

LAMBETH SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Discussions are underway within the borough regarding the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) to be instituted next year in April, specifically within a working group comprising representatives from MPS, LBL, SNPs, the IAG and CPCG. Thus far, models progressing in other boroughs have been discussed but no clear proposal for Lambeth has been tabled.

CPCG has already set out a set of principles which we feel are essential if arrangements for local engagement, problem solving and accountability are to be effective¹. They are based on 30 years of experience and have the support of our membership.

This paper translates those principles into key elements for implementation of a Safer Neighbourhood Board for Lambeth. It does so in three stages. First, we consider the tasks which the SNB should undertake. Next we address an appropriate SNB membership to undertake those tasks and consider how the Board membership should be selected and resourced. Finally, we suggest the work that needs to be done beyond the current working group in order to address the gaps that currently exist, rather than merely rearranging the existing jig-saw.

The approach sticks to our principles but avoids being prescriptive in detail at this stage, as befits a discussion paper. Where there are unresolved issues we make some suggestions (some of which are for interim arrangements) for discussion.

SNB Tasks

The MOPAC Guidance² sets out functions for the SNBs which MOPAC require to be addressed. In summary they are:

- 1. Establish policing priorities in the borough**
- 2. Monitor crime performance and community confidence**
- 3. Monitor complaints against borough officers**
- 4. Hear and monitor complaints from victims of crime**
- 5. Provide assurance that a system of independent custody visiting is delivered**
- 6. Play a significant role in community payback**
- 7. Ensure all wards have a ward panel or neighbourhood panel members on the board. <check>**
- 8. Oversee the borough Independent Advisory Group**

¹ 'SUSTAINING POLICING BY CONSENT IN LAMBETH', CPCG, June 2013

² 'Safer Neighbourhood Boards Guidance', MOPAC, October 2013

9. Support Neighbourhood Watch

10. Ensure the stop and search community monitoring function is delivered

The Guidance is not overly prescriptive on how these functions should be carried out and in some instances there remains a lack of clarity eg in respect of hearing victims' complaints or monitoring complaints against borough officers, how the Board will function effectively without getting drawn into specific cases for which it has not competence and which have the potential to expose the SNB to onerous liabilities.

But the Guidance does offer some suggestions for the operation of the SNB, for example in respect of public meetings.

Here we expand on the Guidance, in line with our principles, making more explicit how those functions of which we have greatest experience should be undertaken and ensuring that some important functions under existing arrangements are not lost. Specifically, we would add:

- That all the SNB meetings be held in public and that papers are published ahead of meetings and archived on a website. There should be opportunities for members of the public to contribute to the meetings and to raise issues which they feel are important to them. There are a number of examples, in other public services, of how this might be formatted (see for example [Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group](#)³). These meetings should be held not less than every other month.
- That the SNB facilitates the established good practice in Lambeth of joint working between the local community and the agencies. The Guidance acknowledges Stop and Search Monitoring, for example, as an existing group but it is important to recognise that the SNB will need to be adaptive and support other such groups for which a need arises as time goes on. Stop and Search Monitoring was not an initiative of the MPS or of the MPA but a community led initiative, in Lambeth.
- That the SNB build and maintain networks amongst local organisations and individuals through the dissemination of information and through presence at significant community events around the borough (eg the Country Show).
- That the SNB supports this by maintaining and growing a mailing list of interested organisations and individuals within the borough and uses it, as well as electronic media (website, blog, social media etc) to keep them informed of the SNB's activities and of key developments affecting policing and community safety.
- That the SNB encourages and supports partnership working between the public agencies ensuring that policing is firmly rooted in the wider context of community safety and wellbeing.

³ Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group:
<http://www.lambethccg.nhs.uk/GetInvolved/haveyoursay/Pages/default.aspx>

- That the SNB maintains and publishes appropriate statistical records and analyses relating to crime and community safety within the borough, including performance measures such as clear up rates, Stop and Search, TASER use and such like.

Composition of the Board

The MOPAC Guidance suggests an SNB of between 12 and 25. For the purposes of this discussion, we have taken an indicative figure of 24, which we suggest be allocated between the following “constituencies”. As a starting point, we have set a broadly even split but this may be adaptable, as might the total number.

By Place

6 SNP Chairs, one from each cluster

Rationale: This is consistent with the MOPAC Guidance and reflects the need for the SNB not only to garner views from across the geography of Lambeth but also to ensure that every ward has a functioning SNP

By Significant issues in Lambeth

Health and Wellbeing, especially Mental Health

Victims

Youth

Independent Custody Visitors

Stop and Search Monitoring Group

Rationale: These represent significant, recurring issues in respect of policing and community safety in Lambeth. They are generally consistent with the MOPAC Guidance. Health and Wellbeing, with an emphasis on Mental Health, is clearly specific to Lambeth. This reflects not only the issues relating to people with mental illness in the criminal justice system, where Lambeth has been notably innovative in its approach, but also the wider Public Health approach which Lambeth is developing towards crimes of violence.

By Interest

6 individuals elected from a registered wider ‘associate’ membership of people who live, work or study in the borough.

Rationale: There is a danger that setting a structure at the outset which has allocated SNB membership to specific groups effectively ossifies the status quo. This constituency provides an entry for anyone in the borough, especially those in marginalised groups, to find a way in to the process. Moreover, whilst we have identified current ‘significant issues’ (above), it is a restricted set and doubtless new issues will arise as the borough’s demographic and

economy continue to change. This constituency provides a way in for champions of such issues.

Most importantly, there is an over-arching need to ensure that the SBB is representative of the borough across all aspects of its diversity. As we have argued in our earlier position paper, this is most likely to be achieved by adhering firmly to the two principles of open access and democratic process.

Public Agencies

6 representatives of the key public agencies, which should include the police and LBL (including the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities). MOPAC suggest Probation should also be represented. The composition of this group is clearly primarily a matter for the agencies to agree, but we would offer the suggestion of representation from Public Health (or from the Health and Wellbeing Board).

Rationale: This is consistent with the MOPAC Guidance. The suggested inclusion of Public Health is both specific to the health dimension of community safety (see above) but also to reflect the importance of partnership working more generally. Lambeth has made impressive strides in this regard over the last decade, moving from a position where the erstwhile CDRP was placed in 'special measures' by the Home Secretary. We should be wary of erecting structures which encourage a retreat to silo working.

The IAG

1 representative (interim position)

Rationale: The IAG is an appointed body. Appointments are made under Nolan principles rather than as the outcome of any democratic process. On that basis, we do not feel that it would be proper to permanently allocate a place on the SNB to the IAG. We do recognise, however, the need to get the SNB up and running and the valuable contribution which the IAG could make to that. For that reason we suggest an interim allocation.

Ultimately, there are a number of options to which this position may transition. For example, the IAG may choose to constitute itself as an open access, democratic entity. Alternatively, members of the IAG (or any other advisory group the borough commander might convene) could be given observer status on the SNB. And of course, members of the IAG or any other group could seek election as individuals within the associate membership.

Selection of the Board

In setting out our principles for effective engagement, we highlighted the need for accountability of any vehicle set up, such as the SNB, resting on proper constitutional arrangements and democratic processes. We therefore argue that all the community positions on the SNB should ultimately rest on a democratic process, whilst recognising that in the interim (to get the Board up and running) some temporary measures may be needed. Our suggested regime is set out below.

Constituency	Ultimate	Interim
6 SNP Chairs	To be elected from the combined Panel Memberships of each cluster. Pre-requires all Panels to be properly constituted and to have regular elections of Panels and Panel chairs.	Current constitutional status of Panels unknown to us.
<p>Health and Wellbeing, especially Mental Health</p> <p>Victims</p> <p>Youth</p> <p>Independent Custody Visitors</p> <p>Stop and Search Monitoring Group</p>	<p>To be elected from bona fide community organisations operating in this area.</p> <p>To be elected from bona fide community organisations operating in this area.</p> <p>To be elected from bona fide community organisations operating in this area.</p> <p>To be elected by the custody visitors</p> <p>To be elected by Monitoring Group</p>	<p>Representative from Lambeth Health Watch (a community representative, not an employee)</p> <p>Representative from Victim Support or Lambeth VAWG Forum (a community representative, not an employee)</p> <p>Representative from an established youth organisation in the borough (a community representative who is a young person, not an employee)</p> <p>To be elected by the custody visitors</p> <p>To be elected by Monitoring Group</p>
Associate Membership	By election from Registered Associate Membership	By election from current combined membership/contacts (IAG/CPCG Individual and Affiliate membership etc)

Constituency	Ultimate	Interim
IAG	None	1 place nominated by IAG

SNB Governance

The suggested Terms of Reference in the MOPAC Guidance provide a useful checklist of the issues which need to be addressed and could indeed form the basis for a Constitution. This might better bolster the desired independence of the SNB. Specific suggestions we would make are:

- Whatever the term of membership (and 2 years may be preferable to 3) we would suggest a rolling membership better secures accountability. In such a scheme, a proportion of the Board seeks re-election each year. This also serves to underscore the democratic accountability of the Board.
- The Honorary Officers should be elected by the Board annually, from and by the community Board members, and should not hold office for more than two consecutive Board terms.
- The Guidance is unspecific about the decision making processes of the SNB. A well-functioning Board with effective Honorary Officers, especially the Chair, should rarely need to vote. But in the event of voting we suggest that representatives of the statutory agencies should not vote, since there may clearly be a conflict of interest.

SNB Resourcing

It is clear that the SNB will have a substantial workload which must be supported. Some of the functions set out by MOPAC (monitoring complaints, dealing with victims etc) are new and we can only hazard what the support required for those might entail.

We can, however, speak from experience in terms of the administrative support required for those functions which are currently carried out by CPCG and, in common with other CPEGs, can be clear that this cannot be sensibly undertaken for just over £5K. The argument put forward by MOPAC (effectively that all costs which aren't 'cash out the door' are overhead) is disingenuous and indeed, on that basis, MOPAC itself would represent an overhead to be eliminated! The sum suggested would barely purchase one day a week from a low graded post within the local authority, for example. It would certainly be insufficient to provide support for the range of activities set out above.

Moreover, supporting the SNB is more than a clerical task to be undertaken as a constituent part of a larger role. Developing outreach, contact, networks requires commitment and drive from a dedicated role.

For these reasons we suggest that, for the first year at least, 1/32 of the Safer Neighbourhood Board Fund (around £30K) be provided for the employment of a member of staff, located within an appropriate Lambeth voluntary body.

Review

The SNB is an ambitious new departure about which there are widespread misgivings and apprehensions, in Lambeth and across London.

It is important therefore that the SNB sets clear objectives for its first year's achievements and performance and that all aspects (including an Equalities Evaluation) are reviewed at the end of the year. The review should be published together with an action plan to address any short-fallings.

Next Steps

Thus far, within the community, discussion of the SNB has been largely restricted to current players – the SNP Chairs, the CPCG Membership, the IAG. It is our hope that this paper will help the working group move to a proposal which is consistent with the MOPAC Guidelines whilst at least not crossing any of the participants 'red-lines', even if there remain tactical details to be worked through.

But we must all recognise that, whilst we may have many successes to be proud of, there has not been unalloyed success and there remain shortfalls and gaps – many documented in the *Whose Shout?*⁴ report - which we should avoid building into the SNB at the outset.

There is thus a task for the working group of reaching out beyond the usual suspects and establishing an SNB that has a reasonable chance of reaching those groups for whom crime and community safety are a paramount concern and yet who are often missing from the dialogue. The combined contacts of the participants within the working group should be used to facilitate that happening.

Community Police Consultative Group for Lambeth

December 2013

⁴ 'Whose Shout?', CPCG, June 2010