

Tower Hamlets Ward Panel Action Plan Update

26th July 2021

Chris Weavers, SNB Chair

Inspector Clare Thomas – Met Police



Introduction & Overview



Councillor Sirajul Islam, Deputy Mayor,
Cabinet Member Community Safety and
Equality



Context



- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee made 11 recommendations to improve Ward Panels in Tower Hamlets
 - Tower Hamlets ward panels to develop and recruit to vice chair roles
 - Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) to incentivise learning and development opportunities for ward panels vice chairs (e.g. how to promote inclusion and engagement with seldom-heard community)
 - Change the location, time and venues so that those panels that are already well attended add two additional daytime meetings per year, and those with low attendance from residents, switch to 2 daytime and 2 evening meetings
 - LBTH Public Realm representation and attendance to ward panel meetings
 - Have a Youth Council representative on the SNB to enhance inclusion and better understanding of diversity
 - Local authority to lead on a borough-wide marketing campaign to publicise ward panels
 - Collaborative approach by the SNB, ward panels and the Police to publicise the visibility of ward panels
 - Strengthening the trust between the Police and the ward's residents
 - Police prioritisation of attendance of ward panel meetings, as the fundamental purpose is to hold the Police to account
 - Develop a list of community safety acronyms to facilitate better resident understanding of key terminology
 - Mayor to lobby Home Office for more resources for 101 service



What has changed?



- There have been several changes in the way that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) approach ward panels and how priorities are set since the Ward Panel Action Plan was agreed.
- There are plans in place to standardise the way that ward panels work, to promote best practice and to support panels to improve where they are not functioning as well as they might.
- A new Ward Panel Members Handbook has been issued containing comprehensive guidance as to what a ward panel is and how a ward panel should operate. This has been provided to Committee for the purpose of context.
- The handbook outlines how ward priorities are set, what the SNT officer's roles and responsibilities are, and that each ward should have up to three priorities with at least one of focusing on violence.



Ward Panel Action Plan update



- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on how ward panels have been operating and most meetings have taken place online. Once restrictions have been lifted, meetings will resume when it is safe to do so in person.
- While virtual meetings has improved the attendance of some residents who have not previously attended, other long-standing members have been less able or willing to engage. This suggests a combination of physical, virtual and even hybrid meetings might be desirable.
- The action plan aims to ensure ward panels are more inclusive and representative of the community. However, raising awareness during the past 18 months has been hindered due to the pandemic: with face-to-face contact and leaflet delivery actively discouraged.
- All ward panel meetings are advertised on the MPS website and on social media: Twitter and OWL.
- 6 out of 11 actions are RAG rated green: marking them as completed. The other 5 recommendations have either been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic or are on target with minor issues affecting completion. The Lansbury ward project is an example of actions affected by COVID restrictions resulting in no update being available this at this time.
- There remains an aspiration to hold a 'Ward Panel Conference' when Government restrictions allow.

