOs compare.

Recommendation 6

That the Community Safety Team continues to explore greater partnership working with Registered Social Landlords in order to share intelligence and increase collaboration around the borough

Recommendation 7

That the THEOs explore increasing working with other parts of the Council and external agencies which are involved with detached and outreach working

Recommendation 8

That the Community Safety Team explores providing a seven day coverage so the THEOs are on the streets every day

Recommendation 9

That the performance outcomes of the THEOs are measured against costs and monitored on a 6 monthly basis to ensure value for money

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Challenge Session was an opportunity for Members and residents to further understand the role of the THEOs in the borough and to identify areas for improvement. Members and residents acknowledged the need for the THEOs in tackling low level ASB in the borough and where keen for their work to be extended to include more generic enforcement issues.
- 7.2 The key areas for improvement which were identified included the need for the THEOs to raise their profile and visibility through the publication in local media of the work that they have carried out with a statistical breakdown of their achievements as well as publishing how they differentiate from other local enforcement agencies. The impact of the THEOs in reducing ASB locally needed to be publicised more to residents in order to both act as a deterrent to potential crime as well as to publicise their work.
- 7.3 Further recommendations included the need for strengthening the THEOs community engagement strategy, particularly to engage Schools and Youth/Community Centres in order to deliver joined up working in order to resolve local issues. Also highlighted here was the need for the THEOs to work closer with the LAP areas in particular sharing joint intelligence reports in order to tackle local issues. It was also discussed that the THEOs needed a workforce that reflected the community in order to engage with the community more.

7.4 With a period of fiscal tightening greater inter-service collaboration within the Council and in particular between the THEOs and other detached or outreach organisations such as the Youth Support Services Rapid Response Team and external agencies such as the Toynbee Halls Safe Exit project was needed.

8. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

8.1. The Council is required by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the executive to provide a response.

8.2. The report makes nine recommendations concerning the work of the Tower Hamlets enforcement officers. These recommendations appear capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions. If the executive were minded to accept the recommendations, then it would be for officers to ensure that they are carried out lawfully.

9. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

9.1 The majority of the recommendations do not have any immediate financial implications but may have budget implications for the future if agreed when the Council will no longer receive the same levels of government funding from 2011-12 onwards. The report describes, in paragraph 6.14, how the delivery of the service will expected to operate under these financial constraints and with greater efficiency including suggestions to monitoring and benchmarking the costs of the service.

9.2 Consequently, the reports recommendations are expected to be contained within existing current budget provision and officers are obliged to obtain financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

10. One Tower Hamlets Considerations

10.1 Councillors and Local Area Partnership (LAP) Steering Group Members as community leaders have a key role to play in service development. The session allowed both Councillors and LAP Members to strengthen and undertake this role.

10.2 There is evidence to suggest that there is a link between community cohesion and ASB in the borough. Reducing ASB in turn both promotes and develops a more cohesive community.

10.3 The report also considers the Council's Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy and the need for the THEOs programme to be consistent with this in order to better understand the community.

11. Risk Management

11.1 There are no direct risk management actions arising from this report.