

Summary

Gill Close, chair of Brent Safer Neighbourhood Board, welcomed over 100 people to the meeting at which police commander Roy Smith would be answering questions.

Roy Smith identified the main policing challenges in Brent as:

- violence and preventing it, which is the top priority and involves stop and search, including section 60
- policing COVID-19 for which they continue to adopt a gentle encouraging approach
- austerity causing financial constraints on activity even though they will continue to recruit officers.

People had raised 11 broad issues in questions sent in beforehand. The main issues were drug dealing, street drinking and the associated antisocial behaviour about which some residents felt that reporting to the police had no effect and community intelligence should be better used.

Roy Smith said he was a big believer in the broken windows approach of dealing with the small things before they got bigger. He wants officers to stop and deal with low level antisocial behaviour when they are passing by. He asked people to keep telling the police where crime and antisocial behaviour happens. He said he had asked officers to provide a speedy response by text or email to say what had been done in response to reports. He said that British Transport Police already used this type of quick response to reports. Residents had asked for anonymous ways to report these ongoing problems to the police and council. They are provided at the end of this summary.

Gill Close asked how solutions to these long-term ongoing issues could be better in future than they had been in the past as residents' lives were affected every day.

Roy Smith said that Safer Neighbourhood Teams were now fully staffed following a big recruitment campaign and there were separate neighbourhood tasking teams. These teams could be tasked by Inspector Becs Reeves, Brent's neighbourhoods inspector, to where needed so police could tackle entrenched problems. He said really good design out crime officers were working closely with the council on practical steps such as changing lights, fitting gates and altering refuse collection frequency. Police were also using partnership funding for safety initiatives, including £20000 to provide vulnerable residents with free Ring doorbells containing video cameras.

One questioner said that when drug dealing was reported to police, residents were told that an officer would come the following day, but this was not an effective way to catch the dealers. He asked for council and police to be more joined up about putting in new CCTV cameras to replace old broken ones overlooking a quiet area where drug dealing took place near Fryent Park. The council's neighbourhood manager, Shirley Holmes, said she had requested a new CCTV camera but other locations came higher on the priority list for the number of cameras available. Roy Smith said the police and the council would follow this up. Police and council would also look at ways of tasking officers to respond to reports more effectively. He asked residents to provide specific times, dates, locations, vehicle registration numbers and descriptions in their reports.

A resident asked how vulnerable people could apply for one of the free doorbells. Roy Smith said that he would ask the officer in charge to consult with the council, safer neighbourhood teams and safer neighbourhood board on ways to identify people who would benefit most.

A ward panel member said that a large number of new builds no longer designed out crime but contained dark alleyways and car parks without gates, although designing out crime had been a requirement in the past. Roy Smith said that police would write a statement to use in the police response to all planning applications for new developments. It would state that they must be built to secured by design standards by avoiding such things as alleyways, recessed doorways and unlocked car parks and by using white light instead of sodium light. He also asked for links to be made between the council planning department and police and for the designing out crime officer to attend the partnership tasking meetings. Councillor Gaynor Lloyd said that some residents of older properties were concerned about proposals for gating rear alleys which might cut off access to their garage and the rear of their property. Roy Smith said that there were other design options for existing buildings.

A questioner said he had sent police his own good quality CCTV image of an intruder in his garden at 4am and received a standard reply that they did not deal with antisocial behaviour. He asked why the image could not be kept on file to help find burglars. Roy Smith said the response was unacceptable and asked for the image to be emailed to his office so that it could be forwarded to the right teams. He said he would also look at responses provided to victims of crime as there is usually something police can do even if it is only signposting to safety measures.

A questioner referred to what he had written in advance about noise late at night in Gladstone Park car park and residents' requests to lock it and for the parks public spaces protection order to include noise. He said police and council tell him to call each other. Roy Smith said that things should not be sent back and forth between police and council. The issue would be looked at by police and council then the written question would be responded to.

A representative of Harlesden Area Action referred to her question submitted in advance asking for police to disrupt the behaviour in the open drug market around Craven Park Road and St Albans Road. Roy Smith said Inspector Becs Reeves will work with the council on joint tasking of resources in the area. Colin Wilderspin, the council's head of community protection, said that joint patrols were taking place and fixed penalty notices (FPN) and criminal behaviour orders (CBO) were being used.

A representative from Barn Hill Conservation Group said that trail motorbikes driving through Fryent Park fields and woods were a danger to pedestrians and asked how they could be stopped. Roy Smith said he would look at tasking for the roads and transport team, work with the council on measures to prevent access, and find out if police might get some off-road motorbikes. He asked residents to keep calling the police when they saw trail bikes in the park.

A questioner said that lots of residents send images to the police using Twitter @MetCC but the images do not reach the police. He asked for this to be enabled. Roy Smith said that the Metropolitan Police was currently dealing with this technical challenge as well as looking at ways to send images by WhatsApp. He will obtain an update on when the capability to receive images will be available.

A resident asked what the police were doing to persuade people away from crime rather than just taking measures to prevent parties, drug dealing and motorbikes in parks. Roy Smith said that police do support engagement activity but are not the driving force behind it. Police work with charities, youth organisations, football clubs and their independent advisory group and recently provided a summer camp for young people held at a local school.

Roy Smith responded to a written question about the impact of upcoming budget cuts, saying that there were proposals across London to increase the number of safer neighbourhood team officers so Brent might be able to have some town centre safer neighbourhood teams in addition to its current ward teams.

Roy Smith said that written comments on stop and search indicated people were asking for more of it. He said it was a fine balance, must be fair and explained well, and not unfairly target people disproportionately. It was fair to say that police could do better at explaining what they were doing and why.

A questioner said that many thought section 60 powers to use stop and search were used disproportionately in certain communities. She said that more engagement was needed with the community. She said that notice was not given soon enough and only on Twitter, which few people saw.

Roy Smith said there is disproportionality in stop and search and in the likelihood of being a victim of a homicide or a suspect, but stop and search was not a solution to violent crime, the sources of which needed to be addressed when children were at primary school age. Officers are taking weapons off the street and saving lives but it is an imperfect solution and he welcomes support on how to improve it. He said he spends a long time with members of the black community who are more affected than anyone else, including victims of shootings and stabbings. The problem is with how it is done and explained, but not with doing it. He said the police need to learn through feedback.

Roy Smith said he would work with the council on the best mechanism to get messaging about section 60s and quick spontaneous messages out quickly and to large numbers in the relevant geographical areas. He wants feedback on stop and search to make sure it is dignified and not criminalising young people. He provided his office's contact details for feedback but asked the community to use their local ward officers as the primary point of contact.

Dr Angela Herbert, the chair of Brent police independent advisory group, said positive engagement was a priority. Roy Smith said that, if police stop and search someone and find nothing, they should apologise for the inconvenience, although not for the search. A participant commented that an apology is a must. Roy Smith said stop and search was not about racial profiling and must be intelligence led. He wants community support where officers are working legally. He said no-one has the right to prevent officers from doing their work. He said officers do not want to use force, so want people to cooperate calmly. Dr Angela Herbert said that the independent advisory group was looking to roll out training to help the community to respond safely.

Roy Smith thanked Roy Croasdaile, the chair of the Brent Stop and Search Community Monitoring Group, for running a stop and search workshop at the summer camp. He said it had provided a positive environment where young people could talk to police. Roy Croasdaile then thanked the 50 young people who had participated in stop and search scenarios in a role reversal with police. He said they had exercised their judgement very well and asked important questions, and that police officers had engaged enthusiastically with role reversal. The police press release about the workshop is at <http://news.met.police.uk/news/met-officers-engage-with-teens-in-stop-and-search-summer-camp-408615>. Roy Croasdaile said that stop and search issues remaining were the speed of complaint resolution, disproportionality and equality impact assessment. Roy Smith said police were having conversations with the monitoring group to bring about improvement, including on complaints which he wanted to be able to deal with in five working days.

Roy Smith repeated the principle stated by Sir Robert Peel when he founded the Metropolitan Police in 1829 “The police are the public and the public are the police”. He said the police are paid but we are all demonstrating Peel’s principles by coming to this meeting, participating, being in workshops and gathering information. He gave a massive thank you to the community as the police could not do their work without community support. He thanked everyone for their constructive criticism, for which there was not a closed door.

Gill Close thanked Roy Smith for his responses to the questions and concerns raised.

Gill Close explained how people could send in follow-up questions until 5pm on Friday 21 August. She said that all questions submitted for this meeting would receive a reply from a police officer, and council officers would be involved where council action had been asked about. She said a summary of the meeting would be placed on Brent Council’s website and that, as part of its police accountability role, the safer neighbourhood board would follow up on the actions taken as a result of this meeting.

She said the safer neighbourhood board planned to hold more online meetings in future. She also invited everyone to the safer neighbourhood board public meeting from 7pm to 9pm on Thursday 18 March 2021 in the Grand Hall at Brent Civic Centre where they can ask questions of the commander, the Brent neighbourhoods inspector and the sergeant for their ward. She said that the safer neighbourhood board was working on ways to involve more young people in the public meeting and in ward panels, which set priorities for the ward police.

Gill Close encouraged everyone to join OWL (Online Watch Link) to receive secure messages on safety and crime from the police and council. She said that all contact details offered at the meeting would be provided with the summary of the meeting.

She thanked everyone for attending and for sending in questions. She said the safer neighbourhood board hoped that today’s meeting and the individual responses questioners will receive will contribute to us all living in a safer community and will sow seeds for increased communication between the community and the local police.

Contact information is provided on the next page

How to report crime

Include specific details: time, date, location, description, vehicle registration number

Police

Phone	Other	Online	Crime type
999			if any crime is happening now, the suspect is nearby or anyone is hurt or in danger
101	Twitter @MetCC	www.met.police.uk	other crime and antisocial behaviour
0800 40 50 40	Text 60116		on trains and tube, British Transport Police

Anonymously

Phone	Online	Independent charity
0800 555 111	www.crimestoppers-uk.org	Crimestoppers
	www.fearless.org	Fearless, for young people

Brent Council antisocial behaviour team

Phone	Email	Online
020 8937 1058 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday	community.safety@brent.gov.uk	www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/crime-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour/

How to contact Brent police

Commander's office	NWMailbox.BCUCommander@met.police.uk
Brent inspector for neighbourhoods, Becs Reeves	Becs.Reeves@met.police.uk

Safer neighbourhood teams (SNT) for each ward

They work shifts, so may not be working when you contact them. Do not contact them for urgent matters; use 999. They can deal with ongoing issues. (Note: 'Brent' is in the email for Barnhill, Kenton, Kilburn, Queens Park and Queensbury to distinguish it from wards with a similar name in other boroughs.)

Ward	Email
Alperton	Alperton.SNT@met.police.uk
Barnhill	Barnhill.SNTBrent@met.police.uk
Brondesbury Park	BrondesburyPark.SNT@met.police.uk
Dollis Hill	DollisHill.SNT@met.police.uk
Dudden Hill	DuddenHill.SNT@met.police.uk
Fryent	Fryent.SNT@met.police.uk
Harlesden	Harlesden.SNT@met.police.uk
Kensal Green	KensalGreen.SNT@met.police.uk
Kenton	Kenton.SNTBrent@met.police.uk
Kilburn	Kilburn.SNTBrent@met.police.uk
Mapesbury	Mapesbury.SNT@met.police.uk
Northwick Park	NorthwickPark.SNT@met.police.uk
Preston	Preston.SNT@met.police.uk
Queens Park	QueensPark.SNTBrent@met.police.uk
Queensbury	Queensbury.SNTBrent@met.police.uk
Stonebridge	Stonebridge.SNT@met.police.uk
Sudbury	Sudbury.SNT@met.police.uk
Tokyington	Tokyington.SNT@met.police.uk
Welsh Harp	WelshHarp.SNT@met.police.uk
Wembley Central	WembleyCentral.SNT@met.police.uk
Willesden Green	WillesdenGreen.SNT@met.police.uk

How to receive secure crime and safety alerts from the police and council

- Join OWL (Online Watch Link) www.owl.co.uk for messages by email and soon by OWL App push notification.
- If you have a CCTV camera or video doorbell, also join the OWL CCTV watch so officers investigating crimes can see where there might be video evidence.