

Committee(s): Strategic Planning & Performance (Police) Committee – For information Police Authority Board – For Information	Dated: 22 February 2024 6 March 2024
Subject: Improving communications and engagement on crime and policing	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 4, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£-
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Joint report of: Commissioner of Police & the Police Authority Director	For Discussion
Report authors: Emma Cunnington, Head of Strategy and Planning. Richard Riley, Police Authority Director.	

Summary

This paper sets out a joint plan to improve communications and engagement with City communities. It provides a brief background on our legal obligations and current engagement panel structures and sets out a focus on widening engagement and improving coordination and collaboration. It outlines some ideas for changing how we run our engagement panels to achieve these aims including restructuring the cluster model or building into other engagement forums.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note this report and discuss the options

Main Report

Background

1. Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sets out the following obligations:
 - a. local policing bodies/PCCs must have regard to community views of policing in that area
 - b. police forces and PCCs must engage with communities to inform Police & Crime Plans priorities
 - c. police forces must obtain views of people in each neighbourhood about crime and disorder and make them aware of information about policing in that neighbourhood

2. The College of Policing has also produced detailed guidance¹ for how police forces and their PCCs should deliver effective neighbourhood policing supported by engagement and consultation with their communities.
3. Key principles of this guidance include: having a visible policing presence on the ground, conducting regular, transparent, and tailored engagement, effective joint-working with partners, making effective use of engagement (to identify local priorities and inform problem-solving), and to provide regular feedback and be accountable for responding to community input.
4. City Police operates a dedicated ward officer model under which named officers are responsible for clusters of City wards, in which they hold formal ward panels, conduct wider informal engagement with individuals and businesses, and hold specific responsibility for responding to and managing crime and disorder.
5. In 2023 the City Police published a new Neighbourhood Policing Strategy² which, among other measures, commits to improving two-way dialogue with communities, strengthening local partnerships, embedding a problem-solving culture, and developing the skills (including around engagement) of officers, staff, and volunteers.

Current Position

6. City of London Police and Police Authority have been exploring options to improve communication and engagement with the City's communities, and are focussing on the following priority areas:

Widening engagement

7. Our aim here is to talk to, and hear from, a wider range of people and communities in the City, including hard-to-reach groups. The small number of attendees to the current ward panel meetings, and those who tend to complete the Annual Community Survey run by the City of London Police, do not reflect the rich diversity of our communities. In the short term we will explore alternative ways of reaching our three key audiences: residents, workers and businesses.
8. In the longer term, the Police Authority will launch a new workstream to more fully map the City's communities so we better understand our audiences and stakeholders.

Improving coordination and collaboration

9. Our aim here is to better coordinate communications and engagement across the City of London Police, Police Authority, and wider Corporation (including, for example, the Safer City Partnership). The key issue is that there is not an established framework for full coordination, and this means we are not taking full

¹ [Link](#)

² [Link](#)

advantage of the scope to amplify specific messaging and initiatives, link up on joint campaigns, and generally work together most effectively.

10. In the short term, we will set up fortnightly meeting to focus on City community communications and engagement between the City Corporation and the City of London Police, similar to the weekly economic, fraud, and cyber-crime focused Strategic Communications and Engagement Planning (SCEP) group. This group will meet to discuss nearer-term proactive plans and issues, and in due course improve longer-term planning.
11. In the longer term, we will improve future planning on communications and engagement between the City of London Police, Police Authority, and Corporation – with better sharing of upcoming initiatives and more joint campaigns. We will map full communication and engagement objectives and plans in fuller detail to identify commonalities and areas of overlap.

Options for developing our approach to engagement panels

12. We are interested in exploring how we can develop our approach to engagement panels with Members to widen our engagement and improve coordination and collaboration.

Option 1: Maintain current cluster panel approach

13. In this option we would retain the current structure of quarterly meetings for the City's 6 current ward clusters³ but implement changes to make them more visible, accessible, relevant, and responsive (see Appendix 1). As other Corporation departments cannot resource this level of engagement it would remain led and focussed on policing. The disadvantage of this is many people want to discuss issues that are broader than policing and crime. It does not achieve the aims of improving coordination across the Corporation departments, or recognise the important role of Corporation preventing crime and disorder.
14. An alternative would be for clusters to be consolidated into two regions (East and West) and run bi-annually for each. This would be less resource intensive for other Corporation departments but may still not be achievable with current levels.
15. We will supplement these cluster panels with specific outreach and engagement campaigns with City workers through the Corporation's City Belonging network. For example, an awareness and education initiative on violence against women and girls which aligns with publication of our Serious Violence strategy and the priorities of the incumbent Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress.
16. We will also continue to develop our engagement with businesses through the Business Improvement Districts who are now also represented on our multi-agency Safer City Partnership Board.

³ Barbican, Bank, Fleet Street, Liverpool St, Fenchurch St, Monument

Option 2: Build on existing Corporation engagement forums and implement local surgeries

17. This option would capitalise on the audience and forum provided by the Member-led City Question Time run 4 times a year, by providing a breakout engagement panel focussing on crime and community safety. This would be in partnership with Children & Community Services and Environmental Health and any other relevant departments, before or after the session. The benefits of this approach are the ability to present as a joined up organisation and to maximise attendance through the focus of the Corporation. However, having the two sessions back to back may be a detraction for the public in terms of their time commitment. It should be noted that these events currently primarily attract residents and are Member led, whereas the panels would be officer-led. Any exploration of this as an option will require consultation with Members beyond the Police Authority Board and more detailed scoping at an officer level.
18. This approach would be supplemented by regular police surgeries where dedicated ward officers would base themselves in common spaces (eg libraries), and encourage people to speak with them individually about their concerns. We are also interested in trialling these surgeries in large businesses to test effectiveness for widening our engagement with the worker population.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. Strategic implications – By improving engagement with our communities, we will better understand public perceptions and improve our service to the public. This will help to contribute to the Policing Plan objective to keep those who live, work and visit the City safe and feeling safe. In addition, this work will contribute to the City Corporation's new Corporate Plan 2024-29 objectives including Diverse Engaged Communities, Providing Excellent Services and Vibrant Thriving Destination. Finally, by working together, the City of London Police and the Corporation will better collaborate and improve ways of working as set out in the Target Operating Model.
20. Financial implications – can be contained within current budgets.
21. Resource implications – the level of resource varies depending upon the option and would require commitment from other Corporation departments to support.
22. Legal implications – effective community engagement will support our legal obligations under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
23. Risk implications – none.
24. Equalities implications – When implementing plans under these priorities, we will continue to be mindful of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 and ensure there is no negative impact on people protected by existing equality legislation. The proposals in this report intend to improve accessibility for the whole community to engage and to better understand service needs.

25. Climate implications – none.

26. Security implications – none.

Conclusion

27. This report sets out some ideas for how to widen engagement and improve coordination and collaboration across the Corporation. In order to develop these approaches further consultation is required with officers and/or Members.

28. City of London Police and the Police Authority will continue to explore how communications and engagement can be improved drawing upon guidance issued by the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners, College of Policing and good practice elsewhere in policing. Our approach will continue to seek opportunities to maximise benefits of a coordinated approach across the Corporation, for example how we can align and improve response rates to public surveys and consultations.

Annexes

- Appendix 1 – Detailed plans to improve engagement panels

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Detailed plans to improve engagement panels

<p>Explanation – This table sets out four attributes that we believe engagement panels should have, what they each mean, and ideas to achieve these</p>
<p>I. Visible - Communities need to know about engagement panels in general and individual meetings specifically</p> <p>Options to achieve include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focussed social media campaigns, followed by regular signposting on social media channels • Making sure community leaders & heads of networks (Members, businesses, resident groups, local associations, BIDs) know about them and are directing members of their communities toward them, including with dedicated mailing lists and automatic reminders • More prominent and/or more intensive advertisement in physical spaces – on estates, in businesses, in high-footfall public spaces • Advertising and signposting via other existing messaging routes– Barbican residents newsletter, City Police community surveying platform, etc.
<p>II. Accessible – Engagement panels need to be as easy as possible to attend</p> <p>Options to achieve include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of past dates, times, locations of panel meetings to assess if there are issues with this • Periodically basing panel meetings in high-footfall locations (e.g. Liverpool St station or Cheapside), or in places where people are already going (e.g. food markets, larger retail banks, larger shops, Corporation buildings) • Make meetings shorter, and ensure they run to schedule • Explore holding some meetings online or creating online option for in-person meetings
<p>III. Relevant – Engagement panels need to be about issues that matter to people</p> <p>Options to achieve include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically hold ‘thematic’ meetings that attract people with specific concerns • Improve targeting of meetings at businesses and SMEs, who may be under-reporting crime (this may include hosting meetings in businesses) • Broadening beyond policing to enable people to discuss a range of issues
<p>IV. Responsive – People need to see and feel that we are responding to issues raised at engagement panels</p> <p>Options to achieve include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a ‘you said, we did’ format both at panels themselves and potentially online (e.g. a webpage tracker setting out responses) • Report on themes of cluster panels to SPCC • Promote successful panel-related initiatives on police and Corporation comms channels