

Fifth meeting of the Tower Hamlets Community Monitoring Group (CMG)

16 October 2024

In attendance

Emmanuel Baidoo ('EB') – Tower Hamlets CMG Member
Alice Bird ('AB') – Programme Manager, Community Engagement, MOPAC
James Conway ('JC') – BCU Commander, Met Police
Mirren Gidda ('MG') – Tower Hamlets CMG Chair
Adam Gould ('AG') – Chief Inspector, Met Police
TM – Tower Hamlets CMG Member
Paul Oladimeji ('PO') – Inspector, Met Police
Vicky Tunstall ('VT') – Detective Superintendent, Met Police

Welcome/Introductions

All attendees introduced themselves.

Updates on CMG action plan

MG spoke about the action tracker the CMG has created. She noted there were several open actions for Insp Thomas Vie who has now moved on from supporting the CMG. MG confirmed she would send this over to PO to pick up these actions.

MG also noted that there were outstanding actions from the feedback given at the July BWV viewing.

ACTION: MG to send PO action tracker and July feedback

MG noted that there was an open action regarding a letter that goes to individuals who were subject to a stop and search, where the CMG reviews their encounter in their BWV session. The letter, which is sent by the Met, tells individuals that their stop and search has been viewed by the CMG. MG is supportive of the letter and had amended it to state that the CMG could assist individuals with making a complaint.

MG noted she raised the letter at the CMN meeting [Note to readers: A meeting of all the CMGs across London] to encourage other groups to similarly amend their letters. Other CMGs said they did not know of the existence of the letter and were unhappy that their contact details were being shared. The Met's Central Stop and Search Team had gone away to access legal advice. MG said she was still happy for the letter to be sent to people in Tower Hamlets.

ACTION: AB to check in with the Central Stop and Search Team on where this action is and what the barriers are

The CMG noted that the most important thing is to ensure that those who had been stopped and searched are aware of the group's presence and its role in scrutiny, to offer support or

advocacy. MG suggested that a Met QR Code, which provides information relating to stop and search, could include the CMG's contact details. The group also wanted to consider other ways to raise awareness of the CMG, for instance youth outreach and putting posters in community spaces and police stations. It was noted, however, that posters in police stations might make the CMG look like a Met-linked organisation.

ACTION: AB to follow up with MPS on the QR code rollout for Tower Hamlets

Discussion about what we want the CMG to become

[Note to readers: The Tower Hamlets CMG is in discussions with the Met and MOPAC to adopt a new model that provides it with expanded powers in line with a police scrutiny group in Hackney. The below discussion relates to this.]

MG spoke about her meeting with the Hackney scrutiny group, she noted that she had found it interesting but felt that there are key differences in what the groups want to achieve and their views.

MG confirmed that the CMG is interested in piloting additional scrutiny powers but was clear that the group wants to remain a CMG and independent from the Met and MOPAC. The group discussed the use of the BWV feedback form and the feedback process [Note to readers: In October 2024, the CMG began using the Hackney group's feedback form during its BWV viewings. The police are supposed to respond to issues raised by the CMG in that form.] AB noted that there needed to be agreement on both sides around what was reasonable in terms of time frames to follow up on actions etc.

ACTION: AB to get agreement on BWV feedback process from both CMG and Met Police

MG noted that the CMG has the following "wants" in terms of change to the Met Police:

1. Officers only use coercive/forceful powers (including stop and search) when absolutely necessary
2. When those powers are used, they are not used in a disproportionate way

MG then said the barriers to this work being done effectively are:

1. Existing legislation and codes of practise
2. Met institutional racism
3. Police training (or lack thereof)
4. Internal and external targets and pressures
5. The limited powers of the CMG

MG noted that the CMG can help change police training, culture and ethos and external pressures when they come from the community (e.g., being at community meetings to offer a

counter view to requests for increased policing). She also noted that the CMG can change its limited powers by adopting a new and expanded role. MG also noted the CMG needs to expand through recruitment.

MG said the CMG would like the following:

1. CMG to be respected by the police
2. Regular sit downs with high level officers to push for change at a higher level
3. Inclusion in discussions where it is appropriate to involve the community (e.g., upcoming operations)
4. The power to make suggestions about changes to the police (e.g., racial awareness training, changing policy on handcuffing)
5. CMG scrutiny should extend to all police powers
6. To still have, under the new model, a minimum two hours for BWV viewings
7. To be able to have targeted BWV viewings, including by topic (e.g. tasers/handcuffs/drugs), officer, location
8. To continue utilising the online feedback form, on the same proviso that any feedback must be responded to and actioned
9. To have the ability to make complaints about BWV we see
10. That a letter goes to people whose BWV we have watched advising them of their right to make a complaint

TM also made the point that the CMG should not be diluted by the views of other organisations. MG said that independence is vital.

JC and VT noted they saw no issue with these requests but noted that these should be recognised and agreed formally through a ToR or MOU.

ACTION: AB to send over an updated MOU with additional requests to the MPS and the CMG

MG noted that the group will want to scrutinise issues thematically, for instance, stops related to drugs and then how that breaks down into different geographical areas and the relationship between disproportionality there. JC was supportive of this approach.

JC highlighted the difference between scrutiny and advisory groups, saying that it was important to him that groups weren't advising police then scrutinising the same activities which take place as a result of that advice. [Note to readers: The CMG is a scrutiny group].

The CMG discussed recruitment and confirmed that it would be better to put this on hold until they were clear on the direction of the CMG.

MG noted that it would be helpful to be able to remunerate members for their time, especially when they are bringing specialist skills. Additionally, this would support a wider range of

people being able to join the CMG. AB said she agreed with this point and that it's something that is being considered for the wider changes to volunteer mechanisms. Currently the options were fairly limited though, there is an existing volunteer expense policy she could give the CMG which covers travel and childcare.

ACTION: AB to send CMG members expense policy

The CMG and the Met agreed that they would reconvene in a month to finalise the details of how they want this group to look going forward.

AOB

Nothing was raised.