

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW**

### **CABINET – 13 JULY 2017**

#### **REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 JUNE 2017**

#### **Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy for 2017-2020**

The Committee considered a report setting out the strategic vision of Harrow's Community Safety Partnership in the Annual Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy for 2017-2020. In discussion, the following principal points were made:

- a) The information in the strategy related to the year October 2015 to September 2017, and it was therefore not reflecting the current position in the Borough, but rather the circumstances more than 9 months previously. Some more recent information was made available at the meeting, and it was acknowledged that reporting comprehensive, up-to-date information was challenging, but the Committee nevertheless considered it difficult to engage with the issues raised in the report when circumstances could have altered significantly in the interim period. It was suggested that arrangements be made for the Committee's consideration of the data to be brought forward to February while retaining the approval of the annual strategy in June.
- b) The strategy had been influenced by the new approach to policing and crime taken by the Mayor of London elected in May 2016. The previous Mayor had established seven key areas of priority across the capital based on the outcome of public consultation, yet some of these were not prevalent issues in Harrow borough and there had therefore been a mismatch between regional and local priorities.
- c) One of the themes of the new strategy was the value of focusing on some low volume, but high impact crimes rather than simply targeting the high volume crimes. There had also been efforts to coordinate with other separate strategies, for example, by integrating the domestic violence strategy.
- d) There was reference to instances of people coming from other boroughs to commit crime locally, for example, the recent case of someone stabbed to death in South Harrow. There were a number of cross-borough initiatives, including on knife crime, designed to mount a more effective response to these situations. Meetings on crime and community safety were held with Ealing, Brent, Barnet and Watford. Superintendent Claire Clark confirmed that there were also discussions about the Mayor's Office for Policing and

Crime (MOPAC) moving towards a “merger” of their policing resources across groups of boroughs.

- e) There had been growing concerns over the number of young people caught carrying knives; there were some links to gang activity, but also many young people were mistakenly doing so for reasons of self-defence. Young people were increasingly worried over the issue as there were predominantly the victims of knife attacks. A considerable amount of time and effort was devoted to trying to engage young people. By comparison with other areas of London, Harrow did not have high numbers of these crimes, but they were on the increase and were often associated with perpetrators from other areas. Superintendent Clark confirmed that regular weapons sweeps were carried out and there was good community support for spreading the message about the dangers involved.
- f) The Harrow Youth Parliament had produced very helpful cards for young people on the subject of knife crime; it was suggested that these would help both spread the message about dangers in carrying knives but also help in the interaction between police officers and young people when searches were carried out. Superintendent Clark was interested in learning more about the cards and confirmed that she was aware of some loss of confidence among officers in carrying out knife searches of young people. She underlined that searches could only be initiated where the Police officer had a reasonable suspicion that a weapon might be involved; they had to be targeted and carried out for a specific reason. She was concerned that young people often did not object to the search itself, but perhaps to the manner and approach of the Police officer, so there were lessons to be learned about appropriate and respectful conduct in these situations. In conjunction with knife crime charities, Superintendent Clark was planning a seminar for parents in September, and was keen to develop a range of community-based activities to highlight the issues involved, including role models among those who had turned away from knife crime, engagement with Police cadets, the use of drama, etc. The Street Doctor scheme was a new programme and further information would be provided at the seminar for parents.
- g) Harrow was in the fortunate position that Michael Lockwood was a lead Chief Executive for policing and crime in the capital and was therefore in a better position to influence discussions and decisions at a regional level.
- h) Members expressed concern that there had as yet been no convictions for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Borough. Superintendent Clark was aware that there had been very few across London and would check whether any prosecutions had been initiated in the Borough. A separate report on FGM had been prepared for the Scrutiny Lead Members and this included some data on referrals as well as an outline of the good work being done to encourage reporting.
- i) In relation to tackling domestic violence, the Council had invested funds in the work of community-based organisations providing support to victims and building confidence to report crimes and abuse. There was also support for school-based programmes highlighting issues of sexual violence and coercion. The Council was keen to work with voluntary and community

organisations, such as the Shiva Foundation, in these areas. It was acknowledged that one of the factors behind under-reporting of these crimes was the immigration status of the victims. It was understood that cases of domestic abuse involving “coercive control” were not progressed mainly because complainants were not willing to appear in court to give evidence.

- j) London Councils had led the project examining the opportunities to secure sustainable CCTV provision across the capital. It was understood this had been reported to the London Crime Board but this would be confirmed.
- k) The “Equaliteach” project, funded through the Home Office, was being offered to schools to help respond to the risks of radicalisation of vulnerable young people. Some schools had been concerned about WRAP training within the Prevent programme, but there had been few, if any, issues about information sharing.
- l) The Harrow Youth Council representative expressed concern that the report gave insufficient coverage to prevention strategies; reference was made to the work of charitable organisations such as WISH and Compass, and to the impact of the reorganisation of youth services on the level of support which could be provided to young people. The Council was trying to maximise the value of its resources even though there had been cuts in funding; the Police were also facing further budget cuts totalling £400 million across London. The point with regard to the balance in the strategy between prevention of crime and dealing with perpetrators would be reconsidered. There were many measures focused on early intervention and prevention and the contribution of the Harrow Youth Parliament to the review of these, was very welcome.
- m) There was some concern that progress in the Borough on crime and community safety might be overshadowed by an undue focus on London-wide issues and this was reinforced by the reference to future merging of Police responsibilities across boroughs. It was argued that Harrow should continue to focus on its own priorities and take pride in the effectiveness of so many of its activities. Superintendent Clark could not provide any assurances about the decisions by the Mayor of London and MOPAC about the reorganisation of policing across the capital or indeed, about the impact of pending budget cuts in the Metropolitan Police. However, in her first few months in post in the Borough, she had been impressed by the potential of the initiatives developed to tackle crime and improve community safety.
- n) It was acknowledged that access to mental health services for young people has been an issue; indeed it now had a national profile. It would be increasingly important for the Council to continue working closely with the health sector and relevant voluntary organisations and schools to strengthen the Future in Mind [Harrow Horizons] programme which has recently been commissioned through Barnardos, to deliver an extensive menu of emotional well-being and mental health services for children and young people in Harrow.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted and that the comments made at the meeting be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet when it considers the Annual Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy.

Background Documents:

Agenda of the Overview and scrutiny Committee – 27 June 2017: Report on the Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy for 2017-2020.

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