

WALTHAM FOREST POLICE COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE GROUP

12th July 2006

GEORGE MITCHELL SCHOOL
FARMER ROAD LONDON E10 5DN

2.

Representing	Name
Chair – WFPCCG	Steve Williams
Vice-Chair – WFPCCG	Cllr. Graham Sinclair JP
Honorary Treasurer - WFPCCG	M. A. Malik
Members	
Cann Hall Area Residents Association (CHARA)	Philip Dundon
Older Persons Forum	Gwen Williams
South Chingford Community Council	Edward. Gold
Independent	Sandra DaCosta
Waltham LBWF	Cllr K. Rayner – Deputy Leader of the Council
Waltham LBWF	Cllr B. Wheatley
Borough Commander - Metropolitan Police Service	Chief Supt. Mark Benbow
Forest Homes	Brian Wilks
Forest Homes	Margaret Wilks
Independent	D. Francis
Waltham LBWF	Cllr. Laura Sheppard
Waltham LBWF	Cllr Afzal Akram – Cabinet Member Community Safety
WF Islamic Association	N. A. Butt
Waltham LBWF	Cllr. M. Jovcic
Waltham LBWF	Cllr. L. Philips
Waltham LBWF	Cllr. Fais Yunis
Waltham LBWF	Cllr. R. Sweden
Head of Community Safety	Head of Community Safety
Independent	Independent
W.F. Tamil Sangam.	W.F. Tamil Sangam.
Bengali International	A. Khundkar

Asian Community Action
W.F. Victim Support
Gurdwara Sikh Sangat London East
Independent
Independent

Khaliq Mian
Brian Whyte
Harpal Singh Sehmbi
Jane Welfare-Peck
D. Francis

Also Present:

Jane Bond MPS Property Services Division, Chief Inspector Iain Larnder;
Superintendent Tony Dawson; Inspector Jane Connors

Residents Present:

There were approximately 63 residents at the meeting.

20. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jennette Arnold, Sylvia Poulsen, Paul Marlow, Richard Southall, Emma Gracey, John Lawal, Barry Smith, Maiphy Richards, Anita Carter, Alastair Duncan and Gulam Thakor.

21. MINUTES

The Group is asked to agree the minutes of the meetings held on 15th March 2006.

22. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Group received a presentation from the Police Representatives on the introduction of the Safer Neighbourhood Scheme as it relates to the Borough of Waltham Forest.

The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows:

Question: What is being done to address the apparent high levels of crime in the Higham Hill area?

Answer: A proactive team will be in place by the beginning of 2007 and details of this team will be made available to Members in the near future.

Question: The Market Office is not always open which is of concern to residents given the significance of the locality. What should Members do if it is not open?

Answer: The Office is closed Sunday and Monday but there will be occasions when it will be closed at other times. Therefore, if Members should find that the Office is closed then can they contact Inspector Jane Connors.

Question: What has been done to provide diversionary activity for young people?

Answer: An Inspector is now in post tasked with looking at engaging young people.

Comment: The Joint Council of Asian Organisations (JCAO) are organising a youth event on 16th July to which all Members are invited. Those requiring further information should speak to Mr. Afzal Malik after the meeting.

Question: Is this event connected to the Zahid Mubarak Trust?

Response Yes Zahid's family have established a Youth Trust to support events to encourage greater understanding and eradicate the ignorance that racism feeds upon. The JACO event is all about combating the "cancer" of racism. This "cancer" still exists and it is hoped that one-day racism will be eliminated, after all we are all the same, we live, we work, we die, regardless of colour or creed!

Question: What can be done about residents concerns regarding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Flaxen Road?

Answer: It would be best to deal with this issue outside of the meeting. However, whilst the Police and their partners are working with the community to deal with ASB it should be stressed that evidence is needed to resolve such situations.

Question: Whilst welcoming the robust activity now being undertaken by the Safer Neighbourhood Team won't those teams with more staff simply displace crime and anti social activity into the Wards whose teams are not yet up to the full compliment of officers? Would it not make sense to deploy staff more evenly across the borough?

Answer: All the teams' need to be built up and therefore it would not be right to "cherry pick" officers from certain teams so as to bolster those teams currently awaiting their full compliment.

Question: Have the vacancies for all the Safer Neighbourhood Teams been filled?

Answer: Yes.

Comment: For those members of the community working with the police there is a need for trust and mutual understanding.

Comment: It is good to note the work that has been sponsored by the North Chingford Community Council during the summer for young people. All Members are aware of the significance of providing such services for young people.

Question: What is the policy with regard to feeding back information to those members of the public who contact the police about criminal activity or anti-social behaviour?

Answer: Feedback is provided if the information is not sensitive or restricted. The MPS considered feedback an important element in developing their partnership with the local community.

Question: Concern has been expressed that the various railway lines running through the borough if not properly “policed” will provide easy access for burglars wanting to get into those properties adjacent to the lines.

Answer: The MPS and British Transport Police are working together to address this issue.

Comment: Some residents in Falmer Road have expressed concern about the incidence of vandalism in that area.

Response: Can those residents speak to the officers after the meeting?

Question: How do the Safer Neighbourhood Teams co-ordinate with the police switch board?

Answer: The teams are now linked through a new Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) including the use of email.

Comment: There seems to be a poor level of response to incidences of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour in the Coppermill Lane area. Plus there is little information on what is being done to eradicate crime and disorder.

Response: There was a distribution of information in that area six months ago but officers are happy to discuss with residents any concerns that they may have.

Question: My husband was assaulted and required to attend the local station even though he is a wheel chair user.

Answer: That is an appalling story such a victim of crime should have been visited at their home as a priority.

Comment: Within the Tamil Community there is a concern that a minority of young Tamils are behaving in an anti social manner.

Response: Officers will speak to you after the meeting?

The item was closed at this point.

23. ACCOMODATION STRATEGY

The Group received a presentation from the Police Service Representatives on the MPS Accommodation Strategy as it relates to the Borough of Waltham Forest (Inc. Opening hours of police stations). The Group noted that the MPS Strategy aims to provide appropriate properties in the correct locations.

The Group noted that the development of a custody suite on the Hainault Road site will mean that Waltham Forest will be one of the first Boroughs to benefit from having such a facility.

The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows:

Comment: The Police are to be commended for the improved access to Walthamstow Station.

Comment: It is interesting to note the comments about the accommodation being in the right place. As the Safer Neighborhood teams have operated successfully out of Leytonstone Police Station. 10,000 local residents have signed a petition to keep Leytonstone Station indicating that they feel that this is the appropriate location.

The future of borough accommodation is a key one for residents across the borough and addresses the fear of crime. It is a key element of the police services partnership with the local community. How will the relocation of the police officers to the Waltham House site represent value for money for residents?

Mavis Vasey on behalf of local residents then handed the above-mentioned petition to Chief Superintendent Mark Benbow.

Response: Leytonstone Police Station does not actually serve as accommodation for that many officers and by relocating to Waltham House we will be moving staff into a crime hot spot and in accommodation better suited to modern requirements. Leytonstone is no longer able to provide appropriate accommodation, it is too costly to run and there are a number of health and safety issues that need to be addressed if the building was to remain in use. The police service if it is going to be in a position to finance the new accommodation in the right location and of the right quality will have to sell off its older premises.

Question: This issue has been raised with four previously borough commanders. Leytonstone has often been closed requiring those residents wishing to report crimes having to travel to Leyton. Also if Leytonstone is such a successful police base why do we have the levels of crime that we are now experiencing in Cann Hall and Cathall Wards? There have been three firearms incidents in the area involving police officers. Also the station is a warren of small rooms unfit for purpose. However, residents are concerned that if the police station is sold it could then be used for inappropriate purposes.

Answer: We would not let a property be sold if its intended use was deemed to be inappropriate. Also we would not sell it until we have a new location for our officers.

Question: The Police need to look at this relocation in terms of its partnership with local residents. There are two other petitions circulating which illustrates the strength of local feeling on this matter. Why cannot the existing building be modernized to meet the needs of its occupiers?

Answer: If it was feasible to modernize the building for modern use we would but buildings such as this can only be altered within the terms of the preservation orders placed upon them.

Question: The Waltham House location is a crime hot spot but it is located in a one-way system that would not be easy access.

Answer: Waltham House will not be housing the response teams they are located on the Uplands site and we have to locate staff were the crime is. The site will also be a base for foot patrols and not vehicle based response units.

Question: Ten years ago residents felt that the police were making it difficult to use Leytonstone so as to push services to other locations. The Waltham House site has poor access and limited car parking.

Answer: In 2000 there was a shift in the MPS accommodation strategy with the establishment of the MPA. The MPS now has an accommodation crisis that precludes the continued use of many of its older properties which have in some instances been in use for 176 years.

Notwithstanding that the MPS will take on board the comments of residents regarding future usage of this site. In addition, any change of use will be subject to a planning application and residents can lodge objections at that stage.

Question: Has a feasibility study been undertaken on a modernization of Leytonstone and it should be noted by the MPS that residents are concerned that their Ward teams will no longer be based in the area that they patrol.

Answer: A feasibility study has been undertaken and the site is too small for continued use. However, the Borough Commander would be happy to consider suitable premises identified by residents. The changes will not happen for another year so there is still time to look at viable alternatives.

Question: Decisions seem to be made before residents are told anything. The MPS seems keen to sell of its birth right. It would be good to see in writing what is actually planned so that the community can understand. Has the MPS looked at the use of modern technology to utilize its old buildings? Further consideration needs to be given to this issue.

Answer: We cannot give assurances that building will not be used for certain purposes but we will ensure that communities are properly consulted. In particular Jennette Arnold the local MPA Link Member has been very active on behalf of residents regarding the changes in use of police property.

Question: Will the public access to the proposed Custody Suite in Hainault Road be via the High Road?

Answer: That will be considered at the planning application stage and the decision will be based upon a traffic survey and the estimated traffic volumes based upon other similar facilities.

Question: It would be good if a front counter facility could be built into the Hainault Road complex to replace that one in Francis Road?

Answer: It is too early to comment upon that idea.

The item was closed at this point.

24. POLICE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In accordance with agreed procedures the Group received a presentation from the Police Representatives highlighting performance matters in general terms as they relate to the borough of Waltham Forest.

The main points of the discussion may be summarised as follows:

Question: How are the performance targets set?

Answer: They are set in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Authority.

Comment: Residents have expressed concern that there do not appear to be sufficient staff at the times of greatest need.

Response: More staff have now been roistered at the times of greatest demand to deal to issues of concern to residents.

Comment: It would be good if the Direct Dial Numbers for key officers could be circulated so that residents could contact the right officers quickly.

Comment: There has been concern expressed in the media about the sale of knives.

Response: Operation Blunt is a pan-London knife crime initiative which aims to reduce the number of knives on London's streets. The operation aims to arrest offenders and those carrying knives on the streets, whilst raising awareness about the severe consequences carrying knives such as being physically hurt, arrested or convicted. So far 60 knives have been retrieved from the Borough's Streets.

Comment: With regard to front counter provision in 1994 it was proposed to close the front counter at Walthamstow. Residents oppose such a closure then and would do so again.

The item was closed at this point.

25. STOP AND SEARCH GROUP

The Group received and noted a presentation on the introduction of a Stop and Search Group within Waltham Forest. Members were advised that volunteers were required to sit on such a Group to meet on a regular basis to look at Stop

and Search issues. They would also be involved in the training of officers. The main points of the discussion are summarised below:

Comment: The objective of such a Group seems to be focused on the black, minority and ethnic communities

Comment: There is concern at the way residents from the black, minority and ethnic community are treated by some police officers. This does not send a positive message to young people.

Comment: It would be good to know what the time commitment would be for the volunteers. People will be more willing to buy into supporting the Group if they know what is required of them.

Comment: Members of such a Group must listen to residents concerns.

A number of those present indicated their wish to volunteer to serve on the Group and passed their details to the officers.

The item was closed at this point.

25. IMPROVEMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNITY AND POLICE CONSULTATION IN WALTHAM FOREST

The Group received and noted a report that outlined the way forward for the Group based on the discussions of the Working Party and identified the best ways of achieving sustainable systems that will increase the capacity of the community members serving on the WF PCCG. This means that they would not only be informed of local crime and disorder reduction activity, but also, that the Group would take a more proactive role in monitoring and actively influencing local plans and priorities

The main points of the discussion on this item may be summarised as follows:

Members observed that Waltham Forest Police Community Consultative Group (WFPCCG) is one of the oldest police community engagement group's in London; set up in 1979 it predates the Scarman Report and has successfully worked with the wider community in Waltham Forest. It has well attended meetings with an active membership comparable with other PCCG's, older Black; Minority and Ethnic (BME) groups are well represented.

However, recent discussions within the Waltham Forest Police Community Consultative Group (WF PCCG) have acknowledged the historical role and structure of the Group has now been superseded by certain developments. Firstly in the Safer Neighbourhoods programme, and in a far greater emphasis on community consultation throughout the work of the Metropolitan Police Service.

As a consequence, during December 2005 a Working Party was convened comprising Steve Williams (Chair of the WFPCCG), Chief Superintendent George Clarke, the then Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety Barry Smith and the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) Link Member Jennette Arnold.

The intention of this meeting was to look at ways to identify the best mechanism for the WFPCCG to evolve in order to fulfil its role in acting as a strong and influential link between the communities of Waltham Forest and the Police.

At this meeting a number of reports were considered which looked at mechanisms designed to provide the means of better communication between the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP); Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and the local community engagement group. These had been produced by Professor Mike Hough; Kingston Community & Police Consultative Group; Islington Community Safety Board and the Enfield Community and Police Consultation Group.

The Working Party acknowledged that in Waltham Forest at present the WF PCCG maintains a shape that is still easily recognisable as a PACE Section 106 Group. However, whatever shape the WF PCCG decides to take, it will need to engage with Safety Net and establish and maintain a structure that enables it to take soundings of public opinion in a way that ensures adequate representativeness. The development of the new structure would be critical in developing best practice and attracting future funding.

It is envisaged that the WF PCCG will be re-configured as a Community Safety Board to undertake an extensive Borough wide strategic role. (This differentiates it from localised forums such as the Safer Neighbourhood Panels and tactical forums like the Independent Advisory Group) The idea would be so as to develop the formal relationship with Safety Net that the WF PCCG would assume those functions currently vested in the Board of Safety Net. The new body would then be responsible for holding Safety Net to account on behalf of the community. Members would be drawn from the current Safety Net Board and those local stakeholders who have an experience of either living or working in the Borough and can look at crime and disorder in a strategic fashion.

Those existing WF PCCG Members not engaged through the Community Safety Board will be engaged through their membership of the other more localised forums. In particular it is envisaged that they will provide cadre of members around whom the Safer Neighbourhood Panels could be established. As it is recognised that there is a premium to be attached to such individuals who are genuinely representative of their local communities, and representativeness must be an important goal for any Safer Neighbourhood Panels. They will provide an important element of community engagement at operational level and will help ensure that ward-level engagement meshes smoothly with borough-level engagement.

Choices about levels of community engagement necessarily in this new structure involve compromises between the desirable and the possible. There are important choices to be made about the sort of community engagement to which the Community Safety Board should aspire. There are also clear limits to people's preparedness to give up their time to participate and a limited pool of skilled people at borough level with the interest, time and capacity to engage

constructively in the process of community engagement. Members of the new Community Safety Board would be expected not only to ask questions of and pose problems to the Police, Council and their partner agencies, but also supply ideas and propose solutions for such problems' resolution.

In developing any form of community engagement, the Working Party recognised that it can be very difficult to strike the right balance between representativeness and 'reach' into the community, on the one hand, and dealing with people who have the motivation and skills to participate in engagement, on the other. Whilst having in certain instances to rely on a self-selected group of consultees this has the potential for significantly misrepresenting community views. This can also result in the undesirable over-representation of 'the usual suspects' in the process

However, while accepting these points, the Working Party felt there is a strong case for achieving representativeness by building upon the pool of available consultees, rather than starting from scratch with a new system. In other words, one should not marginalize those who have already developed some knowledge and expertise in engaging with the police.

Accordingly the Working Party wanted to see an emphasis being placed on capacity building, so that, whilst initial membership may feature the above-mentioned 'usual suspects', in the medium-term they will be required to support their less experienced peers in taking over this representative function from them.

Accordingly, it was unanimously **AGREED** that:

- The WF PCCG would be reconstituted as a Community Safety Board (CSB) and assume those functions currently vested in the Board of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership - Safety Net. With the new body therefore holding Safety Net to account on behalf of the community (Proposed Structure is set out in **Appendix A**).
- The first of the new style group meetings be set for January 2007 (to link with the Annual General Meeting of the WF PCCG).
- The Chair of the WF PCCG seeks clarification on the future functions of each body. Including the suggestion that the new CSB holds it's self to account.

The item was closed at this point.

26. WORK PROGRAMME

The Group were invited to suggest items for inclusion in the work programme for the forthcoming year.

The following topics were identified:

- Role of the Stop and Search Group; and
- Independent Advisory Group.

27. FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the following revised schedule of dates for Group meetings up until 28th March 2007

- 25th September, 2006
- 23rd November, 2006
- 18th January, 2007; and
- 28th March, 2007

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There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 10:00 p m.