

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

6 June 2023

Present:

Chair: Councillor Amir Moshenson

Councillors: June Baxter
Govind Bharadia
Graham Henson
Maxine Henson
Vipin Mithani
Samir Sumaria

**In attendance
(Councillors):** Councillor Ajana Patel
For Minute 48

**Apologies
received:** Councillor Dan Anderson
Councillor Rashmi Ali
Councillor Eden Kulig

Absent: Harrow Youth Parliament
Representative
Reverend P Reece
Ms M Trivedi

48. Community Safety Strategy 2023-26

Members received an introduction to the report from Councillor Anjana Patel, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety. The report set out the rationale for the updated Community Safety Strategy which was aligned to the new Corporate Plan.

The Portfolio holder, Superintendent Matt Cray and Assistant Director for Strategy and Partnerships supported by other officers, took Members through the report and draft strategy and highlighted the following:

- The three-year strategy set out a clear vision and comprehensive delivery plan for how the Safer Harrow Partnership would deliver community safety priorities, how each priority would be measured, and progress monitored. Working with Harrow's statutory and VCS partners as well as residents, communities, local businesses and stakeholders would be instrumental in keeping the residents of Harrow safe from crime and repeat victimisation and help achieve desired outcomes.
- The strategy outlined six community safety priorities for Harrow, and how each of these priorities would be measured and progress monitored. These priorities were identified through the analysis of Harrow-specific data and trends and were proposed by statutory and non-statutory partners at consultation workshops, and as such they were based on insight and evidence. The six priorities for Community Safety in Harrow were:
 - Tackling and reducing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
 - Reducing incidents of burglary / motor vehicle crime / robbery
 - Reducing the number of violent incidents in the borough
 - Tackling and reducing offences and harm caused by drugs
 - Tackling Hate Crime
 - Perception of crime
- As the overarching body which had the statutory responsibility to produce a Community Safety Strategy, the SHP would oversee this work. Being a strategic Board, the partnership would delegate the operational aspects of this strategy to sub-groups who would implement the work and report back to the partnership quarterly. This would be under the remit of the SHP with the Board's Terms of Reference already allowing for the establishment of thematic sub-groups and setting out how they report to the SHP.

Next Steps

- There would be six thematic sub-groups which reflect the six priorities in the Community Safety Strategy. To avoid duplication, any forums that currently exist would report to the SHG on a quarterly basis.
- The Strategy would cover the period 2023 to 2026 and would be reviewed annually by Safer Harrow.

Members asked the following questions

A Member asked about the use of scooters in criminal activities on Harrow roads. Councillor Ajana Patel confirmed that use of scooters was not legally allowed on Harrow roads. Superintendent Matt Cray agreed to investigate it.

Another Member asked about the drop in public perception to 45% and asked for the latest figures. It was explained that the latest figures were not available, and that Harrow was in a fortunate position with strong scores in this area.

Another Member asked how Harrow's figures fared when compared to other boroughs outside London considering what was stated on page 29 of the agenda, that Harrow was the safest borough. The Superintendent explained that recent figures were not available.

The Vice-Chair Councillor Graham Henson, asked about the implementation of the London Police and Crime Plan and clarification on the non-inclusion of sexual exploitation of children. An officer explained that it was referenced on page 33 of the agenda and that the Council was working with children's services and partners to ensure that this remained on the agenda.

A member expressed concern that the team was small and wondered if they were overwhelmed given the increase in number of crimes reported. Councillor Ajana Patel and an officer explained that the current size of the team had not impacted its effectiveness and there had been a deliberate attempt to increase the number of crimes reported by finding new ways of encouraging people to report crime.

A Member questioned about how effective the Harrow safer place work. An officer explained that it was launched for businesses in Harrow in 2021. It had proved difficult getting businesses on board, officers were working hard to get them to engage with the programme. The take up had not been as great as was expected.

The Vice-Chair questioned about mental health crisis and new referral system how it would be tackled in partnership across the council. It was explained that work would be done in partnership to prevent officers being tied up dealing with incidents with mental health issues when it should be the responsibility of another agency. Should be careful to focus on priority.

The Vice-Chair asked how the Council, Police and Partnerships would ensure that people do not fall off the system as this year's budget review of the mental health strategy had brought mental health support staff services back into the Council. Access to these services was now reduced to referral systems. There were reports and concerns that some could not get through the mental health service. The Assistant Director for Strategy and Partnerships explained that the officers were prepared and would use a partnership/public health approach to this. There would be frequent reviews to capture any new issues.

The Vice-Chair proposed that a suitable form of words be added into the strategy to address mental health. Officers and the Portfolio Holder felt that mental health had been captured on page 28 of the agenda and perhaps the best place for the wording was the Delivery Plan to avoid delaying the strategy any further as it had been due to the Baroness Casey Review.

The Chair suggested that a form of words could be added in Section 2, the foreword of the strategy to address mental health and it was agreed by Members.

The Vice-Chair asked why Community cohesion was not mentioned in the strategy. It was explained that it was, under tackling hate crime and at

harmony was high in Harrow and there was focus on tackling hate crime as detailed in the strategy on page 35 of the agenda.

A Member asked why drug offences had increased by 29%. It was explained that more the Council's achieving more conviction around possession with intention to supply. This was due to training and proactive actions around Harrow Town Centre. The Council along with Partners were combating drugs partnership with priorities and a delivery plan to extend early intervention primary schools. In response to a subsequent question on planned intervention for the youth, the officer further explained that the outcome of Baroness Casey's review had been incorporated in the delivery plan and was a big piece of work but would rely on voluntary sector with partnerships that could be mobilised immediately, and capacity built for funding.

A Member questioned if councillors and residents were made aware of residential rehabilitation centres in their ward or communities. Officers explained that could be done but there was the need to maintain confidentiality for those in secure treatment.

A Member questioned about gang related activities what had been done and its connection to knife crimes. The Superintendent explained that in relation to knife crimes and gang activities, Harrow was doing well compared to other boroughs. Officers highlighted the partnership with the Police which was well managed and streamlined to deal with priorities.

A Member asked about if planned "Days of action" would be effectively promoted to ensure good attendance. The Portfolio Holder explained that rather than days, "weeks of action" was planned. It would be themed, well actioned, very well advertised, a joint communication plan had been put in place to promote community confidence in the event and location would be based on need and intelligence received.

The Chair commented that he was encouraged to see the attempt to increase police presence and visibility at night and asked for further explanations about the Turn Around Strategy. The Superintendent explained that the new strategy would be launched at the end of June to partners and wider communities and would be about delivering better policing through community crime fighting, service through stronger neighbourhoods, protection of the public from harm, crime reduction and the best outcomes for victim. It would also focus on policing by consent, inclusion and diversity and development of a strong organisational core.

The Chair asked about increased police presence and the Superintendent informed the chair that there was a planned recruitment campaign for the 500 PCSO's this year and a further 1600 in the next three years to address that.

The Vice-Chair asked for an update on the Harris Safer Neighbourhood Board, and it was explained that there were only five members of the board but there were plans to recruit more members to increase the ability of the board to link in more effectively with their communities and the ward panels.

The Superintendent of Police confirmed his availability and willingness to attend ward panels.

The Chair asked a question relating to the Metropolitan Police's continued policy on zero tolerance for hate crimes and Superintendent Matt Cray confirmed that this policy was ongoing that that indeed he would be liaising with Chief Superintendent Ovens to review what could be used from the approach during his time as Borough Commander.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

RESOLVED: That Cabinet considers including mental health in the third paragraph (below) on page 28 of the agenda.

“The work on each of these priorities will be considered further in specific thematic strategies, including one focusing on VAWG and domestic abuse, and the Adolescent Safeguarding strategy, the latter linking to many of our key priorities in this document.”