

Minutes

Strategic Independent Advisory Group

Wednesday 18 October 2023 at 10.00am in Meeting Room G1/2, BTP Force Headquarters, 25 Camden Road, London, NW1 and via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Steve Reeves (Chair)
Dov Gerber (from 11.00am)
Lucy Kennon
Neil McLennan
Catherine Poulton

Apologies:

Kimberley Campbell-Lamb
Ritikha Wadwha

In attendance:

British Transport Police Authority Executive
Hugh Ind (Chief Executive)
Katie Stanton (Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Manager)
Alistair MacLellan (Board Secretary / Minutes)

British Transport Police
Sean O'Callaghan (Assistant Chief Constable)
Allan Gregory (Assistant Chief Constable) (from 10.30am)
Jen Crowther (Strategic Planning Manager)
Karen Wiesenekker (Strategic Head of Diversity and Inclusion)
Marco Di Paola (Independent Advisory Group Co-Ordinator)

Apologies

Agenda Item 1

1. Apologies were received from Kimberley Campbell-Lamb and Ritikha Wadwha.

Declarations

Agenda Item 2

2. There were no declarations with respect to items on the agenda.

Members agreed to vary the order of items on the agenda to reflect the availability of officers and staff providing verbal updates.

British Transport Police Policing Plan Refresh 2023/24

Agenda Item 5

3. Members received a verbal briefing on the British Transport Police Policing Plan Refresh 2023/24 and the following points were made.
 - a. The Strategic Planning Manager provided background to the Policing Plan refresh and noted,
 - i. The Policing Plan was complementary, and provided an operational arm to, the BTPA Strategic Plan 2022/27.
 - ii. The Policing Plan was set on a three-year cycle from 2022 to provide certainty to stakeholders. That said, it was subject to an annual light touch refresh to comply with the statutory requirement to adopt an annual policing plan.
 - iii. Endorsement of the current year's refresh of the Plan would be subject to approval of the Force's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan due in December 2023.
 - iv. The light touch refresh process involved stakeholder engagement throughout September and October each year, with six events based on each Force sub-division.
 - v. The refresh also took into account the wider UK policing environment, and evidence from rail staff and passenger surveys.
 - vi. The Force's 2022 passenger survey had identified priorities as sexual offences, violence and anti-social behaviour. In comparison, the 2022 rail staff survey had shown rail staff to be more fearful of being out on the rail network, with anti-social behaviour as an identified priority.
 - b. In response to a question, the Strategic Planning Manager and Strategic Head of Diversity and Inclusion reassured Members that the Force had the ability to analyse protected characteristics at both a national and local level, and this formed part of the Force response to Police Race Action Plan Workstream 4 (Not Under Protected).
 - c. In response to an observation, the Strategic Planning Manager acknowledged that priorities within the Policing Plan did not change substantively from year-to-year, albeit the previous refresh did lead to a change in safeguarding focus following Train Operating Company (TOC) feedback.
 - d. The Chair commented that the Group had the potential to offer insights into elements of the Plan e.g., on policing of vulnerable groups. The Chief Executive agreed and noted that the Strategic Independent Advisory Group should be factored into future Policing Plan consultations, as well as promotion of future Policing Plan surveys (Action).

- e. An Assistant Chief Constable welcomed proposed involvement of the Group, noting that this could only enhance stakeholder feedback and ensure stakeholder focus moved beyond industry voices. The Group also had the potential to feed into Force conversations regarding Legitimacy.
 - f. The Chief Executive continued, noting that the Plan did produce a lot of metrics. The Strategic Independent Advisory Group would want to consider which of these metrics it wished to monitor (Action).
4. **RESOLVED**, that the verbal update on the British Transport Police Policing Plan Refresh 2023/24 be noted.

British Transport Police Policing Plan Performance Q1 2023/24

Item 6

5. Members considered British Transport Police Policing Plan Performance Q1 2023/24 alongside a verbal briefing on Policing Plan Performance for Q2 23/24 and the following points were made.
- a. An Assistant Chief Constable introduced the item and noted,
 - i. A positive overall solved rate of 16.1% was diluted by the overall quantum of crime.
 - ii. Robbery was a significant albeit disparate pattern, heavily influenced by figures recorded by B Division (London and Southeast England).
 - iii. Assaults against rail staff – an issue identified during Policing Plan engagement - had a 15.5% solved rate which had the potential to be improved pending greater rail staff engagement in preventative measures e.g., using body-worn video, as well as the resulting justice process e.g., provision of witness statements.
 - b. In response to a question regarding issues underpinning assaults against rail staff, the Assistant Chief Constable opined it was, in part, to anti-authoritarian attitudes on the network persisting from the time of the COVID-19 pandemic i.e., refusal to pay fares when challenged. The Force also needed to ensure reporting assaults was deemed worthwhile by staff, to ensure an accurate picture of rail staff assaults was reached. The Force needed to increase its visibility on the network as well as delivering victim satisfaction when crime was reported.
 - c. In response to a question on whether high profile activity to combat e.g. robbery at defined locations led to sustainable changes, the Assistant Chief Constable noted that resurgence in crime once the Force removed resources was always a challenge, hence the Force's focus on its prevention offer to stakeholders.

- d. The Assistant Chief Constable noted the Force's focus on identifying and analysing its disproportionality against black persons. Whereas the Force had a high find rate compared to peer forces, it was telling that a black person was nine times more likely to be stopped and searched by the Force compared to a white person. Focus on ward data allowed Force leadership to establish that a black person was three times more likely to be stopped and searched in areas of London. Some of these figures were influenced by Notting Hill Carnival. Work was ongoing within the Force to better understand and address the reasons for this disproportionality. Force leadership was also focused on improving the levels of self-defined ethnicity (SDE) secured from persons who were subject to stop and search.
- e. The Assistant Chief Constable concluded by noting the Force had seen an increase in hand back time on the network to 111 mins during September 2023, when the target hand back time was 90mins.
- f. A Member highlighted the positive Policing Plan performance seen by D Division (Scotland).
- g. The Chief Executive noted that, going forward, the Group could decide to focus its scrutiny on different elements of Policing Plan performance e.g., crime, disruption, vulnerability or disproportionality.

Dov Gerber arrived at this point of the meeting.

British Transport Police Update / Armed Policing

Item 4

6. An Assistant Chief Constable provided a verbal update on British Transport Police Armed Policing and the following points were made.
 - a. No BTP armed officer had chosen to enter a period of reflection following the Crown Prosecution Service decision to charge the Metropolitan Police officer responsible for shooting Chris Kaba.
 - b. The court case would have implications for armed officers' decision making when discharging their weapons, in whether they had an honest-held belief in they were justified in doing so.
 - c. The forthcoming trial of the Metropolitan Police armed officer could likely see that officer's anonymity removed by the judge. If that happened, this would likely prompt some disquiet among armed officers across policing.
7. **RESOLVED**, that the verbal update on British Transport Police Armed Policing be noted.

British Transport Police Update / Op OVERHAND [Force Response to Israel / Hamas Conflict]

Item 3

8. An Assistant Chief Constable provided a verbal update on British Transport Police's response to the Israel-Hamas conflict and the following points were made.

- a. The Assistant Chief Constable provided some background and noted,
 - i. Strategic Independent Advisory Group / Independent Advisory Group Members were welcome to engage with him directly with their comments and insights.
 - ii. He was the Force GOLD and therefore attended weekly meetings of the national policing response as well as the BTP-level response (Op OVERHAND).
 - iii. Community engagement was a key element of Op OVERHAND, with divisional community engagement leads in place.
 - iv. The Force was focused on hate crime as it was an existing Force priority. OVERHAND now meant it was subject of a daily Force reporting brief.
 - v. The Force had a strong policing footprint in London, with co-operation with the Community Safety Trust that extended to the Force's policing response in Manchester and Leeds.
 - vi. The Force had a good understanding of school routes and London Underground journeys, with uniformed officers present on known rail journeys for Jewish school groups travelling from London to Manchester and Newcastle.
 - vii. He was mindful that elements of the Jewish community did not use social media routinely and welcomed Force access to an extensive Shomrim (neighbourhood watch group) Whatsapp group to cascade and receive information and intelligence.
 - viii. Graffiti was a standing Force focus which was subject to an enhanced approach in light of the conflict and the potential for hate crime graffiti. Normally the Force did not publicise witness appeals given the extent of graffiti on the network but varied this approach where there was a significant impact on the community.
 - ix. The Force's own Jewish Police Association and Muslim Police Association was providing advice and guidance on the Force response.
 - x. OVERHAND had identified 27 hate crimes on the network to date with 10 of those in London. These crimes involved no serious assaults and were verbal altercations, inappropriate flags, stickers and graffiti.
- b. A Member of the Group provided some perspectives from the Jewish community and noted,

- i. Based on his 20+ years' experience supporting UK policing, there was sometimes a risk any policing response did not grasp nuances within Jewish communities given e.g., very Orthodox Jews did not own smartphones.
 - ii. Similarly, whilst the Community Safety Trust did excellent work, sometimes its messaging was not specific enough for some elements of the Jewish community.
 - iii. In his view, the threat to Jewish communities would increase the longer the conflict continued.
 - iv. He would welcome the Assistant Chief Constable's offer of direct engagement following the meeting (Action).
 - c. In response to a question, a Member of the Group replied it was key for the Force to adopt a localised community approach to crime(s) involving Jewish communities. For example, some communications should not make any reference to the Community Safety Trust. Moreover, the Force should trust informal feedback from within the Jewish community on likely hate crime hotspots, even if this feedback was not supported by data at that point in time.
 - d. In response to a question, the Assistant Chief Constable reassured the Group that the Force was keen to proactively engage with community leaders and groups and build relationships that underpinned the Force's response to the current conflict.
9. **RESOLVED**, that the verbal update on British Transport Police's response to the Israel-Hamas conflict be noted.

British Transport Police Authority Chief Executive's Report Q1 2023/24

Item 7

10. Members considered the British Transport Police Authority Chief Executive's Report Q1 2023/24 and the following points were made.
 - a. The Chief Executive highlighted the following elements of the report: the in-year financial pressures faced by the Force; the fact the Authority and Force would be reflecting on recommendations made by the Home Office Dismissals Review; the forthcoming publication of a number of relevant HMICFRS reports; and the implications for security on the network posed by the proposed closure of ticket offices.
11. **RESOLVED**, that the British Transport Police Authority Chief Executive's Report Q1 2023/24 be noted.

Minutes / 19 July 2023

Item 8

12. **RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

Actions

Item 9

13. Members considered action arising from previous meetings and the following points were made.
 - a. The updates provided against Actions 4/2023 and 5/2023 were noted.
 - b. Members agreed that Action 6/2023 could be closed.
14. **RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

Any Other Business

Item 10

15. There was no other business.

Meeting Evaluation

Item 11

16. The following comments were made in evaluating the meeting.
 - a. The Chair noted the Group needed to reflect on how it shaped its future agendas.
 - b. The Strategic Head of Diversity and Inclusion noted some thought should be given to how Independent Advisory Groups fed into the Strategic Independent Advisory Group and vice versa – specifically, how meeting outcomes were captured and communicated.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm