

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

27 JUNE 2017

Chair:	* Councillor Phillip O'Dell	
Councillors:	* Richard Almond	Barry Kendler
	* Jo Dooley	* Jerry Miles
	* Ms Pamela Fitzpatrick	* Chris Mote
	* Ameet Jogia	* Paul Osborn
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	* Mr N Ransley	None
	Reverend P Reece	
Non-voting Co-opted:	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	

* Denotes Member present

219. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that no Reserve Members had been nominated to attend the meeting.

220. Appointment of Coopted Member

RESOLVED: To approve the appointment of Mr Neville Ransley as a co-opted member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing the Roman Catholic Church diocesan education authority.

221. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

222. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2017 be taken as read and signed as a correct record

223. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting.

224. References from Council/Cabinet

There were none.

RESOLVED ITEMS

225. Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy

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.

226. Street Trading Policy and Charges

Richard Le Brun, Head of Community and Public Protection, introduced the report explaining the delay in the implementation of a new policy due to operational and enforcement issues which had arisen. It would have been possible for the Council to introduce fees and charges from as early as 2000, but it had waited many years before judging it to be appropriate for Harrow. A number of businesses had become concerned about its impact and there were uncertainties about how to deal with private land on the margins of public highway. The Council were trying to adopt a gradual and practical approach to implementation, working with local businesses to determine appropriate arrangements for particular locations. This involved treating some areas of private land which had been maintained by the Council as public highway for the purposes of street trading. The Council was working with the West London Alliance to try to achieve greater consistency in the charges to businesses and to coordinate licensing schemes across the sub-region. Efforts were made to underline the benefits, including to local businesses, arising from the removal of clutter and obstructions from pavements.

A Member suggested that the Council need to adopt a clearer statement about whether certain types of street trading such as food markets were favoured and would be supported. The enforced reduction of the trading area available to a business could threaten its viability, so it would be important for the Council to consider such factors as shop vacancy rates in particular areas.

The Head of Community and Public Protection confirmed that the Council was monitoring the position in relation to business viability and economic development more broadly. He acknowledged the value of working with ward councillors and local businesses to develop a balanced approach in the relevant areas which considered both commercial needs and the importance of clear highways for pedestrian and vehicle movements. The Council had issued 72 licences to date and there was a phased and considered approach to enforcement involving discussions with business owners before any more formal action was considered. A review would take place later in the year to

include business opinion and gauge the appetite for further street trading licences; depending on the level of interest, it might be possible to reduce fees as the volume increased. The value of food markets was recognised, though it would be important to select the right locations in terms of space and footfall.

In response to a Member's query about developing a package to offer businesses which would include, say, advertising for the street trading activity, the Head of Community and Public Protection advised that the banner and advertising policy was being reviewed and this proposal considered in that context; of course, road safety issues might come into play if advertisements were unsuitably located.

A Member asked about the income expectations for this policy in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and whether that would need to be adjusted in the light of performance to date. The Head of Community and Public Protection advised that, based on the current 11 designated areas were not in themselves sufficient to generate the £200,000 envisaged in the MTFS, but the policy was to be extended into other areas in the Borough. The regular monitoring suggested that the £200,000 would be met, but this could not be guaranteed at this stage, less than three months into the financial year.

In response to a Member's enquiry about enforcement arrangements, the Head of Community and Public Protection advised that there was a range of five fixed-penalty notices but the first step was to persuade businesses to comply before formal action. If there was no response, visits would take place and notices would be issued in the event of further non-compliance. Ultimately, prosecution would be considered and convictions could attract penalties such as fines up to £20,000. There were also powers to remove street trading material except perishable goods.

In response to a Member's query about the position of car washes in relation to street trading, it was explained that this was not clear though the use was not presently classed as street trading. In conjunction with the Planning section, efforts were in hand to address new car washes in terms of planning permission; there were sometimes uncertainties about whether they were businesses in their own right and whether the use was temporary or not.

A Member asked about the proactive and positive promotion of street trading as a business opportunity and making the policy more accessible via the Council website, it was acknowledged that it was currently not easy for businesses to track down relevant information on the website. However, there was a dedicated officer who worked with the Economic Development office and visited businesses premises to discuss opportunities. Council staff were conscious that this was an area of work subject to detailed legislation and regulation, and that businesses would need help navigating. Work was in hand with the Business Improvement District to produce user-friendly guidance for business owners.

A Member referred to the area near the South Harrow Tube station and bus stops on Northolt Road, pointing out that there were ongoing disagreements between pedestrians and businesses using the pavement for street trading.

The Head of Community and Public Protection reported that a minimum 2.5 metres width of pavement had to be safeguarded for pedestrians and businesses could normally only use the pavement up to 1 metre from their premises. Licences were clear about the measurements which applied to the particular location. The Council would conduct inspections and sometimes “days of action” in particular shopping areas, but it was not unusual for certain businesses to return subsequently to using more areas than they should. The Council relied on reports of alleged non-compliance, including from staff such as street cleaners.

A Member suggested that a report on progress be made in 8 months’ time and the Chair asked that this be circulated to all members of the Committee as a monitoring report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

227. Health Visiting Scrutiny Review

Councillor Janet Mote, the Chair of the Health Visiting Scrutiny Challenge Panel, introduced the report focusing on its recommendations which were partly for the Council and partly for the London North West NHS Trust. The results of the review would be fed into the reprocurement of the service which would be aimed at ages 0-19 in future and would incorporate school nursing services.

In discussion of the report, the following issues were raised:

- a) Language barriers were a problem for the service, leading to misinformation and misinterpretation. Five main languages were covered, but there were still challenges in a borough as diverse as Harrow. The review had even revealed that some health visitors were unaware of the availability of translation services. Also, the issues went beyond language into areas of cultural differences and practices.
- b) The performance data had revealed an unacceptable level of no-shows by the age of two and a half. In the reprocurement exercise, efforts would be made to evaluate the readiness of prospective providers to offer innovative solutions to the performance issues. It was suggested that best practice in other areas be carefully researched and that benchmarks be incorporated in the new contract to incentivise better performance.
- c) The Harrow Youth Parliament representative raised the question of mental health issues for young people, particularly in the teenage years, and also how the review would deal with the caseload problems identified. It was confirmed that the extension of the new service to the age of 19 would provide for mental health of teenagers to be addressed. Mental health issues were also very relevant to mothers and fathers who could suffer from depression and isolation. The

review included recommendations on staffing and caseloads, and these would need to be reflected in the contract specification in future.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

To refer the review's recommendations to Cabinet and to the London North West NHS Trust for consideration, as appropriate.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) to endorse the findings and recommendations of the Health Visiting Service Review; and
- (2) to acknowledge that the substantive Cabinet response will be available in September.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.50 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PHILLIP O'DELL
Chair