

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 18 SEPTEMBER 2014

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2014

COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2014/15 - 2016/17

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which set out the proposed Community Safety Plan.

Following a brief introduction by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime & Community Safety, Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- A Member questioned whether there was evidence to show that the production of a Community Safety Plan contributed to a reduction in crime. The Portfolio Holder responded that there was no evidence as such, but that it was a requirement for the Council to have a Community Safety Plan.
- A Member felt greater definition was required in respect of the Council Priorities' target groups, in order to measure successfully whether the Plan supported positive impacts on crime and its consequences and to allow better focus on areas with the greatest potential impact. An officer explained that the Community Safety Plan was an overarching document which brought together other plans, and that target groups, such as 'families' could be affected by a range of problems, and therefore covered within several programmes, each of which would have its own discrete targets.
- Members noted the increase in domestic abuse crimes and that Harrow experienced a higher proportion of this crime than other London boroughs. The Borough Commander stated that in his view this was a welcome statistic, as he believed it reflected a significant increase in the reporting of such crimes, which historically had been under-reported, and demonstrated greater confidence amongst victims that the abuse would be taken seriously and that perpetrators would be pursued. He reported that Harrow had the highest number of arrests in London and a high number of convictions, which in turn would promote higher levels of reporting domestic abuse incidents. A Member expressed disappointment at the lack of comparative data, and queried whether it would be possible to determine if lower figures would demonstrate an actual reduction in crime, or a return to a reluctance to report crimes.
- Members commented on the discrepancy between low levels of crime generally in Harrow, against high levels of fear of crime. The Borough Commander agreed that this was a conundrum and he was working with communications staff to consider how best to address this through the media.
- In response to queries about crime statistics, the Borough Commander explained the following:
 - the use of force was the qualifying distinction between crimes listed as 'theft from person' or 'robbery';

- the apparent variation in the gender of victims reflected the fact that most reported thefts and robberies were amongst boys, and that women were rarely the target of ‘muggings’ or street crime as such;
 - there was an assumption that reported complaints were genuine and investigated as such, unless they were so unlikely or outrageous as to obviously not be true, and therefore all complainants were considered ‘victims of crime’.
- Members observed that the Community Safety Plan did not set out how priorities would be achieved; the full cost and impact on victims and services; the level of cross-departmental work in addressing targets; any inter-linking with the Youth Justice Plan; and a clear scope of what was and was not included in the Plan. An officer stated that as it was intended as an overarching document, bringing together other plans, it was not intended to provide a greater level of detail. He also stated that the targets identified by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime were the main drivers for inclusion within the scope of the Plan. The Borough Commander commented that, in respect of young offenders, the priority was to prevent young people moving on to a life of crime, and to use shock or diversionary strategies to achieve this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee’s comments be referred to Cabinet:

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 16 September 2014

Contact Officer:

Una Sullivan, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

Tel: 020 8424 1785

Email: una.sullivan@harrow.gov.uk