

Establishing Barnet's first Safer Neighbourhood Board

Introduction

This paper sets out Barnet's proposal to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to establish the new Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board (Board) as set out by the Mayor of London in his election manifesto 'Fighting Crime in London' in 2012. This document draws on the strengths of the proposals presented by CommUNITY Barnet and Barnet Community Safety Engagement Group to a MOPAC facilitated workshop held in Barnet on 21 October 2013.

The Mayor has made a commitment to setting up a Safer Neighbourhood Board in every borough by 2014.

Delivering our proposal

This proposal has been drawn together following the MOPAC facilitated workshop held in Barnet on 21 October 2013 and chaired by Barnet Council's Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement. The MOPAC representative asked participants to nominate themselves or their organisations to attend a meeting to agree on how best to establish Barnet's Safer Neighbourhood Board. It was agreed at this meeting that a steering group would be set up and chaired by CommUNITY Barnet which would combine the CSEG and CommUNITY Barnet proposals into a single document and to set into motion the process to begin the establishment Barnet's Safer Neighbourhood Board.

Further information about CommUNITY Barnet and Barnet Community Safety Engagement Group can be found in Appendix 1.

Guiding principles:

Our approach to establishing this new Board will be guided by the following principles:

- the Board should be democratically appointed, recruited fairly and be firmly embedded in the Barnet community
- the recruitment process for the membership to the Board will be done locally and transparently to ensure that membership reflects both Barnet's diverse communities and the ring-fenced positions set out in the Mayor's manifesto
- the recruitment process for the Board will be overseen by CommUNITY Barnet due to our role as an executive member of the Barnet Safer Communities Partnership and the Barnet Partnership Board
- that decisions and priorities of the Board will be set by those communities most affected by them
- to set in place governance arrangements which would ensure that Barnet's Safer Neighbourhood Board could be administered locally and free from political influence

Recruiting to the Board

CommUNITY Barnet proposes to use the same successful volunteer recruitment campaign that it used to recruit volunteers for Healthwatch. This would be done as follows:

- Set up an independent recruitment panel with representatives from Barnet CSEG and FORAB¹. The panel will be chaired by Barnet Council's Head of Community Safety
- Develop a role profile for the community representatives on the Board
- Advertise these roles through CommUNITY Barnet's extensive engagement tools including the website, e-newsletters, newsflash, member updates, children and young people's e-bulletin, Healthwatch Barnet's membership distribution, social media outlets, Barnet Boroughwatch network and through the local press
- Invite individuals to contact CommUNITY Barnet to advise them of their interest and to complete a simple template setting out their experience, their interest in the role and their time commitment
- CommUNITY Barnet will invite these individuals to attend a briefing session with the Borough Commander and Barnet Council's Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Safety
- Subject to public interest it may be necessary to implement a more rigorous selection process such as interviewing prospective candidates – this will be explored after the closing date
- Successful candidates will be notified by CommUNITY Barnet
- CommUNITY Barnet will be responsible for developing an appropriate induction process in consultation with the Borough Commander and the Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement

Appendix 2 summarises our proposed timeline.

Composition of the Board

We believe Barnet's Safer Neighbourhood Board should act as the operational arm of the Safer Communities Partnership whilst being firmly embedded in the community. To ensure continuity of corporate memory from Barnet CSEG we actively encourage CSEG members to apply for one of the positions set out below through the recruitment process: We propose the Board should be composed as follows:

Community Representatives:

We are keen that Barnet's first SNB should clearly reflect our diverse communities. We recognise it would be impractical to have standalone representatives from each of the protected groups as defined by the Equality Act 2010, but we also recognise that in a city like London people have a number of identities by which they describe themselves. There will be a maximum number of 5 places set aside for community representative.

Voice of the Victim/Managing Complaints

In his manifesto the Mayor proposes not only to monitor complaints but also to hear complaints made by victims. The focus of the Board would be on ensuring that victims' complaints were monitored; identifying common themes and concerns and raising these with the Borough Commander and his or her Senior Leadership Team. We propose that a place be preserved for the representative on the Safer Neighbourhood Board from a victim support service.

Independent Custody Visitors:

Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) is a statutory responsibility for MOPAC and there are national standards and guidelines that need to be followed. Barnet has a vibrant ICV programme with a number of trained volunteers visiting custody suites in the Borough. ICV visits must always be carried out in pairs and each

¹ FORAB – Federation of Residents Associations in Barnet

custody suite should be visited once a week. This would make it impractical for Safer Neighbourhoods Board members as envisaged by the manifesto commitment to undertake these visits.

We propose that there would be a position reserved for the Chair of the ICV Panel on the Safer Neighbourhood Board. This will need to be reviewed should the Metropolitan Police Service introduce custody suites covering more than one Borough.

Independent Advisory Group:

Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) were introduced by the police across the London area in response to the Macpherson Report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence. IAG members are individuals from various communities to whom the Borough Commander can turn to for advice on specific policing operations. Whilst belonging to communities they do not act as community representatives and the Borough Commander understands the extent of this group. Locally the IAG is administered by Barnet Police.

We propose that there would be a position reserved for the Chair of the IAG (or their delegate) on the Safer Neighbourhood Board.

Youth Participation:

Youth participation is a growing area in Barnet. CommUNITY Barnet has recently engaged a Youth Engagement Office who will work closely with the local authority's 'Voice of the Child worker.' Together these two roles support Barnet's Youth Board. In addition, CommUNITY Barnet coordinates and facilitates the Children and Young People's Network.

We propose that a place be reserved on the Safer Neighbourhoods Board for at least one youth representative nominated by the Children and Young People's Network.

Barnet Residents:

Barnet is a large borough with one of the most successful neighbourhood watch schemes in the country. At present there are over 700 neighbourhood watches staffed by active volunteers with an excess of 30,000 members.

Barnet proposes that a position be reserved on the board for the Chair of Barnet BoroughWatch.

Ward Panels:

It is proposed that the Borough Commander will propose representatives from the Ward Cluster Panels.

Chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board

We propose that the Chair of the Board be recruited from within the Board members. The process for the election of the Chair will be overseen by Barnet Council's Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement to ensure that the elections are held fairly and without prejudice.

Role of the Board

Monitoring Performance and Measuring Confidence

A key function of the Safer Neighbourhood Board is to monitor the performance of both the police and the Barnet Safer Communities Partnership. Using publicly available data and any information provided by MOPAC, we propose that the Safer Neighbourhood Board should produce crime reports for its public meetings focusing on the priority crimes set out in Barnet's Community Safety Strategy. The Board's Administrator needs to be a member of the Partnership's performance management group and the Chair will be an executive member of the Community Safety Partnership Board.

Communications

Managing public reassurance and communications needs to be driven by the Safer Neighbourhood Board as public concern about crime remains disproportionately high compared to the actual levels of crime. At present there are no established mechanisms for cascading messages of reassurance. For example during the 2011 riots it was the close working relationship between the local authority, police and voluntary, community and faith organisations coming together in haste and using their independent networks. This methodology was repeated during the recent incident involving the fire on the Somali Bravanese Welfare Association community centre.

The Safer Neighbourhood Board needs to develop a comprehensive communications strategy setting out how messages can be sent to individuals groups and businesses using both electronic, verbal and postal mailing. There are a number of social media outlets which can be accessed and CommUNITY Barnet proposes that as keen advocates in the use of social media, particularly for real-time communications the Board sets up its own social media outlets. The use of social media has the added benefit of sharing information way beyond our usual cohort.

All the minutes of the Boards meetings will be posted on the Community Safety Partnership page of Barnet Council for public information.

Public Meetings

We recognise that in recent years there has been a tendency Met-wide to move away from the old-style police/community consultation style public meetings. However, the power of face-to-face engagement with key decision makers cannot be ignored. In Barnet, events organised either by the Police, Barnet BoroughWatch or the local Community Safety Engagement Group have been well supported illustrating the appetite of local people to engage in this way. However, to make these events to be of strategic value we suggest that these public meetings need to be aligned to both the local and strategic community safety priorities of the borough and informed by the Strategic Assessment.

Public meetings need to be seen as a partnership between the community, police and the local authority. More importantly, it is important for Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board to be able to challenge both the Borough Commander and the Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement on performance in a public forum.

The Safer Neighbourhood Board will be holding at least 2 public meetings per year together with a series of engagement events across the borough. These will be held after consulting with key stakeholders to make sure that we coordinate our efforts and reduce the risk of 'engagement fatigue' of interested and passionate residents.

Stop and Search

Stop and Search in Barnet has not been the enormous cause of friction between the police and young people as it has been in some other boroughs. However, in the recent past – most notably whilst the Prevent Strategy was being actively implemented meant that some communities felt targeted by police attention. The lack of 'community style summits' meant it was difficult for these communities to raise their concerns in a constructive and systematic way.

Local accountability of Stop and Search is very important. We would like to propose that the new Safer Neighbourhood Board once established should explore models of engagement which will help to increase trust and allay fears through a Local Stop and Search Group. Barnet currently does not have its own Stop and Search Group.

Conclusion

We are of the opinion that the new Safer Neighbourhood Board has to start from scratch. We believe there are no bodies, groups or organisations in Barnet who could simply be 'dragged and dropped' into the Mayor's framework at the present time. CommUNITY Barnet is skilled at setting up and establishing new organisations. Barnet CSEG was well placed with local communities to offer insight and understanding on matters relating to community safety and community re-assurance. It has since wound up on 15 January 2014 but has played an instrumental part in developing this proposal. By combining the expertise, contacts and skills of both organisations we believe we have the expertise, skills and infrastructure in place to make this happen and ensure that Barnet has a high calibre, well-functioning Safer Neighbourhood Board by 1 April 2014.

Context

In his election manifesto *'Fighting Crime in London'* the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson proposed to reform borough-based community engagement with the introduction of Safer Neighbourhoods Boards. He said this would be accomplished by merging existing borough community engagement groups with the Metropolitan Police Service's Independent Advisory Group (IAG) structure.

The Safer Neighbourhoods Board would be expected to establish policing priorities for each neighbourhood. Safer Neighbourhoods Boards would also have other new duties that would include:

- hearing complaints from victims of crime,
- undertaking the role of "independent Custody Visitors", and
- ensuring that all boroughs have panels of residents as sounding boards for the newly expanded Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Who are we?

CommUNITY Barnet is a medium sized charity limited by guarantee. As Barnet's local infrastructure organisation (LIO) for the past 40 years we understand the changing nature of the local communities living, working and studying in our borough and how they want to actively contribute to Barnet continuing to be a successful, safe and enterprising borough.

Our primary role is to support and empower the local voluntary and community sector so they can most effectively respond to the needs of their users. To achieve this we encourage and facilitate voluntary action, empower organisations and groups to make a difference to their community and broker relationships between the sector and other commissioners and providers.

In addition we work with public authorities to enable them to understand the unique value of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. We believe CommUNITY Barnet is uniquely placed to act as a natural conduit in facilitating an effective two-way relationship between public sector and the voluntary/community sector.

Over the past two years we have been hosting the highly successful Barnet BoroughWatch and the administration for Barnet Community Safety Engagement Group.

Barnet Community Safety Engagement Group (CSEG) is funded by the Mayor's office for policing and Crime (MOPAC) and is a forum for liaison between the community and the police. The CSEG has the direct involvement of Barnet Police, the local authority and other agencies. Membership consists of over 50 local voluntary and community organisations.

Agreeing our approach

Approximately one dozen people expressed an interest and attended a meeting at CommUNITY Barnet's offices on 4 November 2014. Other members of the steering group include CSEG and the Federation of Barnet Residents' Associations. This paper sets out the Barnet approach.

As organisations committed to being inspirational leaders we want to use our involvement in Barnet's Community Safety Partnership to oversee and recruit members of Barnet's diverse communities to serve on the new Board. We acknowledge that the Mayor of London has a democratic mandate to introduce

Safer Neighbourhoods Boards. CommUNITY Barnet is an executive member of the Board and CSEG currently holds observer status.

In addition, CommUNITY Barnet is responsible for overseeing and delivering the Healthwatch Barnet consortium through 9 charity partners and 36 volunteers and will bring this experience as evidence of its successful track record to this proposal.

With whom do we engage?

CommUNITY Barnet has always attempted to be a model of good practice in matters relating to community engagement across all communities. As a membership organisation (with at least 600 organisations) we focus on building relationships and partnerships across protected groups including children and young people, frail elderly and disabled people from across care groups. We have recently established a new Refugee and new migrants forum. Our delivery of Healthwatch Barnet has helped us to build links with local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people resident in the borough.

Barnet BoroughWatch has been hosted by Community Barnet for the past two years and through their 30,000 participants we have access to local citizens actively committed to ensure Barnet remains a safe and successful borough.

Across these different engagement mechanisms and partnerships CommUNITY Barnet estimates that it can reach at a minimum 50,000 of Barnet's residents. We believe this credential alone gives us the confidence to suggest that we would be well-placed to recruit a diverse and representative group of people to the Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board.

Establishing Barnet's first Safer Neighbourhood Board - proposed timeline

Date	Activity	Comments	Responsibility
October 2013	MOPAC Workshop	Workshop developed and designed by MOPAC	MOPAC representative
	Barnet Safer Communities Partnership Board	Presentation of SNB Proposal for consideration	
November 2013	Agreement of Safer Neighbourhood Board Appointments Panel	Update on MOPAC meeting to be sent to Borough Commander, Barnet Council , CSEG and Community Barnet	SNB Steering Group/CSEG (administration)
	Establishment of Barnet SNB Steering Group	Draw up Terms of Reference	
December 2013	Recruitment of community representatives	Draw up role profile/application template for community representatives	
		Advertise through CommUNITY Barnet's extensive networks	
		Send a press release to the local press	
		Invite candidates to inform CommUNITY Barnet of their interest	
January 2014	Recruitment of community representatives	Meet with Barnet BoroughWatch and CYPNet to agree representation	
		Advise candidates to complete application form	
		Appointments panel approved by Barnet Community Safety Partnership Board	
		Proposal to establish Barnet's first Safer neighbourhood Board to be presented Barnet Community Safety Partnership Board	
		Barnet CSEG formally wound up (15 January 2014)	MOPAC duly advised
	Recruitment of statutory appointments	Invitations and meetings to be set up with all statutory representatives as set out in MOPAC guidance	SNB Steering Group/CSEG (administration)

Date	Activity	Comments	Responsibility
February 2014	Informal meeting of all the board members	First informal meeting of the board to discuss governance issues/arrangements/operating budget	CB administration
	Appointment of Administrator	The CSEG Administrator has agreed to support the SNB until it recruits its own administrator.	CommUNITY Barnet/ MOPAC
	Inaugural meeting of the Barnet's shadow Safer Neighbourhood Board	First meeting of shadow Board to be chaired by LBB Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement to agree governance arrangements e.g. bank account, recruitment of Chair, constitution etc	SNB Steering Group/CB (administration)
	Appointment of SNB Chair	Election of Chair overseen by LBB Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement	LBB
	Liaise with MOPAC about funding arrangements	Identify projects for which funding could be secured from the new funding pot to commence in April 2014 including operating costs/start-up costs eg website and publicity	Shadow SNB
March 2014	Formal launch of Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board	Launch event Local press Publish membership list of SNB Publish engagement and communications strategies Publish engagement diary	Shadow SNB
April 2014	Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board formally operates	Chair takes up executive membership on Safer Communities Partnership Board	Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board