


Cabinet 29 July 2020	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Denise Radley, Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community	Classification: Unrestricted
Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels Scrutiny Action Plan	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum, Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, Youth and Equalities
Originating Officer(s)	Filuck Miah Corporate Strategy and Policy Officer, Ann Corbett Divisional Director for Community Safety, (Community Safety and Substance Misuse)
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Forward Plan Notice Published	4 June 2020
Reason for Key Decision	Impact on Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 2 – A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in; outcome 7 – People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled.

Executive Summary

This report submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels in Tower Hamlets and focusses on how resident engagement (seldom heard) can be improved and provides an action plan for implementation.

The Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) has a statutory responsibility for making arrangements for obtaining the views of the community and victims of crime on matters concerning policing in London.¹

It's important to note that Neighbourhood Ward Panels are not Council, but Police led and that they are independently run by residents with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). The Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) is funded by MOPAC and plays a key part in the Police and Crime Plan (PCP) 2017-2021 agenda. This commits MOPAC to support the work of SNBs and provides funding for those (Community led and decision making) structures that hold local policing to account.

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/governance-and-decision-making/mopac-decisions-0/public-engagement-funding-201920>

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the report of the scrutiny challenge session on Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel and agree the action plan in response to the report recommendations.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 During the 2019/20 Municipal Year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's annual work programme had identified the need to examine reasons for low participation and engagement from seldom-heard residents with Met Police safer neighbourhood ward panels and how this can be improved.
- 1.2 The Council's annual resident survey (ARS)² (surveyed 1,104 residents). Findings suggest that crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) has remained for 2018 – 2019³ the top personal concern for the borough's residents.
- 1.3 The enquiry remains consistent with the Mayoral priority and Council's strategic plan⁴ e.g. priority 2 – A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in; outcome 7 – People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour is tackled.
- 1.4 Implications of low engagement suggest that it can lead to a loss of public confidence in the police. The challenge it leaves for the police is that it will be difficult to predict changes to the community profile, needs and priorities. Additionally, there will be increased vulnerabilities around threat, risk and harm, services becoming less responsive and unrealistic public expectations.
- 1.5 Ward panel engagement influences the design and delivery of services from the outset. This supports the police to deliver and meet the priorities set by the ward panel. Ward panel engagement should be considered as a core element of local community policing activity. Effective engagement can also operate as an enabler for fostering social responsibility.
- 1.6 This report seeks the endorsement of the Mayor in Cabinet for the Metropolitan Police safer neighbourhood ward panels challenge session recommendations and its related action plan. Through the implementation of the action plan many of the issues identified in the challenge session will be targeted and improved.

² https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Annual_Residents_Survey_results_2018.pdf

³ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/2019_ARS_Briefing_Paper.pdf

⁴ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Strategy-and-performance/TH_Strategic_Plan.pdf

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides an evidence base for improving seldom-heard resident engagement with Met Police safer neighbourhood ward panels.
- 2.2 To agree to recommendations highlighted. All recommendations are achievable within existing resources as outlined in the action plan.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Community safety remains a key Mayoral priority e.g. Priority 2: *A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in*. Our Council, along with local Police and the borough's Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) remain of the view that ward panels are an essential piece of the puzzle in delivering community policing.
- 3.2 The scrutiny challenge session was commissioned (as part of OSC's work programme) to investigate the reasons why seldom-heard residents faced difficulty in engaging with the Metropolitan Police safer neighbourhood ward panels.
- 3.3 The scope had also identified several key reasons for justifying the investigation of this topic. These have been identified as the following: low resident engagement with ward panels; low awareness of the Online Watch Link⁵ (OWL) system; low awareness of enforcement activities and community improvements and resident's perception of feeling unsafe. The challenge session's focus was to review and understand the seldom-heard residents experience of engagement with community safety. The challenge session is underpinned by two key questions:
 - How can participation of seldom-heard groups be enhanced?
 - How can residents be empowered to improve safety in their own neighbourhood?
- 3.4 Listening to local seldom-heard residents' views suggested that the safer neighbourhood ward panels did not have reflective representation of the ward; that there was low engagement from young people and therefore the function of the ward panels failed to address a key stakeholders' views on community safety given the level and significance of youth violence, crime and ASB in Tower Hamlets. The challenge session findings further ascribed the challenges around inequalities for seldom-heard groups on barriers e.g. English as a second language; level of general education; local involvement with ethnic minority women, social class division between wealth and those living in poverty, levels of employment.

⁵ <https://www.owl.co.uk/met/>

3.1 The challenge session suggests eleven practical recommendations for the council and its partners for improving local safer neighbourhood ward panels. The recommendations focus on improving better engagement and reflective representation on ward panels i.e. young people involvement, training, improving trust between the Police and ward residents, developing a comms approach for publicity of ward panels, lobbying for additional resources. The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 **Recommendation 1:** Tower Hamlets ward panels to develop and recruit to vice chair roles, focussed on building representative participation.

Recommendation 2: MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Police and Crime) to incentivise learning and development opportunities for ward panel vice chairs e.g. how to promote inclusion and engagement with seldom-heard community

Recommendation 3: Changing 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

Recommendation 4: Public Realm representation and attendance at ward panel meetings

Recommendation 5: Establishment of a Youth Council representative on the Safer Neighbourhood Board as part of inclusive and diversity agenda

Recommendation 6: Local authority to lead on a borough wide marketing campaign to publicise ward panels

Recommendation 7: A collaborative approach by Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB), ward panels and the Police to publicise ward panels.

Recommendation 8: Strengthening trust between the police and the ward's residents e.g. SNTs to lead and implement action-focussed minutes and jointly developing (at ward panels) a cultural framework of co-produced solutions.

Recommendation 9: Police prioritise attendance at ward panel meetings, as the fundamental purpose is to hold the police to account.

Recommendation 10: Local authority to develop a meaningful breakdown of community safety acronyms list to facilitate better resident understanding of key terminology

Recommendation 11: Mayor to lobby Home Office for more resources for 101 service

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Challenge session had considered and factored in PSED (2011) when developing engagement with the seldom-heard residents. The recommendations are drawn from the views captured from those residents (representing the seldom heard groups) which include improving the participation of seldom heard residents with the Metropolitan Police safer neighbourhood ward panels.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 The recommendations and service action plans are made as part of the OSC's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the Council as part of the best value implications
- 5.3 Many of the recommendations in this report relate to wider benefits of having good public engagement in terms of avoiding financial costs associated with enforcing the law, detecting crime and processing offenders. Ward panel engagement influences the design and delivery of services from the outset with aim of delivering crime reduction.
- 5.4 The report highlights the proactive approach to engaging with seldom heard residents with the challenge session as part of its compliance with the PSED 2011 as well as the legal requirements (in the context of engagement and views of local people) from the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011⁶
- 5.5 The report recommends public realm to have a presence with the safer neighbourhood ward panels and considering the environmental factors which can exacerbate community safety concerns though there
- 5.6 The Metropolitan Police safer neighbourhood ward panels are independent of the Council and is resident led with a focus on holding to local police to

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/contents/enacted>

account. There are no direct risk implications arising from the report or recommendations.

- 5.7 The report relates to police services that have frequent contact with potential vulnerable adults. Although there are no direct safeguarding implications from this report or 'action plan', all stakeholders must remain mindful of potential safeguarding issues during the implementation of the recommendations

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications emanating from the Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel Scrutiny Action Plan.
- 6.2 Costs associated with the implementation of the recommendations will need to be managed within the existing budget resource.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council is required by Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements which ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with that 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, as appropriate, in connection with the discharge of any functions.
- 7.2 The report seeks the approval of the action plan which sets out the Council's response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review into improving resident engagement with the Metropolitan Police safer neighbourhood ward panels.
- 7.3 The recommendations in the plan can be carried out within the Council's powers. The Council is able to exercise its general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to implement the action plan for the benefit of the authority, its area and persons resident or present in its area.
- 7.4 The Council is required when exercising its functions to comply with the duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, namely to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The report refers to various actions in the review that address equality considerations.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel Action Plan
- Appendix 2: Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: Working in genuine partnership with seldom-heard residents to make our communities safer

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- None.

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