

# THE WORK OF THE BARNET SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The remit of this paper was to show how we interact with other organisations and others, and how we can contribute to the delivery of the Barnet Community Safety Strategy 2015/20, but I have broadened its scope as this is the first time I have been invited to present a paper to this Board and therefore some material is for information in order that members can be appraised if the work we carry out. This paper needs to be looked at together with the Barnet Community Safety Strategy 2015/20 as there are cross references to it at various stages.

1.2 The Barnet Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) was set up in April 2014. SNB's were established in all London boroughs in order to give the local community a greater say in policing matters under an initiative from the Mayor of London and the London Assembly which was translated into reality through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to whom we report. In Barnet the setting up was managed by the local authority. Community Barnet worked to set up the SNB based on the guidelines from MOPAC.

1.3 The SNB has the remit to call the local police to account if there are issues affecting the Barnet community. In 2014/15 we held six meetings and two public meetings. In the current financial year we will hold four meetings – three have already taken place and we have also held one public meeting with a second due to be held in the Spring of 2016. It is expected that the SNB will liaise with the Borough Commander to establish local policing and crime priorities, which align to the MOPAC priorities, monitor police performance and confidence. It should be added that although set up by the local authority the SNB it is not political in any way and although two politicians have reserved seats on the Board this is not to secure a political focus for the SNB and it remains apolitical.

1.4 The SNB also has the task of identifying local priorities, engaging with the police and community on these issues and ensuring the best value for money for Barnet residents. It is a strategic body and takes input from all relevant stakeholders and then defines policy. It is not an organisation that investigates one – off cases.

## 2. **Terms of Reference**

2.1 Ensure communities are more closely involved in problem solving and crime prevention

2.2 Have a broad remit to reflect MOPAC's broader responsibilities whilst at the same time respecting local people's knowledge and expertise of the locality

2.3 Have a greater reach with frequent refreshes of ideas and views

2.4 Achieve greater coherence between different engagement mechanisms to improve public scrutiny of police performance and crime reduction.

2.5 Deliver value for money by targeting funds on issues of local concern which prevent crime.

## 3. **Composition of the SNB**

3.1 The SNB itself is designed to reflect the diverse communities we have in Barnet and also includes some organisations who have reserved seats on the Board.

3.2 Community Representatives – a maximum of nine designed to reflect the number of protected groups under the Equality Act 2010. These are elected posts.

3.3 Voice of the Victim /Managing Complaints – This is a difficult area as there may be tensions between unlawful use of police powers and criminal activity. Victim Support therefore has a reserved seat on the SNB but personnel may change.

3.4. Independent Custody Visitors - At present the Chair of Barnet's ICV Panel has a reserved seat on the SNB. If the Met introduce custody suites covering more than one borough then this position will be reviewed.

3.5 Youth Representative – There is one reserved seat the person nominated by Barnet Children and Young People's network.

3.6. Independent Advisory Group – Such groups were introduced by the Met across London in the light of Macpherson Report on the murder of Steven Lawrence. IAG members are drawn from various communities whom the Borough Commander can turn to for advice on policing issues. There is a reserved position for the Chair of the Barnet IAG on the Barnet SNB - this is not the same as a community representative.

3.7. Barnet Residents – This brings Neighbourhood Watch into the process. A position is reserved for the Chair of Barnet Boroughwatch. In addition Barnet Police have divided the borough into ward clusters and a representative from each cluster attends the SNB meetings with a remit to report back to the ward panels and also to feed back concerns to the SNB. There are four such representatives.

3.8. Two other seats are reserved places on the SNB for persons by virtue of their position. These are the head of community safety in Barnet – currently Cllr. David Longstaff and also the London Assembly member for Barnet and Camden, currently Andrew Dismore AM. In addition, the Borough Commander or his appointed representative is invited to each meeting and I am pleased to report that we have had good support from Mr Usher and his team.

#### **4. Developing Effective Communication across the Community Action Panels**

4.1 These bodies are effectively the ward panels as we know them. There has however been some difficulty in disseminating information from the SNB. This was partly because the ward cluster representatives were unsure of their role. As all were nominated by Barnet Police in the first instance and the Borough Commander wanted to eliminate this problem as it was becoming a weak link in the communication process. Subsequently, Supt. Steve Wallace has provided all of them with a job description on which they have had the opportunity to comment and I understand meetings have been held between the cluster representatives and the area inspectors to ensure that they were all aware of their roles. It is important for the four members concerned that their role is agreed and we need the cooperation of Barnet Police to see that this happens. The SNB works at a strategic level so it is important for us to be aware of local issues to see if there is a trend in the borough that merits SNB intervention. After a long learning curve we are now better placed than before to deliver that aspect of communication but work still needs to be done.

## 5. Communication with Other Organisations

5.1 As stated earlier there are many diverse groups included on the SNB and if they have concerns these are raised at our regular meetings. There are however other organisations not represented on the SNB who make a valuable contribution and this is reflected in the programme of projects, the funding for which has been approved by MOPAC. Such organisations include:

5.2. Get Outta the Gang – covers a whole suite of projects under Stop and Search

5.3. Barnet YouthShield supported by Community Barnet – covers a project on awareness of abusive relationships aimed sat 14-18 year olds. This is part of the Healthy Relationships Peer to Peer Project which was a direct response to a consultation carried out by YouthShield.

5.4. Barnet Community Transport (Rolling Base) - a project aimed at providing pop up Play Clubs to reduce anti-social behaviour in Barnet as well as reducing neighbourhood crimes

5.5 In addition we are also in close contact with Barnet Boroughwatch and support their project on crime prevention which was the subject of our public meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September. We also keep in close contact with Barnet Police and I have had a number of meetings with them in order to clarify particular issues of concern to the SNB. We are also in close contact with CommunityBarnet who provide our administrative support and who are always supportive without being invasive.

5.6. The appendix to this paper outlines the projects for which the SNB has received funding and is for information. I do not wish to repeat what is mentioned there, as this would make this presentation too unwieldy. I hope however that it shows we are actively pursuing policies in line with our remit from MOPAC for the benefit of Barnet residents.

5.7. The SNB is continually looking at ways to communicate with other stakeholders as well as Barnet residents and we have so far held three public meetings at which members of the public have had a chance to ask questions and hopefully receive satisfactory responses.

## **6. How the Barnet SNB can contribute towards the 2015/2020 Community Safety Strategy**

6.1. Although under the aegis of MOPAC there is no reason why the Barnet SNB cannot contribute positively towards the delivery of the Community Safety Strategy.

### Strategic Objectives

6.2. Under (1) we are already trying through our contacts with the police and our public engagement to make residents feel more confident about responses to crime and ASB. This is, however not a quick fix but we feel that we can make a positive contribution. Under (2) this is a matter we have started and it is our aim together with the police to ensure all residents are informed about community safety and much of our effort will be spent on this issue. On (3) the SNB had noted that there was an issue with hate crime and proposed a mobile app to encourage reporting of such incidents. We were however advised by MOPAC that as it was a London wide issue no specific funding could be allocated to us and therefore the project was never taken forward. The SNB is therefore aware of the issue and will co-operate with other stakeholders on this matter On (4) we are trying through many of the projects approved by MOPAC to reduce this and as yet it is not possible to say how successful our efforts will be as these projects are only now starting. On (5) we cannot directly contribute but can advise if information comes to our attention on this issue. On (6) we have in the past received monthly figures from Colindale as well as a data pack from MOPAC before each meeting. Due to resource constraints however this local source of information is not now available so we now have to rely exclusively on the MOPAC data pack. Whilst statistics do not always tell the full story it is a basis for discussion but in order to achieve this objective this we require help from Barnet police particularly in relation to staff numbers allocated to Barnet and the extent to which AID removes officers from the borough to police events in Central London. We can identify the issue, hold the police to account but physically beyond that we have to rely on the police to deliver for us. We also have to bear in mind that the funding reductions within the Met has led to a reduction in effectiveness in particular the reduction of PCSO and Police Staff members is adding to pressures on the police but they can say more than I can about how it is affecting them both now and in the future. What is important is that if there is a sustained adverse

trend in unresolved crime this is brought to the attention of Barnet police as soon as possible.

6.3 As I mentioned earlier one consequence of cutbacks in the police is that we no longer receive local statistics as the staff who prepared them are no longer in post. On a wider issue we cannot fathom who is behind the cutbacks. We suspect the Home Office has set parameters of spend which has been transmitted to City Hall but whether MOPAC or the Commissioner is responsible for the cuts to neighbourhood policing we do not know. MOPAC should be able to advise on this matter. Our main concern is the future of neighbourhood policing. With the huge cutbacks currently under consideration not least of which is the possible abolition of PCSO's we are concerned that neighbourhood policing is no longer seen as a priority for the Met but to Barnet residents it is vital. We know that a decision on the future of PCSO's was deferred until later in the year but the whole issue of resources for neighbourhood policing is causing us concern.

#### Outcome 1

6.4 Beyond what I have already said on this issue our scope to deliver on ASB is difficult. We do not have the funding for a project on this matter and as we are all volunteers it makes information gathering difficult. If, however, we do receive information that would be of assistance it would be made available to the BCSPB. On crime generally the stakeholders on the SNB and Barnet police are committed to see a reduction in the MOPAC 7 suite of crimes. We will work together to try and deliver this working with the BCSPB.

6.5. For information the MOPAC 7 list of offences is as follows:

- Burglary
- Criminal Damage
- Robbery
- Theft from Motor Vehicles
- Theft/Taking of Motor Vehicle
- Violence with injury
- Theft from Person

#### Outcome 2

6.6 Where the SNB can help here is through communication directly with the public and heightening their awareness of community safety issues. An example of this was our most recent public meeting which focused on crime prevention with particular emphasis on Burglary. This meeting was held in collaboration with Barnet Boroughwatch and had the support of Barnet police. Many of the community concerns expressed can also be addressed by the SNB. In addition as mentioned earlier the SNB did a lot of preparatory work on hate crime and in particular an app which was intended to encourage more reporting of these crimes but as a London wide issue MOPAC felt it should be handled centrally. These are but two examples where we feel we can make a useful contribution to delivering the Strategy.

6.7. As we are all facing testing times regarding funding it seems a pity to duplicate work. I would therefore suggest that a small group be set up to examine which areas in this part of the Strategy the SNB should handle and which should fall to the BCSPB. In this way tasks are not duplicated and we can achieve value for money as well as sharing our results with each other. The SNB is ready to participate and my Deputy Chair is willing to participate with me in any discussions. It is however for the BCSPB to decide if it wants to travel down this route.

### Outcome 3

6.8. We can assist here at a local level through public meetings, raising awareness in conjunction with the BCSPB. On domestic violence, this has been identified as an area of concern and one of our projects deals with this issue and how best we can overcome this. I am happy for this Board to see the results of this project but as funding was only recently approved there is no data to share with you as yet. We can assist on this matter but our resources of both time and money are limited but there is no reason in principle why we cannot share information to ensure that we obtain a clear picture as to what is happening in the borough.

6.9 The issue of hate crime has already been mentioned and we are willing to work with the BCSPB on this but as I have already said our plans for this are no longer in place as MOPAC have identified this as a central issue and perhaps they may wish to comment on this aspect of the Strategy.

### Outcome 4

6.10. We currently have a total of five projects in this area which have now received funding. The aim in a nutshell is to make young people and their parents aware of the dangers of gang culture and look at ways in which such issues can be resolved and thus decrease the level of violence among the youth of the borough. Our Deputy Chair, Temi Mwale has been heavily involved here and she like all of us is committed to reducing the level of violent youth crime we see. Much of what is in the Strategy is covered by these projects and what I can do is to make the results available to the BCSPB or at least a progress report so this Board can see if any other action is required. Alternatively, if my idea of a sub-group is approved it could examine these projects to see if they met all the needs of the Strategy and recommend a course of action to this Board to fill in the gaps which may be identified.

6.11. We have not carried out any work on child sexual exploitation and I am not sure if we have the expertise among our members to assist on this beyond an awareness campaign but again, this depends on funding and I am not sure if MOPAC would regard this as a core function of the SNB.

#### Outcome 5

6.12. This has not been a main area of debate within the SNB but we are aware that drug misuse can result in other crimes being committed. The SNB can contribute anecdotally to see if there are trends using our contacts with the local police and with MOPAC. If required, we will share any information with this Board.

#### Outcome 6

6.13. This has already been identified by the SNB as an area of major concern among local residents. We are working closely with Barnet Borough watch and through them neighbourhood watch schemes. What has emerged is the perception that the police are not performing as they might although the statistics do not bear out this assumption. The SNB seems to have more questions in this area than any other and this is because of the strength of feeling among local people. We have until recently obtained local figures as well as those provided by MOPAC. I suggest that if the small group I have suggested is formed it can compare the data provided to this Board with that received by the SNB so any discrepancies can be identified and we then can both agree on a common set of figures. I would also suggest that the wider areas identified in the Strategy should be discussed between us in order to see



who is best placed to take matters forward so we do not have any duplication of work.

## 7. Conclusions

7.1. As you will have noted from the comments made in this paper there are many issues on which we have a common aim. The SNB itself reports to MOPAC but at the same time it must and does look at local policing issues which affect Barnet residents. I hope therefore that this paper demonstrates that we are willing and I feel able to contribute effectively towards the delivery of the Strategy in areas that fall within our remit. As regards confidence within the community we have had a long learning curve but I hope that our work programme will lead to more confidence within the community but we do need active neighbourhood policing in order for good intentions to be translated into true confidence.

7.2 As we are all volunteers naturally our time is restricted and we do not have the level of funding to do everything we would like to do but I think that as a first step there should be discussions comprising members of this forum and the SNB to look at the Strategy to see who is best placed to take the lead on issues which we both cover. To keep it manageable I would suggest two or three from both this forum and the SNB. As the paper demonstrates there are areas on which both the SNB and this Board have the same concerns and require the same information. We should try therefore to avoid duplication of information. I also hope that this paper clarifies the role of the SNB for those who do not know much about us.

Roger Kemp  
Chairman  
Barnet SNB  
October 2015