

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 24 MAY 2016

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 APRIL 2016

COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime & Community Safety introduced a report which summarised the Community Safety Strategy 2016-19 including current trends, emerging priorities and the implications of the Strategy. He made the following points

- it was a live document which would go back to Safer Harrow;
- there was a greater focus on high impact and high profile events around the world;
- although there were concerns at the reduction in police numbers and its effects had been recognised, Harrow was one of the safest London Boroughs. Harrow police also assisted at the more high profile events in Central London;
- concerns had been expressed regarding the increase in violence with injury involving persons who knew each other;
- co-ordination had been improved with the sharing of data and information working successfully.

The following questions were made by Members and responded to accordingly:

- statistical comparison was difficult due to the recording of figures for recorded crime for the London context being the year to January 2016 whilst those for the Local context were for October to September. This should be raised with the Police as the information was used to compare Harrow with the rest of the country. Attendance by a Police representative at the Committee would have been helpful.
- The difficulty in making comparisons with such data was noted. The figures were provided centrally by the Police Information Unit. Consideration would be given to the subtraction of data in order to report on a common period although as it was received in pdf format there was a capacity issue. The Borough Commander had access to more recent data than the officers.

- the fact that Safer Harrow was assisted in its work by the efforts of other strategic partnerships that had their own agendas and action plans suggested a lack of coordination.

The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning undertook to take the issue to the partnership Chairs in his capacity as the co-ordinator of the Community Strategy.

- Concerns regarding IT systems in the Youth Offending Service had been expressed for some time. Whilst it was reported that the introduction of the new IT for the service had not been problem free and that in the medium term it would make the operation of the team more effective, information was sought on the short term effects. The Committee requested the submission of a report to Members of the Committee outlining the problems and the expected date of resolution.

Difficulty had been experienced in rolling out the new system which had gone live in September. Teething problems had been reported to the supplier and progress was being made. There had been some infrastructure issues during the move onto Citrix resulting in the system not working some years ago, but this was the old system rather than the new system. The officers undertook to report back on the matter as requested.

- Additional information was sought on the increase in violence with injury of 10.4%. How was it measured that this was due to an increase in reporting and not an increase in crime? A request was made to track reports of domestic violence over the previous 5 years in order to see if there was a trend and, if so, more evidence was requested as to why reporting had increased.

There were a number of aspects such as crime on the street and although it was not possible to substantiate, it was considered that the main reason for the increase was the national trend in the increase in domestic violence reporting.

The Portfolio Holder reported that it inferred increased signposting such as in hospital and by the police. In addition there had been reclassification in the way data was reported to include children and blood as violence and injury.

- What percentage of the 23% increase in domestic and sexual violence reporting was violence with injury as the latter had increased by 10.4%?

The officer undertook to provide a breakdown of the information.

- What was the source of the five key attributes for cohesive communities

This reflected national formats.

- With regard to community cohesion, the report recognised the importance in identification of changing issues, and responding quickly and effectively when there were tensions to be addressed. However, in the absence of information on which areas of the Council were responsible for which activities, it was difficult to monitor how issues were addressed and who was responsible.

The Safer Harrow representatives together with Lead partners in Harrow co-ordinated activities. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning, had responsibility for community cohesion matters but did not have management of front line services. The Portfolio Holder stated that a page in the report identifying who was responsible for the different activities would be useful.

- Although the attributes for community cohesion that could be influenced by other social programmes and outcomes were listed, there were no figures to supplement the indicators. As the action plan was developed could it be reported to the Committee together with data, measures and baseline.

The action plan would be submitted to the Committee as it developed. Work was taking place with the community to develop trust and work together. It was noted that the Action Plan referenced was the Prevent Action Plan and not the Community Cohesion Action Plan.

- What does 'political trust' mean

The officer undertook to check the source and come back

- What were the reasons for the reduction in burglary, did it result from specific initiatives?.

The arrest of prolific burglars affected the figures.

- It would be of interest for the Borough Commander to make a presentation on his aspirations for Harrow to be a safer borough and what the steps would be.

The comments of the Committee would be submitted to the Safer Harrow Group.

Resolved:

That the comments of the Committee on the draft Community Safety Strategy be noted and referred to Cabinet.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background documents

None

Contact Officer:

Miriam Wearing, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 020 8424 1542

Email: Miriam.wearing@harrow.gov.uk