

WALTHAM FOREST COMMUNITY SAFETY BOARD

21st November 2007

2.

Council Chamber, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road Walthamstow

Present

Borough Commander	Mark Benbow
MPA Representative	Jennette Arnold
Crown Prosecution Service	Antony Salmon
HM Court Service	Huw Richards
London Fire Service	Darren Dovey
WALB Community Council	Mike Cave
Leytonstone Community Council	Jane Brueseke
South Chingford and Highams Park Community Council	Peter Jaggs
Walthamstow West Community Council	Abid Hussain
N Chingford Community Council	Kevin Wyatt - Lown
Leyton and Whipps Cross Community Council	Steve Williams
Community Group Representative	Neil Collins (VAWF)
Community Group Representative	Margaret Wilkes
Race and Equality Group	Afzal Malik
Disability Group Representative	Pat Bhabra
ELOP / LGBT	Maria Lin Wong
Faith Forum	Faisal Raja
Elderly Group Representative	Edith Poulsen
WF Regeneration	Phillip Dundon
Head of Community Safety	Robin Tuddenham
Community Safety Lead Member	Afzal Akram
Councillor	Richard Sweden
Councillor	Liz Phillips
Councillor	Graham Sinclair

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from

British Transport Police	Chris Horton
Community Group Representative	Brian Wilkes
Community Group Representative	Bill Ravenscroft
Victim Support Group	Chris Casey

Disability Group Representative
ELOP / LGBT

Pat Bhabra
Teresa Sharpe

Also Present

E. Hassell	Independent Group Member	Advisory
Insp. Steve Laurie	Tactical Support Group -5	
Chief Insp. Michael Dod	Tactical Support Group - 3	
Sgt. Andy Hardwick	Tactical Support Group – 5	
Sally Odde	Independent Group Member	Advisory
Catherine Burns	Resident	
Jerome Harvey	Young Advisor	
Sylvia Poulsen	Resident	
Gwen Williams	Resident	
Lyndsey Buchanan	Youth Officer	
Carmela Crute-Jones	Resident	

9 Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Graham Sinclair, the interim chair of the Board welcomed all those present.

10. Special Presentation – Use of TASAR

A presentation was made by Chief Inspector Michael Dod of the Tactical Support Group (TSG) that explained the protocol and tactics surrounding the use of TASAR weapons by Police Officers in the borough. These weapons are to be introduced for use by unarmed TSG officers on 3rd December as part of a Home Office trial. The main points of the discussions are summarised as follows.

The Board noted that on 22 November 2007 the meeting of the MPA Committee would be receiving a report that provides further details of the Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO) Conflict Management Tasar Trial, and the Metropolitan Police Service proposal to participate in the trial using Specially Trained Officers (STOs) from the Territorial Support Group. This report deals with the issues raised by MPA Members at the 25 October 2007 meeting of the Full Authority, where two reports were considered by Members:

1. Tasar Usage and its Diversity Implications, and
2. ACPO Conflict Management Tasar Trial by Specially Trained Officers.

These two reports were presented, following a report titled, "Conversion to the X26 Tasar", which was considered at the Co-ordination and Policing Committee 27 September 2007. The trial extends the use of Tasar to Specially Trained Officers in non-firearms situations. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has been asked to take part in the trial and intends to use selected officers from the Territorial Support Group. The trial will run for 12 months.

The Board noted that due to the uncertainties in the population characteristics of the increased numbers of subjects who are likely to be affected by the extended use of the Tasar concerns had been raised regarding its use and that STOs should be particularly vigilant for any moderate or serious injuries or adverse physiological responses occurring directly or indirectly from firing of a Tasar. In particular children and adults of small stature might be at potentially greater risk from the cardiac effects of Tasar currents than normal adults of average or large stature.

Accordingly, the Board indicated that it would wish to see as much information as possible on this subject to allow them to make a properly informed view on the deployment of Tasar.

Comment: The Police are often called to deal with persons who have Acute Behavioural Disorder (ABD) and would Tasars be used?

Response: The key to a successful intervention in cases of acute behavioural disorder is to seek medical assistance and remove the person to hospital where it is safe to do so. In addition, the Metropolitan Police Service Officer Safety Unit and Territorial Policing Mental Health Programme Board monitor acute behavioural disorder issues in the MPS. Whilst the protocols for dealing with Mental Health issues are reviewed with Health Service Partners and any incidents of concern are reviewed. Plus the medical care of persons arrested or in detention remains a priority for the MPS. Within the officer safety training package the importance of medical care is emphasised throughout in terms of the potential risk areas of the body to the potential damage that can be caused in use of force and restraint.

Comment: There needs to be a further debate on this issue, including the historic uses of the Tasar both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps considering the whole gamut of the options available and training provided.

Response: The training and operational use of Tasar in the UK follows approved conflict management protocols that ensure that the weapon, as with all less lethal tactical options i.e. CS spray, baton, empty hands tactics etc. are used correctly and any further actions in terms of restraint or medical needs are also applied correctly following the guidelines that have been set and agreed with ACPO and the Home Office. The use of Tasar in the UK takes place within stringent operational guidelines and assists in the safe resolution of incidents for police and the

subject. Additionally to date there is no scientific data that attributes any of the deaths that have occurred in North America directly to Tasar. The MPS have had incidents where death in custody has occurred and these have been attributable to a number of the medical issues as confrontation can lead to exertion and this in turn can lead to cardiac issues irrespective of the tactical options that have been deployed.

Question: If you did not have the Tasar how would you respond?

Answer: The Tasar is the only piece of officer safety equipment that offers distance control. It allows officers to restrain subjects without getting too close and putting themselves in range of weapons, but it also allows them to do so without using larger numbers of officers that can cause unintended and unnecessary injuries. It is a tactical option and used under the instruction of the senior officer on the scene.

11. Election of Officers

At the last meeting it was agreed to defer elections for the posts of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer at the meeting pending resolution of issues relating to membership of the CSB.

Having now accepted that these issues had been resolved the following were elected to serve for the respective posts

Chair **Mr Steve Williams**

Vice Chair **Mr Afzal Malik**

Treasurer **Mr. Abid Hussein**

Mr Williams took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting. The Board also agreed to place on record that thanks and appreciation to Graham Sinclair who had assumed the role of the Interim Chair since the final meeting of the former Police Community Consultative Group and had worked tirelessly with the other key stakeholders to bring about the introduction of this Board.

12. Metropolitan Police Authority Report

Members noted that the MPA was totally committed to both fund and support bodies such as this Board. In addition, that the potential of the Board was ably demonstrated by tonight's meeting of the Haringey Community and Police Consultative Group that was to consider an inquest report.

13. Borough Commander's Report.

The Board received a presentation from the Borough Commander highlighting performance and accommodation in general terms as they relate to the

Borough of Waltham Forest. The main points of the discussion are summarised as follows.

Comment: Concern has been expressed by the manner in which a company employed by the London Development Agency (LDA) had left leaflets protruding from resident's letterboxes.

Response: This will be raised with the LDA.

Comment: The Cathall Community Safety Group has placed on record a number of comments regarding community safety matters in that area.

Response: A dialogue will be established with the Group including attendance by officers at a future Cathall Community Safety Group meeting.

Comment: Concerns have been raised at Police response times and that contacts are not apparently being followed through by Police Community Support Officers and Safer Neighbourhood Teams after crimes have been reported.

Response: It is important the victims of crime are kept informed and that subsequent to a crime being reported the Safer Neighbourhood Team contacts them to reassure and get further feedback about the reported crime.

The Borough Operational Command have now moved C3i system which stands for Command, Control, Communication and Information and is the name the MPS have given to an organisational change programme that will help them deliver improvements to their command and control systems, communications (both with the public and within the MPS), and the way the MPS manage information.

Question: What is the position regarding the development of Police Accommodation in Waltham Forest?

Answer: Basically the Borough Command has to run a service from antiquated Police Stations that are not Centrally Located or fit for 21st Century Policing. With cell Space that is limited and inappropriate.

Question: What therefore is the vision for the future?

Answer: Single Patrol Sites for 24hour policing; a Borough Based Custody Centre; Office Accommodation with Front Counter Facilities and Safer Neighbourhood Bases.

Comment: This it would seem would be an ideal topic for consideration at a future meeting.

14. Borough Criminal Justice Group Report (BCJG)

Antony Salmon reported on the work of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in the Borough. The major points of the debate are outlined as follows.

Question: If the CPS is to be located with the Police Service how will they remain independent?

Answer: It is a mindset and not where you based that is important.

Question: What is meant by the statement a realistic prospect of conviction?

Answer: There must be enough evidence to provide a 'realistic prospect of conviction' against the defendant. A realistic prospect of conviction is an objective test. It means that a jury or bench of magistrates, properly directed according to the law, is more likely than not to convict the defendant of the alleged crime. This is a separate test from the one that the criminal courts must apply. A jury or magistrates' court should only convict the defendant if they are sure that he or she is guilty.

When deciding whether there is enough evidence to prosecute, Crown Prosecutors must consider whether the evidence can be used in court and is reliable. This means that they must assess the quality of the evidence from all witnesses before reaching a decision. A decision to drop a case does not mean that the prosecutor has decided to believe one witness and not believe another.

If there is not a realistic prospect of conviction, the case must not go ahead, no matter how important or serious it may be.

If there is a realistic prospect of conviction, the Crown Prosecutor will ask is it in the public interest for the CPS to bring the case to court.

Question: What constitutes being in the public interest?

Answer: It has never been the rule in this country that every criminal offence must automatically be prosecuted. For this reason, in each case, the Crown Prosecutor must consider the public interest in going on with a prosecution and balance factors for and against prosecution carefully and fairly before coming to a decision. A prosecution will usually take place unless the public interest factors against prosecution clearly outweigh those in favour of prosecution.

The public interest factors that can affect the decision to prosecute will vary from case to case. However, broadly speaking, the more serious the alleged offence, the more likely it will be that a prosecution will be needed in the public interest. On the other hand a prosecution is less likely to be needed if, for example, a court would be likely to fix a minimal or token penalty or the loss or harm connected with the offence was minor and the result of a single incident.

15. Safety Net Report

The Board received and noted a report from Robin Tuddenham Assistant Director Safe & Strong Communities that indicated that Priority crime in Waltham Forest is falling at a rate greater than the regional average for the first time in the last 18 months or so. However, Members asked for more time to consider this report from the Partnership and asked that it be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting.

The Board was also pleased to note that the Partnership had won an award from the Greater London Authority Mayor on Domestic Violence.

15. Public Questions

The Board received and noted a number of questions from the floor in relation to community safety activity.

Question: Will the Board be utilising the new Waltham Forest Community Safety Handbook to promote its activities?

Answer: Yes and the Partnership will also be making use of the Waltham Forest Magazine to promote community safety activity through Waltham Forest.

Question: What is the London Communities Police Partnership?

Answer: The Partnership's role is to promote and develop the best, most effective police community engagement within the thirty-two boroughs, at the pan-London level and beyond. The new Chair is actively involved in the work of the Partnership and will be updating Members on future developments.

17. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday the 24th of January 2008 at Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road E17 4JF