Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels - Tower Hamlets

The Police, the Council and the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) in Tower Hamlets believe that Ward Panels are a key feature in Community policing, and we fully support Ward Panels. We attach guidance for Ward Panels issued by the Metropolitan Police. We expect all Ward Panels to review this guidance and to ensure they are operating with "best practices" in mind. In particular, Tower Hamlets requires the following minimum standards to be observed.

Ward Panel Chairs
The Chair will be a local resident elected by the Ward Panel Members.

Ward Panel Members
Members will be local residents and other stakeholders within the local community who will be appointed irrespective of race or creed. Members should include residents from all geographic areas of the Ward. When possible Members should be selected who represent wider groups of residents, such as committee members of Resident Associations, Community Groups and similar organisations. Potential key members should also include RSLs (Residential Social Landlords) and local ASB Managers.
The local Ward Councillors are automatically Ward Panel Members and LBTH believes they have a vital contribution to offer at Ward Panel Meetings.
A useful and more extensive list of potential local partners is on page 4 of the attached document under "Recommended Core Membership".

Ward Panel Meetings
Ward Panels should meet at minimum four times a year (ie: about every quarter). Individual Panels may chose their own frequency subject to a minimum of four, and a maximum of six meetings each year.
To assist Members' diary management we recommend that Ward Panels should agree meeting dates at least six months in advance.
The Neighbourhood Inspector will attend Ward Panel Meetings when appropriate to monitor progress.

Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT)
The SNT will support the Chair and Members of the Ward Panel, by providing updates on policing status and issues within the Ward, taking account of concerns raised by Members and responding to questions. Every Ward Panel Meeting will be attended by at least one or more of the local Dedicated Ward Officers (DWOs). The SNT Sergeant will attend a minimum of two meetings a year in each of their Wards.

Local Issues & Ward Priorities
The Ward Panel should be the key player in evaluating and defining key local policing issues within the Ward, agreeing the priorities for tackling these issues with the SNT, and communicating these priorities within the Ward.
Each Ward Panel should agree the three top priorities for local policing. These should be defined as specifically as possible to enable success to be measured. (For example "drugs in Carnaby Street" would be much better than "ASB" as a measurable priority.)
The three top priorities should be reviewed every Ward Panel Meeting to evaluate success, and to update the priorities when appropriate.

Communication
It is crucial that the Ward Panel widely publicises its activities, and provides details of how local residents can contact and provide input to the Ward Panel. One possible method would be for the SNT to provide such information on the SNT website.

Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB)
Each Ward Panel Chair is automatically a member of the SNB and is expected to attend SNB Meetings to represent his/her Ward Panel. For any SNB Meeting that the Chair is unable to attend, he/she should appoint another member of the Ward Panel to represent the Ward Panel at that SNB meeting.

Signed on behalf of Tower Hamlets:
Sue Williams	BCU Commander
Asma Begum	Deputy Mayor, and Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Jon Shapiro	Chair, Safer Neighbourhood Board

Safer Neighbourhoods - Ward Panels Guidance

What are Ward Panels?

Ward panel focus
The Mayor of London's Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 places further emphasis on Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) delivering on ward priorities, involving local problem solving. Using local crime data analysis, combined various community engagements, such as community contact sessions, 'Voice Your Concerns' internet polls and surveys, SNT's will be able to update and present ward profiles and gain an insight into the local community's crime and disorder concerns. In order to ensure that the work of each SNT is focussed on resolving these problems, each SNT will require a process to involve local people to help prioritise the concerns of the community for them to work on.

Establishing a panel
This process will be based on a seven-stage model that is summarised at **Appendix A**. The 5th stage in this process, public choices, is where decisions are made. At this stage each SNT must establish a panel in every ward. This panel should be made up of local people whose role is to assess the local concerns, identified through community engagement and analysis, and establish ward priorities for policing in that ward. The panel gives direction and local advice to the SNTs, although some ward priorities will require partners, such as a Local Authority or Housing Association, to take the lead.

Panel function
The Ward Panel will decide on the ward priorities by examining the ward crime profile, feedback from a variety of community engagements and research by police and partners. This will include taking account of results from public events and meetings where the community have voiced concerns. In addition to ward priority setting the panel should also be fully involved in deciding what type of action should be taken on their concerns and have an input to the problem solving approach, although the final decision on tactics will remain with the police.

Making the panel aware of police commitments
Ward Panels should be made aware, by the SNT or Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB), of the full remit of the SNT and that they have additional police responsibilities to assist meet the BCU/ Borough priorities. DWO Abstraction away from the ward is by exception only and is monitored and will be published by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). Arrangement may be made to assist a specific targeted problem solving activity on an adjacent ward however each SNT will continue to have a prominent presence on their ward and will engage with their communities in the normal way.

Who should be the members of a Ward Panel?

Panel make-up
The panel should be made up of local residents and/or people who work in the area and have a close connection with the area. Ideally socio-demographic characteristics of the ward panel should broadly reflect that of the ward.

Diversity
Where appropriate to the demographics of a ward, every effort should be made to ensure that the appropriate proportion of people who are recruited are representative of the nine Equality Act protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity). These people could be identified through consultation activities carried out on the ward (ie: public meetings, community contact sessions or surveys). Each SNT will need to attract a wide range of people to ensure that

the group is representative of the community. Some local 'leaders' will be useful however SNTs should not be drawn to giving preference to, or solely listening to, the loudest voices that are present from those who attend every meeting. Nominations might be made at public meetings/events to avoid any impression that the panel has been imposed or selected by the police. This will also ensure that a wide range of people can take part in prioritising and resolving local issues. An ideal size for the group would be about 12-20 people; too many could make it hard to reach agreement.

Structure

As with many community groups some members will request a formal arrangement, others will prefer a less structured approach. Whatever the system chosen for the panel meetings the participants must agree on how decisions will be made to prevent bias or personal opinions influencing the priorities selected by the group. Setting ground rules will be an essential part of the first meeting and should be recorded, reviewed as required and shared with new members.

Administration

It is recommended that a volunteer should be sought to keep a record of the meeting and minutes. Record keeping should include minutes of the meeting with sufficient notes of the ward priorities agreed and the reasons for decisions. It should be clear to the community who the ward panel members are and how long the panel will be asked to serve the community. Members should aim to be involved for a year with an advised tenure of 2 years. A record should be kept of panel membership, including changes of panel members. After establishing the panel it must be clear to members, and the community, how changes to panel membership will be made. The DWO should be able to assist retain a central copy for reference and distribute the records to all attendees and the SNB.

Chair and members

The chair of the group should be a community member with the SNT representative in attendance at all meetings. As well as local people a local authority representative or other significant partner (youth worker or housing provider) should be involved to bring local knowledge and useful contacts to the panel. Ideally the chair would reside, work predominately in, or spend the majority of their time within the ward. As a member they would be subject to the same tenure.

Councillors

The ward panel may also benefit from the involvement of the local ward councillor(s) who can observe the process and contribute their local knowledge of problems, but they should not be party to any 'voting' around the selection of ward priorities. This is to ensure that priorities are free from any criticism that they are politically driven. It is also recommended that Councillors do not 'chair' these meetings for the same reasons.

Youth involvement

To increase participation of young people there should be more use of innovative engagement methods, Safer School Officer promotion, approaching existing youth advisory groups and better use of social media. For example: rather than expecting young people to take part in formal ward panels or Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) meetings, targeted community police engagement events can be held for young people, these may include regular 'Question Time' sessions where young people have the opportunity to directly question senior MPS officers. Should a young person be elected to the panel an appropriate risk assessment must be completed and written parental permission sought if the person is under the age of 18 years old. Transport to and from the venue must also be considered.

Core members

Each ward is different and each SNT and chair should decide on the best people to be on the panel initially. However, some groups/individuals are crucial to the work of panels and therefore all teams should be required to have these groups/individuals involved. There may be the need to review and make changes to members on occasions for which the format is listed below.

Listed below are people who would ideally make up the core of a ward panel to best serve the wider community.

Recommended Core Membership

- **Local Residents**
  o Representatives of local community groups, societies and associations
  o Representatives of local Tenant and Resident Associations (If appropriate to the ward)
  o Educational representatives; (If there is a school in the ward)
  o Small and Medium Enterprises and local traders;
  o Representatives from large industrial estates; (If appropriate to the ward)
  o Young people
  o Representatives from significant demographic groups

- **Local "Partners"**
  o Councilors (**No voting rights**)
  o Voluntary Sector Council;
  o Housing representatives: (If the ward has public housing)
  o Neighbourhood Watch
  o Local Authority officers such as the Anti-Social Behaviour/Crime Prevention Officer
  o Health professionals
  o Local Community or Charitable Groups

How should panel members be chosen?

Panel inception

It may be useful for some existing community leaders to form an interim panel, possibly with a well-known community leader taking the lead as chairperson. This should be a short-term arrangement until further community members volunteer. As more community members become involved the panel may develop by a process of nominations. If this approach is taken opportunities should still exist for interim member involvement should they leave the panel i.e. by inclusion in the ongoing community consultation and engagement process.

Chairperson and panel members

The panel chair and panel members should be people who have the respect of the community and are trusted to voice their concerns. The panel members need to understand community concerns from a variety of perspectives and must be able to feedback the results of police/partner activity and the reasons for ward priorities being set. The panel should be a mixed group of gender of various ages and be drawn from all parts of the neighbourhood to prevent focus on one area at the exclusion of others. Representation should be sought from significant race or faith groups in the area and people from different sections of the community i.e. those living in private dwellings and people from social housing. Consideration should also be given to the panel having a representative from any group forming a large section of the community such as students, young people, lesbians or gay men. Each team must also make plans to involve people with disabilities in community engagement and make the panel accessible to this section of the community.

New members

If there are insufficient panel members, new members can be generated by an advert in local publications, housing association newsletters or supermarket notice boards. Alternatively consider an open invitation to specific groups or random invitations made in person at other community events or venues.

Organisation representatives

It would be reasonable to encourage membership by those individuals who represent an organisation or a group rather than those who were not. This would also ensure that *'single issue'* or non-inclusive members do not dominate panel meetings.

Meetings

Panel meetings could be held at different times of the day, on different days and at different locations in the ward to encourage attendance by a wide range of people. Neighbourhood representatives or panel members equally may find cost effective locations for meetings, however, the location must be agreed by all as being suitable. Consideration should be given to the benefits of some meetings being open to the public.

Review

Ward Panel membership should be reviewed annually.

Ward Panel Responsibilities

Panel responsibilities

The purpose of the ward panel is to agree a realistic and achievable course of action, working with SNT's, to address the issues raised by the community. To enable true problem solving activities to be effective there should ideally be no more than three ward priorities that the SNT deal with. The ward panel need to meet regularly, about every two to three months. The panel will assess the information collected by police and other sources and consider how to prioritise the concerns of the community.

Data sharing

As part of the process of involving communities in setting ward priorities, the panel may be given access to data and information. Some crime mapping information can be obtained from the MPS internet site (www.met.police.uk) and MOPAC dashboards (www.london.gov.uk). Further sharing of crime information should not require any information sharing protocol or agreement with panel members as long as the information does not identify any person as a victim, offender or witness or contain private details about any person. (Further advice can be sought from the central Strategy and governance or Information Sharing Support Unit (ISSU).

Tasking

Tasks are agreed with feedback being given at the next meeting. A communication strategy will also be required to keep the whole community informed of the ward priorities and the outcome of problem solving work. Police should ensure that the ward priorities are achievable within available resources, and set a timescale for achievement or feedback to the community. Partners may need to agree the level of their involvement but should take responsibility should something fall within their jurisdiction.

Reviewing ward priorities, (problem solving)

The panel will review ward priorities agreed at previous meetings and monitor the progress. When a ward priority has been resolved a new one will be agreed. The panel will also adopt a problem solving approach and encourage local action and multi-agency work. Problem solving training can be given to panel members at a local level to help them understand how the community can become involved in solving problems. (The Central Safer Neighbourhood Team does have training material available)

Mapping ward priorities
The panel should set the ward priorities for the SNT, based on the ward profile provided. Police will always deal with policing issues irrespective of whether they are a specific ward priority. Once the community have been consulted through all the various forms of engagement activities (consultations, SNT 'Your Area' internet pages - Voice Your Concerns poll, virtual ward panels, street briefings, public meetings, Key Individual Networks (KINs) etc.) regarding problems in their area, the evidence should be presented to the ward panel who must decide based on the information provided which issues are the most important and what they would like the SNT to achieve. The work of the panel will be made easier if the issues and concerns of the community are presented to them with some analysis. This may be as simple as a map showing the occurrences of a problem, the current ward crime profile or a ranking of the frequency of issues being raised.

Analytic support
Central Analytical support has been reduced but SNTs should still be able to access data from a variety of platforms such as Plan Web, AirSpace SLT analytics, corporate dashboards and Daris. Any data presented from these platforms and shared must be redacted in order that information does not identify any person as a victim, offender or witness or contain private details about any person (Further advice can be sought from the central Strategy and governance or Information Sharing Support Unit (ISSU). Decisions may follow a simple process of discussion to reach consensus. If agreement is not reached a vote may be taken or an extra ward priority agreed.

Balanced opinions
SNTs need to consider how they balance the opinions of panel members. Panel membership can include individuals who do not represent organisations or groups and panel members who do. It may be fair to give additional weight to the opinions of individuals who are representing an organisation or a group rather than those who are not.

Work capacity control
In agreeing ward priorities the SNT Sergeants should be open and honest as to the true capacity of work they can undertake. SNT Sergeants should be aware of the limits on their staffing levels compared to the ward priorities set and must be pro-active in professionally controlling a balance of the two. Any areas of controversy should be referred to the next line manager for a decision.

Feedback
Providing feedback on progress, results and key messages is vitally important in reassuring the community that the local police understand and deal with the issues that matter to local people and is a key principle of true engagement. Feedback should be a key item for the panel agenda. Panel members should also provide feedback to their contacts and groups.

Requirements to make changes to ward panel membership.

Quality assurance
Where it is apparent that current panel membership in whole or in part is no longer synonymous with the good of the wider community, it may be necessary to restructure or dissolve and reconstitute a panel. This may mean removing one or more members and must be done with the following protocols in mind:
a. The issue should first be discussed by the Ward Panel Chair and the local SNT Sergeant to see if the Ward Panel Chair can resolve the issue.
b. Should the issues not be resolved at that level, the Ward Panel Chair should seek assistance from the Tower Hamlets SNB (Safer Neighbourhood Board).

Key Individual Networks (KIN) Lists

Useful contacts
In addition to developing memberships that better reflect the ward, SNTs should maintain a range of individual contacts, a list of key individuals who may have some influence within their community. This will be a list of key individuals who can keep them abreast of local concerns and could include:

o Publicans
o Newsagents
o Concierge staff
o Security staff
o Religious leaders
o Garage staff
o Café and restaurants
o Taxi and private hire
o Local business community

KIN lists should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that they are up to date and remain relevant to the needs of the ward. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are best suited to update these during patrol or a bi-annual drive to recruit and update would be of value.

Virtual ward panels

Public surveys
The Central SNT Unit advises that each borough considers the use of the virtual ward panel system. In short, this is an electronic survey sent via email by the DWO to reach those people who cannot physically, or are less inclined to attend formal meetings, to give them a voice and get them involved in the decision making process. People are asked to select from a list of recurring issues within their ward, based on the current ward profile which they feel should be a ward priority for the SNT to deal with. Responses to the survey feed into the Ward Panel and information compliments the other forms of community intelligence provided. Training to use the virtual ward panel system and access to the required software is available from the Central SNT Unit.

Social Media

Public communication
Safer Neighbourhood Teams must use all existing local communication mechanisms to share information with the wider public.
o Make better use of community websites, ACE within AirSpace, social media, neighbourhood watch and newsletters to share information on the work of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and panel meetings.
o Including information in local free magazines that are delivered door to door.
o Placing information in public spaces which are used/visited by the wider public, such as transport hubs, supermarkets, local coffee shops, local post offices, doctor surgeries/clinics and shopping centres.

Improving information provision will improve community police engagement. More publicity and information on the work of panels can also 'enhance confidence in the MPS'

7 Steps to Community Engagement – The Role of the Ward Panel

SN 7 Steps	The role for Ward Panel
1. **Research**	Contribute any local knowledge or information about the community, such as contact details or organisations that may wish to be involved
2. **Engage**	Ward panel members can assist with meetings or activities by arranging them or helping with communication and publicity
3. **Public Preferences**	As above panel members can take an active role in gathering information on the issues that concern local people
4. **Investigational and Analysis**	Panel members can take part in visual audits of the neighbourhood and collate information from environmental surveys. At this stage the different community concerns are assessed and analysed by police and partners.
5. **Public Choices**	This is the key role for the ward panel. The panel assess the different concerns raised by the community at public meetings or other consultation and taken with the crime data and analysis provided, decide which should be ward priorities. These should be choices that are informed by research and analysis from step 4
6. **Plan and action**	Panel members may be involved in some activity. Non-enforcement activity, such as communication with the community may be carried out by the panel to help publicise what is happening
7. **Review**	The panel should be part of the review process and agree when a promise has been completed or requires further work

This is cyclic process, return to step 1 after the first round of activity