

Adults, Health & Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday 24th September 2015

Briefing of: Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Licensing

Contact Details: Sion Pryse x 2228
spryse@westminster.gov.uk

1 Public Protection and Licensing Restructure

- 1.1 The new structure has been operational for five months, and the most recent recruitment round has resulted in all City Inspector posts across the Public Protection and Licensing department being filled. Arrangements are underway to get all officers in post within the next few weeks. These inspectors are spread across Commercial, Residential and City Operations.
- 1.2 Both the new structure and co-location with other services has meant that City Inspectors have increased their knowledge of a wide range of issues around licensing, waste management, anti-social behaviour and environmental health work. Comprehensive training of all staff continues.
- 1.3 Demand for services remains high and as concerns emerge, they are assessed and resources deployed to priority issues through the Department's tasking process. This is reducing duplicity in effort and managing expectations.
- 1.4 Effective outcomes achieved through City Inspector activity are already being seen in dealing with licensed premises, waste hotspots, problematic commercial premises, foreign national street based activity, anti-social behaviour associated with hostels, and rubbish accumulations on private land.
- 1.5 Neighbourhood Problem Solving Coordinators are working hard to link in to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and local community networks in their areas, encouraging communities to work with the Council to resolve issues effectively. Problem solving meetings continue with key partners and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) resolving mid to longer term problems associated with anti-social behaviour, enviro-crime, waste, problematic people and premises.

- 1.6 City Inspectors are engaging with Environmental Health Officers and Neighbourhood Problem Solving Coordinators, through Clean and Safe Street audits, enabling the teams to jointly address entrenched problems identified on the street, and maximise joint enforcement activity. Businesses and residents who place burden on their local communities are beginning to experience increased enforcement. Currently, resources are being targeted towards the 'No Dumping' campaign around dumping hotspots in the North and South of the borough, and proactive work is underway to ensure businesses have appropriate waste disposal arrangements in place.

2 Community Cohesion

- 2.1 The first meeting of the Westminster Community Cohesion Commission, which I announced in my speech to Full Council in March, took place on 7th September. The Commission is designed to consider practical steps we can take locally to enhance community cohesion and reduce the risk to young people in particular of being lured into dangerous behaviour such as gang activity and radicalisation. The Commission will benefit from input from Councillors Mohammed, Hug and McAllistair who have kindly agreed to support the initiative and drive forward priority strands of work.
- 2.2 Discussion focused on three main areas.
- First, there was a healthy discussion about our collective understanding of what can make people isolated and marginalised from society and the need to ensure Westminster is a place where that doesn't happen. This is a cross-council challenge touching on everything from housing and employment status to opportunities for open discourse on cultural issues.
 - Second, the group considered the processes for identifying risks and the importance of using the eyes and ears not just of council staff, the police or other public services but also communities themselves to do so.
 - Third, the group spoke about the importance of empowering communities to ensure they have the tools to challenge disruptive behaviour but also act responsibly in terms of debates between and amongst different groups. Improving how we engage with communities and make them feel part of genuine discussion on the future of their local area and their own lives was flagged as an important issue as part of this.
- 2.3 There is a significant opportunity presented by the national focus on this area of policy. A new counter-extremism strategy will be published in the autumn and at the same time Louise Casey, former Director of Troubled Families at Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will be leading a review of cohesion policy and practice across the country. We will feed our findings and recommendations into this process and have already contacted Louise Casey with an offer of support.

3 Prevent

- 3.1 The Prevent and Schools Conference took place on Monday 13th July. The Conference, for Head teachers, Senior Leaders, Safeguarding Leads and Chairs of Governors, was hosted by Children's Services, working alongside the Prevent Teams in London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF), Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and Westminster City Council (WCC). The Conference offered attendees the opportunity to gain an understanding of the local threat and to understand how to respond to this effectively in light of the new Prevent Duty Guidance and the Department of Education (DfE) British Values Guidance. A large part of the morning was given over to schools so that they could present their own unique experiences and approaches to responding to extremism and radicalisation risks.
- 3.2 The Conference was attended by representatives from 20 schools in Westminster and positive feedback was received from attendees. It also gave the Prevent Team the opportunity to promote the suite of Prevent resources and projects that they have put together for schools' use over the coming academic year. As a result, a number of schools in the borough have requested access to Prevent resources and will be delivering Prevent projects within their schools.
- 3.3 Confirmation of funding for Prevent projects was received from the Home Office in late June. Alongside the projects to be delivered in schools, a number of other Prevent projects including the Prevent Parenting Programme will be commencing in September. The programme, based on 'Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities' seeks to improve participants' parenting skills and awareness of the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by their children. In addition, it aims to encourage better relationships between parents and children so that parents can fill the space where extremists, gangs and other negative influences try to operate.

4 Street Performing

- 4.1 Since I last reported in June, we have had a big step forward in joining-up our joint approach with the Greater London Authority (GLA) to managing street performance with the MPS; the GLA launched the programme at National Busking Day and the Busk In London Festival; and, following consultation with local stakeholders, Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA) has signed up to trial Busk In London pitches at Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus.
- 4.2 The six trial pitches are being managed by the GLA's BID-funded Busker Liaison Team for an initial 8 week period with the aim that over time the performers themselves will form into a self-managing community that works well at Covent Garden and near the Tate Modern in Southwark as the result of an earlier trial. The Busker Liaison Team has provided its duty phone number to the police, Noise Officers, performers, businesses and anyone else

interested, and is logging and responding in real time to complaints and working with the community to help resolve and avoid problems.

- 4.3 Weekly meetings are being held with HOLBA to review feedback received from its members. This feedback is then provided to representatives of the different groups of performers at fortnightly busker forum meetings where the trial pitch guidance is reviewed and tweaked as necessary.
- 4.4 So far, a positive impact is being experienced at Piccadilly Circus and the situation is better at Leicester Square when the Busker Liaison Team is on duty. As businesses had been told to expect, after an initial reduction in noise and overcrowding issues, some of the younger and less experienced acts are pushing back and trying to find ways to take advantage of the new system which is causing more problems again. This has been exacerbated by unplanned absences in the Busker Liaison Team which are now expected to be resolved.
- 4.5 Behind the scenes the agencies involved – WCC, GLA, MPS and HOLBA – are working to tie up our reporting systems and information sharing processes so that our records and processes are watertight when we start moving to the second stage of the trial which will include enforcement, using the new Community Protection Notice route, where needed.
- 4.6 Once enforcement starts to take place it is expected that there may be some degree of protesting but that the process will be seen to be fair in the long-run and the more rebellious performers will acknowledge that they need to alter their behaviour. The team is working with the UK-wide busking lobby to make sure our joint-approach is proportionate, fair and reasonable.
- 4.7 The HOLBA trials will be reviewed in late October by which time it is hoped that further trial pitches within the New West End Company and the Northbank BID areas will be in place and helping ease pressure on the initial trial pitches. The latest information can always be found at www.BuskinLondon.com.

5 Rough Sleeping

- 5.1 A borough wide intelligence street count was held in the last week of August, which is traditionally a month where we see a larger number of rough sleepers in the city due to the weather and high foot traffic from tourists. We will be holding a formal street count in September with partners from Home Office and Met police taking part and all details will be independently verified.
- 5.2 The month of August saw senior officers from City Management & Communities and Growth, Planning & Housing launch a formal working partnership to provide more inclusive and expanded operational working practices across the city to address both rough sleeping and the anti-social behaviour/street based activity. This enables a three tiered approach to the issue:

- Outreach teams leading on social care and assessment on the streets
- City Management and Hot Spot team carrying out disruption/fixed penalties for low level anti-social behaviour, utilising partnerships between teams to solve localised problems with street based activity/rough sleeping hot spots and sharing intelligence to pursue persistent offenders
- core statutory response to crimes and immigration offences by the police and Home Office

Training has been delivered and operational recording systems and risk assessments have been devised. Both teams will begin measuring the impact of the partnership in the autumn.

- 5.3 The Rough Sleeping team recently commissioned a small piece of work entitled 'Security for All'. This small service is offering training to private security teams on how to prevent people bedding down on private land, information to sign post to ensure that if an individual wants help they know where to go and finally, to increase confidence of security officers to report people sleeping rough so they can be targeted by outreach teams. There will be regular meetings and/or joint patrols with outreach workers to ensure the issue isn't being dispersed into other areas. This service fits within the strategy of prevention of rough sleeping and enabling private landowners to take action while feeling more confident in WCC supporting them when issues arise.

6 Notting Hill Carnival

- 6.1 25 officers made up of City Inspectors, Environmental Health Officers and Contingency Planning Officers attended both days.
- 6.2 Street trading licenses were issued to 34 traders utilising pitches in Talbot Road, Westbourne Park Road and Maida Hill Market. All traders were compliant of the conditions set on the licenses and adhered to the City Inspectors request for a swift close down at the end of the day. Licensed food traders operated to a good standard in respect of Food Safety and Hygiene.
- 6.3 The six static sound systems located in Westminster operated at an acceptable noise level. Where necessary Environmental Health Officers worked with operators to reduce noise levels on request.
- 6.4 Approximately 22 Alcohol warnings were issued by City Inspectors persons having in their possession alcohol with the intent to sell. Two unauthorised food stalls were closed down by officers. Six seizures were carried out by officers these included whistles, horns, necklaces, balloons, alcohol and nitrous oxide.

7 Licensing Consultation

- 7.1 A small working group of relevant members and officers convened to assess the responses to the consultation proposals and a revised licensing policy is being drafted. Subject to discussions with colleagues and advice from officers I will be presenting this draft for approval at Full Council in November.

8 Fixed Odds Betting Terminals

- 8.1 Consultation on the first stage of the revision to the Statement of Licensing Principles for Gambling commenced in August 2015 for a period of five weeks. Stage One of the revision to the council's policy relating to gambling incorporates a very minor revision to the current policy. Following the conclusion of the consultation period for this stage it is intended that the revised policy will be put forward for agreement to commence from the 31st January 2016. Stage Two of the review requires a major revision to implement a number of new policies and specific information on the local area to assist applicants completing the new requirement placed upon them by the Gambling Commission to complete local gambling risk assessments. The Stage Two consultation on the completely revised policy will be conducted later this year.