

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 26 July 2011

Present:

Councillor Douglas Auld (Chairman)
Councillor Kate Lymer (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Harry Stranger, Peter Fortune, Kathy Bance,
John Canvin, Jane Beckley, Gordon Norrie and
Richard Scoates

Katie Chaplin, Judith Cross, Cora Green and Mariam
Ogunwale

Also Present:

Councillor Tim Stevens J.P.

STANDARD ITEMS

119 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

None

120 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stranger declared a personal interest in Item 9b as the Secretary of the Conservative Club Orpington.

121 CONFIRMATION OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS REPRESENTING BROMLEY YOUTH COUNCIL

Although the Chairman had not been advised prior to the meeting 2 representatives of the Bromley Youth Council attended the meeting for the purposes of becoming co-opted members of the committee.

The Chairman welcomed Katie Chaplin and Mariam Ogunwale to the meeting where he proposed, and Councillor Fortune seconded their co-option onto the committee.

RESOLVED that Katie Chaplin and Mariam Ogunwale are co-opted onto the Public Protection and Safety Policy Development and Scrutiny committee representing the Bromley Youth Council.

122 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

There were no questions from Councillors or Members of the Public.

123 MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SAFETY PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28th JUNE 2011

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee held on 28th June 2011.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June be agreed.

124 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman provided an update to the Committee. He reported that 2 items that were to be scheduled for this meeting; Review of Vulnerable Adults service and Partnership Budget would be coming to a future meeting. This was due to the fact that Colin Newman; Head of Community Safety had been taken ill and was in hospital. Other officers would pick up these issues for future meetings. Jim McGowan and Jackie Goad would be standing in for Colin as an interim measure. In Clive Davison's absence Jim McGowan was deputising for him at the meeting.

He also asked Bromley Borough Commander, Charles Griggs, to give an update on policing in the Borough;

Commander Griggs explained that the review of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams was still underway. In July Sergeants would be required to apply for their own jobs. It will then be decided who would be appointed and to which teams they will be appointed too. The preference panel would be sitting on 5th September. It was envisaged that the officers would be in place shortly after. He also outlined the timetable for the PCSO's who were applying to become Police Officers. 82 had applied but not all would be selected. Those that were would be assessed over the next 6 months. There would then be a selection and training process and it was hoped they would be in post in January 2012. Therefore there would be no decline in PCSO numbers on the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) before January 2012 and when the successful PCSO's did leave they would be replaced by PCSOs being transferred to the SNTs from other units.

125 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members considered matters arising from previous meetings.

The report on the Drug Action Team would be coming to the September Meeting.

The issues surrounding ASBO's was currently with Central Government. Once there were developments to report this would be brought to a future meeting.

With regard to the Fire Reduction Officer Members were informed that the Director, Portfolio Holder and Andrew Holcombe from the fire service had been in discussion over the suggestion they put forward at the previous meeting; that this role was incorporated into the post of the 3 Safer Neighbourhood Officers. One of these Officers, Amanda Davis, addressed the officers giving an outline of how this would be incorporated into the current role.

With regard to the £15,000 this would not need to be drawn down now unless officers felt that it was needed for a specific project. Any requests would be brought back to the committee before the Executive were requested to release the funds.

RESOLVED that matters arising from previous meetings be noted.

HOLDING THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO ACCOUNT

126 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

There were no questions from Councillors or Members of the Public submitted prior to the meeting.

Members did ask about the Public Protection and Safety Newsletter that had been produced and circulated by Suzie Clark. She addressed the meeting outlining how it had been sent electronically in the main but some hard copies had gone to Libraries and Doctors Surgeries. She was pleased to report that she had received a lot of feedback all of which was positive. She would bring all the comments together and prepare a report for a future meeting.

Members then asked the Portfolio Holder which elements of the budget he had control over and how they should be used. The Portfolio Holder outlined the areas which included Safer Neighbourhood Grants where he had allocated £40,000, out of a total available fund of £67,000, available for organisations to bid against. When asked he confirmed that organisations could bid for this money to arrange local events. There was also a Portfolio Holder fund which contained £25,000.

127 UPDATE FROM JAMES CLEVERLY - GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA)

James Cleverly, member of the GLA for Bexley and Bromley addressed the meeting. He outlined some of the changes that were taking place including the structural changes to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. The decision to reduce the number of Sergeants in the teams was not popular but necessary.

He reported that during the Olympics local policing would be reduced in order to provide the number of officer required for the games.

After the Olympics a number of officers, who had completed 30 years service and therefore were able to draw their Police pensions, would be leaving the force. The numbers of officers would remain the same but the level of experience would be lower.

He went on to cover the changes in the Police due to the phone hacking allegations. Following the resignation of the Deputy Commissioner John Yates, Bernard Hogan-Howe would be the interim Assistant Commissioner. The interim Commissioner role would be filled by Tim Godwin.

Cressida Dick would be head of Counter Terrorism on a temporary basis.

128 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SAFETY PORTFOLIO - PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Committee noted and agreed decisions taken by the Public Protection and Safety Portfolio Holder since the Committee's last meeting on 28th June 2011.

RESOLVED that the decisions be noted.

129 PRE DECISION SCRUTINY OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORTS

A) BUDGET MONITORING 2011/12

The Committee considered a report which gave an updated on the latest budget monitoring position for 2011/12 for the Public Protection and Safety Portfolio based on expenditure and activity levels up to 31st May 2011. This showed a balanced budget.

Members asked two very specific questions relating to the budgets, in the absence of the Finance officer the Director agreed to come back to members with the answers.

The Chairman asked, as there was a balanced budget would there be any room to make savings. In response the Director said that it was for Members and Officers to scrutinise the budget but it was too early in the process to be able to identify if any savings could be made.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder is requested to endorse the latest 2011/12 budget for the Public Protection and Safety Portfolio.

130 LICENSING FEES

Cllr Stevens (Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Safety) had requested a report following the identification of a need to review licence fees proposed in the Service Review undertaken by the Organisational Improvement Team and reported to Cabinet on 13 May 2011.

Members considered the report. They noted the proposed increments and that they were in line with other authorities and national guidance.

Some concerns were raised that the fees went up in April and were being increased again. In particular there were concerns that small, rural businesses such as riding stables were being increased.

They also wanted to see gambling establishments' licenses increased more but officer explained that these licenses were governed by national statute so increases were limited.

The Committee noted that the statutory fees under the Licensing Act 2003 which account for approximately 75% of the licensing team's fee income had not been increased since 2005. The chairman asked if the Portfolio Holder would consider writing to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and local MP's seeking their support for the increase in the licensing fees.

The increases would take effect from 1st October.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder is recommended to endorse:

- 1. The fees for the Gambling Act 2005 licences and permits are set at the suggested levels**
- 2. that other licence fees are set at the suggested levels**
- 3. that the fees are reported, on 28th September 2011, to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee**
- 4. that the fees are effective from 1st October 2011**

131 OUT OF HOURS NOISE SERVICE - SAVINGS OPTIONS

Members considered a report which provided details of the review of the Out of Hours Noise Service in support of the Cabinet's decision to action the policy options outlined in the Organisational Improvement Group's review of the Public Protection Division.

The out of hours service is broken down into three distinct areas. From 5pm – midnight officers respond to all complaints and provide residents with the flexibility of officers visiting them at home to carry out noise monitoring, etc. They also operate a call out service from 5pm to 8am where a single officer reacts to “emergency” complaints. On Saturday nights a dedicated Party Patrol operates from 10pm to 4am to respond to complaints about party noise.

Members considered 4 options:

Option 1 – Discontinue the out of hours service (saving £34k)

Option 2 – Reduce the Party Patrol service (saving 9k)

Option 3 – Joint working with the Metropolitan Police (saving 9k)

Option 4 – maintain the current level of service.

Members agreed that this was an important issue for residents and that the out of hours service was well known and respected. They did not want to see the service cease.

They did note however, that during the nice weather the number of noise complaints had risen. Since the weather had been less clement complaints had dropped.

They could see the benefit of the officers preferred choice of option 3 however they had concerns that there may not always be a special constable available. Charles Griggs explained that whilst he could not guarantee a special constable as they were volunteers and so could not be compelled to work he felt that with the number of “special” he had currently that the system should work well. They supported this option. The Chairman felt that a 3 month trial was not long enough and requested that this be extended to 6 months.

There was also a suggestion that part of option 2 be trialled; in that the party patrol could be reduced in January and February. However the Chairman felt that Option 2 should be considered once the trial of option 3 was completed.

Officers confirmed, at the suggestion of members, if at any point during the trial it did not appear to be working then it could be stopped and the service reviewed.

Further reports would be brought to the committee to update members.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The options are noted**
- 2. Option 3 is run for pilot period of 6 months with a caveat that it can be stopped at any time if appears not to be working**
- 3. Option 2 is considered after the pilot of option 3**
- 4. Update reports are brought back to the committee March**

A) PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

132 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2011/12.

The two items that were not able to be considered on this agenda; the review of vulnerable adults and the Partnership budget would be included on the September agenda.

The work programme appeared twice on the programme for September so this would be amended.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme, including the above additions and amendments, for the Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee be approved.

133 SCHEDULE OF VISITS

At the last meeting the clerk had been tasked with arranging the long awaited visit to SLAM.

The proposed dates, 15th September at 12 noon and 27th September at 10am were circulated and members indicated their preferred date. Members of the Adult and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny and the Adult and Community Services Portfolio Holder as well the ward members of the 2 adjoining wards had also been invited.

The visits could take a maximum of 12 per visit. Once all the members on both committees have indicated their preference the clerk would finalise the details with SLAM and circulate a brief outline of the visits.

In addition to the Slam visit the Head of Food Safety extended an invite to members to accompany officers on inspections. This would be on a one to one basis and members were asked to let officers know if they wished to attend an inspection. This would be helpful in giving them an understanding of the process ahead of an item on food safety that was due to be considered on the September agenda.

The next visit to be arranged would be to a drug treatment centre. Dates would be arranged for October or November and it was hoped that these would be circulated at the September meeting.

The Meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Chairman