

Council – 8 December 2015 – Agenda item 15.1

Opposition Motion in the name of Cllr Arjun Mittra – Protecting our Emergency Services

Amendment in the name of Cllr David Longstaff:

Delete all and replace with...

Council notes concerns about the state of emergency services in London.

Council therefore welcomes the recent announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the overall policing budget is to be protected.

Council notes previously announced budget pressures of £400 million for the Metropolitan Police that still need to be found could still result in the loss of all London's Police Community Support Officers, with the Met Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, questioning whether PCSOs offer the best value to the public and the taxpayer. Council notes, however, that no firm proposals have been advanced.

In the last Parliament the Metropolitan Police had to save £600m from its budget. Council recognises that since 2010 the number of officers and PCSOs in Barnet has fallen, with safer neighbourhood teams cut from 1 Sergeant, 2 PCs and 6 PCSOs down to just a PC and a PCSO dedicated to each ward, while more officers work flexibly across a the neighbourhood cluster in support of the dedicated team; and led by a sergeant and an inspector. During this period overall crime is down 12%, with over 3,000 fewer offences in 2014/15 compared to 2009/10 and priority crimes like burglary and robbery are down 24% and 47% respectively when compared to 2012.

Council also notes efforts to make better use of resources, with over 2,600 officers across London being moved from back office and support roles to frontline duties since 2012, increasing the proportion of officers engaged on the frontline from 89% to 92%.

Council believes changes to policing methods, allied with the development of Barnet's Safer Communities Partnership, the Integrated Offender Management Programme, intelligence-led policing and the multi-agency response used to tackle issues like Anti-Social Behaviour, have contributed to this reduction in crime.

Council is aware of plans to remove 13 fire appliances in a bid to save £8.1m for the Fire Service. Council notes that these engines have been out of service for two years already, as part of the Brigade's strike contingency arrangements, and that none are located in the vicinity of Barnet. During this time the service has continued to meet its response time targets. Council further notes that returning the 13 appliances to service would improve average London-wide response times by around 4 seconds for the first engine and around 18 seconds for the second. Council understands that,

instead, the Brigade Commissioner wants to reinvest some of the savings in increasing the number of staff available to crew Fire Rescue Units.

Council recognises the significant downward trend in both the number of fires – which fell below 20,000 across London for the first time last year – and in fire-related deaths.

Council notes the announcement by the CQC that following a recent inspection of the London Ambulance Service they have rated it as ‘Inadequate’ and recommended it be placed in special measures. Whilst the report gives the service a ‘Good’ rating for its care of patients, it highlights a number of areas that require improvement.

Council expresses its concern at these findings, but notes that actions are already being taken to address issues around staffing levels, leadership and vehicle standards.

Council notes the pressures on our emergency services. After the recent tragedy in Paris, it is all the more important to recognise the importance of our emergency services and the need for a strong emergency response. Council recognises that the emergency services have recently been taking part in major exercises such as Operation Strong Tower to test their response and resilience in such a dreadful eventuality. In light of this threat, Council also notes the importance of implementing the Government’s Prevent Strategy.

Council calls upon the Leader and the Chief Executive to communicate to the leaders of the emergency services in Barnet our continued support and appreciation for the work they do and to reaffirm our commitment to work with them and our other partners across the public sector to drive further improvements for residents of the borough.