

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 – KNIFE CRIME AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

MINUTES

Wednesday 11th July 2018

PRESENT: Councillors: Aysha Raza (Chair), Praveen Anand, Jon Ball, Seema Kumar (Vice-Chair), Carlo Lusuardi, Tariq Mahmood, Rajinder Mann, and Simon Woodroofe.

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Yvonne Johnson - Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder Schools and Children's Services

LBE Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains - Scrutiny Review Officer
Charles Barnard - Head of Early Years and SAFE 0-18
Ian Jenkins - Head of Integrated Youth Service
Janine Jenkinson - Democratic Services Officer
Jess Murray - Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations
Paul Murphy - Safer Communities Operations Manager

1. Apologies for Absence
(Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Summers had tendered his apologies prior to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private
(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

4. Panel Operations in 2018-2019
(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the first meeting of the Knife Crime and Youth Engagement Panel, and asked the Panel to consider the Terms of Reference and the Work Programme for the forthcoming year.

Resolved: That the Panel:

- I. agreed the Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- II. agreed to refer the Terms of Reference to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval;

- III. agreed the provisional Work Programme, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report; and
- IV. approved the agenda items and actions for the next meeting, due to be held on 18 September 2018.

5. Youth Justice Service Dealing with Knife Crime and Engagement
(Agenda Item 5)

Overview of Knife Crime in the Borough

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations, provided the Panel with a strategic overview of knife crime in Ealing.

Members were advised that the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) had launched a Knife Crime Strategy in 2017 to address the rising number of knife crime offences occurring in London. Recent crime rate statistics had shown that for a short period at the beginning of 2018 the murder rate in London was higher than that in New York, and this had understandably garnered significant media attention.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations explained that the MOPAC Strategy required every London borough to establish a knife crime action plan to tackle violence locally, created in partnership with the Metropolitan Police. Ealing Council's action plan would be presented to both the Safer Ealing Partnership and the Cabinet in the near future. The West Area Police Basic Command Unit would lead on the approach to be adopted across Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon. Members were informed that across all London boroughs, Ealing was ranked in 15th place for knife crime offences.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations provided members with a summary of key data in relation to knife crime, and advised that this was available to view on the MOPAC website: [Weapon-enabled Crime Dashboard \(website link\)](#)

Data indicated that the highest number of weapon offences occurred in the East Acton, Elthorne, Greenford Broadway, Northfield, South Acton and Southall Broadway wards. It was highlighted that there was a particular issue relating to historic gang rivalry occurring in the Harrow / Northolt border area.

It was noted that the majority of victims and offenders were aged 16 to 20 years old. There was some discussion regarding the ethnicity of victims and offenders and it was noted that certain ethnic groups were disproportionately over represented and this was an issue that required addressing.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that the highest number of offences occurred during October, and this was attributed to the shorter daylight hours and events such as Halloween, Bonfire Night, and Diwali; the fewest offences occurred during July and August, and this was attributed to young people being out of school and spending less time together.

The Panel was advised that the Safer Communities Team worked with other departments across the Council and the police to deliver a partnership approach to tackle crime.

The role of Safer Communities included:

- Overseeing the Safer Ealing Partnership and the partnership hub.
- Intervening, by utilising warnings, including Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs).
- Person and premises based enforcement Community Protection Notices (CPNs), Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs), possession orders and closure orders.
- The use of area based enforcement such as Public Space Protection Orders.
- The Safer Communities Analyst and Research Team (SCART) undertook research and analysis relating to knife crime and other key areas.
- Management of public spaces, commissioning and overseeing Parkguard's work in parks and housing estates.
- Regulation of commercial retailers via Regulatory Services, including knife sales and under age test purchasing.
- Key link for local policing teams and other police services.

Members were advised that analysis of the following areas would be undertaken:

- In depth analysis of police data gathered over the last five years relating to offences involving knife, bottle and bladed items.
- An analysis and understanding of how knife crime interacted with child sexual exploitation. Work with the Council's children's services to profile those at risk of exploitation, gang involvement and radicalisation and tactics to disrupt criminal behaviour.
- Further analysis of victim and perpetrator profiles.
- Analysis of 'county lines' information and a new pan-London response. 'County lines' being the term used to describe a form of organised crime where criminals based in urban areas pressurised vulnerable people and children to transport, store and sell drugs in smaller county towns.

Questions

Councillor Kumar asked if the use of Section 60 (of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) powers to stop and search was intelligence led and based on data analysis by the SCART team. In view of the Harrow / Northolt border being a particular 'hot spot', she asked if the police intended to increase its use of stop and search in this area. She reported that Hillingdon Police had increased its use of stop and search, and this had resulted in a reduction in knife crime.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations explained that the SCART team analysed trends in the Borough and shared the information with the police. The Safer Communities Team discussed strategies and particular patrol areas with the police. He explained that police use of Section 60 powers had to be used on the basis of a reasonable suspicion. He advised that this issue could be explored further with the police representative due to attend the November Panel meeting.

Councillor Rajinder Mann raised concerns regarding the closure of police stations and the reduction of police resources to tackle offences. In addition, he asked how knife crime was addressed in schools.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service advised that schools had policies in place to deal with knife crime and if a young person was found in possession of a weapon they would be excluded from school and reported to the police and the Youth Justice Service. He explained that increasingly, younger children were being found to be in possession of weapons, the youngest reported incident being of an 11 year old possessing a knife in school. In addition, he explained that work was being undertaken in primary and secondary schools and community groups, particularly intervention work with boys from a Somali background.

Councillor Raza noted the high number of offences that occurred on the Hillingdon/Harrow border and asked if the respective local authorities adopted a similar approach to knife crime.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that Ealing, Hillingdon and Hounslow had a single integrated Basic Command Unit (BCU). In relation to local authorities he outlined the practical difficulties of sharing information with other organisations, due to the use of different systems and data protection limitations. He highlighted that Harrow operated from a separate BCU and sharing information between BCUs was something that could be improved.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations explained that the London Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy would require all boroughs to establish an action plan for dealing with knife crime and Harrow would be part of this framework. In Ealing, the Northolt / Harrow border presented one of the biggest challenges.

Councillor Ball asked if interventions were being targeted at particular communities, in light of the over representation of certain ethnic groups involved in knife crime incidents.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service said Somali males, under 25 years old, were over represented in fatality statistics. He explained that bespoke programmes were established to divert high risk young people away from criminal activity.

Councillor Lusuardi asked if the difficulty in relation to data sharing with other local authorities was primarily technical or a reluctance to share the information.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that there were issues in relation to the complexity of sharing information with other organisations that

operated different systems, and corporate trust, i.e officers having the confidence that information shared would be used and stored appropriately.

Councillor Mahmood asked if there was a presence of organised crime gangs in Ealing. In addition, he noted the successful work of the Violence Reduction Unit in Glasgow to tackle the city's knife crime culture.

In response the Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations explained that drug dealing was a contributing factor to the number of knife crime offences. In addition, he explained that the level of violence had escalated in recent years, and whereas in the past a stabbing was used as a warning or a means to humiliate an enemy (by way of stabbing a victim in the buttocks), increasingly victims sustained multiple and often fatal wounds.

Councillor Kumar commented that often boys would ask girls to carrying weapons for them, as it was considered less likely that a girl would be stopped and searched.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager said there was a conversation to be had in relation to a public health approach to tackle knife crime, which would involve considering wider issues, such as housing, education, mental health and income.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service informed the Panel of two interventions aimed at deterring young people on the verge of gang criminality. The Safe Space Project, and 'Your Life, You Choose' a magistrate-led project, which brought together justices of the peace, the police, victim support, prison officers, and ex-offenders to provide a day of workshops for schoolchildren, about the consequences of crime, for the offender, their family, friends, victims and the wider community.

Youth Justice Service

The Head of Integrated Youth Service presented a report that identified and set out the process through the criminal justice system, further to a young person being found in possession of a knife or sharp pointed blade.

Members were informed that Ealing Youth Justice Service (YJS) was divided into two areas of responsibility: the early intervention Out of Court (OOC) team, that worked with young people and partners to reduce the likelihood of a young person appearing in court, and the post court team that worked with young people who had been found guilty in a youth court and were awaiting sentence or had been sentenced.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service advised that all policies relating to the YJS were national policies directed from the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, with some local interpretation available on practice. He explained that normally in the case of a young person aged 15 years or under, in possession with no aggravating factors, the starting point would be to issue a Youth Conditional Caution. A young person aged 16 years or over would normally be charged. A second arrest for a young person aged 15 years or under, in possession of a knife or sharp pointed blade would result in a charge unless exceptional circumstances applied. There was a statutory responsibility on the police to consult the OOC team on the most appropriate outcome or disposal decision for a young person who had committed an offence. Following a decision being made on the best outcome, all young people were encouraged to take part in intervention activities or programmes which were

either punitive, reparatory, or restorative, within three months of the decision being made. When a young person was referred through the OOC process for a knife offence, the young person was required to take part in a knife awareness programme, currently run by the London Ambulance Service.

Members were informed that the post court team was responsible for supporting young people through the criminal justice system. Young people who had been charged appeared in court, and the Youth Bench at Ealing Magistrates Court determined the sanctions based on a pre-sentence report compiled by the YJS post court team. The report was completed following an assessment interview with the young person and their family, and explored the reasons behind the offending. The pre-sentence report set out options for the magistrates to consider when sentencing the young person. The options were varied and could include: Conditional Discharge, Fine, Referral Order, Youth Referral Order, Youth Referral Order with Intensive Supervision and Support, and a custodial sentence. The post court team was responsible for ensuring the sentence was carried out as it was intended. A key part of the plan was engagement with the young person and their family to ensure there were no further instances of re-offending. An intervention plan would take into account a young person's education provision, housing, friendship circle, health and the offence, and draw together bespoke interventions for the young person to engage with for the duration of the order. Legally the young person must comply, if there was non-compliance, there was a process to be followed before the young person could be returned to court.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service highlighted some of the many programmes undertaken to engage with young people across the Borough, including: Future Youth Inspired, Young Ealing Safeguarding, Summer Arts College, and Safe Space. The main forums of engagement with young people were through the three youth clubs in Ealing: Young Adult Centre, Bollo Youth Club and Westside.

Questions

Councillor Mahmood asked for some information about the Redthread charity and the work it carried out.

The Head of Community Safety, Tenancies and Regulatory Operations explained that Redthread was a youth work charity aimed at supporting young people (aged 11-24 years old) who had been taken to hospital with knife or gun injuries, or who were victims of sexual assault. The charity currently operated in four London hospital Major Trauma Centres, including St Mary's Hospital. Youth workers utilised the opportunity to reach out to young people, whilst they were in hospital, to ask them to reflect on behaviour and choices that had led them to being admitted to the emergency department. This moment of crisis was termed a 'teachable moment', the brief window when a young person was most receptive to a message about how to make changes in their life. The Panel was advised that a representative from Redthread was scheduled to attend the next Panel meeting in September.

Councillor Ball asked for some further information regarding the Summer Arts College and its outcomes.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service explained that the programme ran during the summer months in Gunnersbury Park in Ealing and Hanwell Zoo, with young people

who had been convicted of offences or were part of the OOC programme. The young people who took part were aged 14 to 19 years old, and priority was given to those at high risk of re-offending and those who were also at risk of, or actually disengaged from education, training or employment. There were two programmes with 15 young people on each programme for a three week period, each session ran from 9 am to 4 pm, and involved participants learning about art, self-discipline, confidence and team work. Members were advised that there was a high level of participation, the programme was NVQ accredited, and a high percentage of young people achieved a bronze, silver or gold award. In relation to funding, members were informed that the Council was paid by Unitas to deliver the Summer Arts College programme, so the scheme was cost neutral to the Council.

Councillor Lusuardi asked about the arrangements and resources for dealing with first time offenders, including the circumstances in which a young person would avoid court.

The Head of Integrated Youth Service explained that for a first offence the young person would normally avoid court unless there were significantly serious factors. Sanctions such as a curfew were relatively easy to monitor and would involve the young person attending an appointment with the YJS team and being at home by a certain time.

Councillor Kumar highlighted that she had provided feedback in relation to the recent Panel site visit to Bollo Brook Youth Centre. A summary of her comments and observations was circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Woodroffe suggested that some of the future meetings could be held in venues outside of the Town Hall.

Resolved: That the reports providing an overview of knife crime and youth engagement in the Borough be received by the Panel.

6. Date of Next Meeting
(Agenda Item 6)

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 18 September 2018.

Councillor Aysha Raza, Chair.

The meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.