

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 JULY 2013

COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Members received a report of the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning which presented the draft Community Safety Plan for 2013/16 and the Strategic Assessment of crime and anti-social behaviour for 2012 which had informed the development of priorities and actions. The Plan would be submitted to Cabinet in September 2013.

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Borough Commander, Detective Chief Inspector Pete Stride and Sunil Galoria, Senior Intelligence Analyst, to the meeting. An officer outlined the content of the report advising that the form of the Plan was short and simple compared to previous years in order to avoid duplication of the content set out in the Strategic Assessment. In his view the most significant issue of note was that the pattern of crime in Harrow changed little year on year and that Harrow had 1,100 burglaries above the level of the safest borough in London. The new Borough Commander's ambition was for Harrow to be the safest borough in London.

Members then asked questions and made comments as follows:

- The distribution of SmartWater kits appeared to be a little haphazard and there needed to be engagement with residents. The officer reported that 13,000 kits were yet to be distributed and in hindsight a different distribution network may have assisted. It was, however, necessary for SmartWater to be used for a number of years before trends would be seen. DCI Stride reported that the expectation was that going forward recorded crime would reduce as a result of SmartWater but that there was, however, a need to manage expectation at the 'front door'. A crime unit had been established comprising 21 officers with a focus on burglary and robbery. It was important to note that it was not possible to stop burglars; they tended to move from one area to another.

Another Member questioned why the publicity of SmartWater had stopped and was advised that following the initial large take up of the kits there had been a decline and it might be that a fresh launch was required. DCI Stride added that the police were keen to actively discourage burglars and to engage with partners. In his previous borough of Brent, SmartWater had largely been a success due to the visibility of officers and visits to residents.

- In response to a question as to the profile of burglars and whether they tended to live in the borough, Mr Galoria advised that of those arrested 40% did not live in Harrow and 20% not even in London. Signs to deter burglars had been erected at the points of entry to the borough. Care and consideration was required in terms of the use of different languages in publicity.

- A Member requested clarification in that he had heard the Borough Commander report that Harrow had the third lowest level of overall crime in London on 4 occasions but that more recently he had reported Harrow as the seventh lowest. Mr Galoria advised that the Borough Commander's chosen measure for comparison with other Boroughs was the total number of crimes committed across the MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) 7 crime types. Previous league tables had been based on the total number of crimes per thousand population. These different measures explained the difference in reported league table position.
- In responses to a Member's question in relation to youth on youth crime in the vicinity of schools, it was confirmed that this was not a huge issue.
- A Member commented that domestic violence did not appear to be addressed in the plan. DCI Stride advised that the priority of burglary had been set by MOPAC. In terms of domestic violence, consideration was being given to the purchase of cameras for officers in order for court action not to be so reliant on the victims, who were often reluctant to pursue prosecution. The officer added that domestic violence was a priority in the Community Safety Plan and that Harrow, due to its low crime levels, had the highest proportion of domestic violence in London.
- A Member questioned whether environmental health and food safety should be included in the plan. The officer advised that whilst he had hoped to include these issues as well as trading standards and potholes, it had not been possible this year because of late changes to accommodate the MOPAC plan and new Borough Commander's priorities. He hoped that these areas could be included in future plans.
- A Member expressed the view that retaining public confidence in the police would be a challenge in light of the spending review and different wards had different issues. The officer advised that the confidence in the police service related to fairness, civility and solving crime. A reduction in crime would result in more time to engage with the community. SmartWater distribution had resulted in 27,000 interactions with the public. DCI Stride advised that a quality call back process was in place. In terms of wards, Members were advised that limited resources had to be targeted effectively.
- With reference to the Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group (HPCCG), clarification was sought as to their funding situation and what measures were being taken to engage with community groups. The officer advised that HPCCG had lost its funding earlier than other CCGs in London as MOPAC felt it had not been performing the functions required. MOPAC was launching Community Safety Boards but it was currently unclear whether the HPCCG would be part of this. In terms of engagement with community groups, a number of voluntary groups had contributed to the Plan and had made valuable contributions including Mothers against Gangs and IGNITE. As the grants budget was reducing, it would be helpful if such groups could align themselves with the police.

- In response to a request for clarification on the purpose of Harrow Shield relationship project, the officer advised that it was funded by the Mayor and aimed to teach young people in schools about healthy relationships. It was a long term investment with the aim of reducing domestic violence.
- A Member stated that he was unhappy with the format of the plan as there was no baseline data, it was unclear what was to be delivered, by when and how it was going to be measured. It would also be helpful to have a recap of the previous year's targets to see if they had been met. In his view there was no other way of determining whether the Borough Commander was doing a good job. The officer undertook to look at these areas prior to the plan's submission to Cabinet.

The Chair thanked DCI Stride, Mr Galoria and the officer for their attendance and responses. He suggested that Members give some consideration as to how the Plan and Strategic Assessment could be scrutinised more regularly.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's comments on the draft Community Safety Plan be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 July 2013

Contact Officer:

Alison Atherton, Senior Professional Democratic Services

Tel: 020 8424 1266

Email: alison.atherton@harrow.gov.uk