

London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 22 October 2020

Non-confidential minutes of the virtual meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 22 October 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Debono (Chair), Gallagher (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Chapman, Chowdhury, Cutler, Gantly, Heather, Hyde, Jeapes, O'Sullivan, Picknell, Poyser, Russell and Wayne

Also Present: **Councillors:** Lukes and Gill

Councillor Theresa Debono in the Chair

- 224 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**
Councillor Bell-Bradford and Councillor Gallagher for lateness
- 225 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**
None
- 226 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**
None
- 227 **MEMBERSHIP/TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020/21 (Item A4)**
RESOLVED:
That the report be noted
- 228 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A5)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2020 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them
- 229 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A6)**
The Chair stated that the order of business would be as follows –
Annual Crime and Disorder report
COVID 19 update
Financial Monitoring
Monitoring report
- 230 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**
The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions
- 231 **ANNUAL CRIME AND DISORDER REPORT/QUESTIONS TO BOROUGH COMMANDER/EXECUTIVE MEMBER (Item C2)**

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Raj Kohli, Borough Commander, Catherine Briody, Keith Stanger, Curtis Ashton and the Executive Member Community and Pandemic response, Councillor Lukes were present and outlined the presentation, during which the following main points were made –

- There were 27,333 total notifiable offences in 2019/20 representing a 7.8% decrease on 2018/19
- Islington recorded a decrease in violence against the person in 2019/20, compared to 2018/19. Islington has also recorded a 18.5% decrease in knife crime in 2019/20, and a 30.5% decrease in knife crime with injury offences
- Islington recorded a 4.9% decrease in youth violence, and no change in serious youth violence. Reductions in all main crime types, with the exception of drug offences and public order offences
- Domestic violence offences have recorded increases in Islington, however there are larger increases across the MPS
- Overall Islington has seen an increase of 13% in hate crime flagged offences, which is in line with MPS as a whole
- Policing Islington – Successes, Changes, Challenges – 9,594 stop and searches over the last 12 months with 2,045 positive outcomes and approximately half amounted to an arrest
- Creation of violence suppression unit to focus on violent crime, and co-located officers in Public Protection and Street Population teams
- Pedal cycle theft has increased significantly – has been investment in a Police cycle team
- Operation Perch ran over Summer with 16 arrests, 64 stop and search, 21 weapons sweeps, 11 seized vehicles, 6 warrants, and numerous dispersals
- During COVID an increase of 6% in domestic abuse. Sexual offences showed a significant reduction, and there has been a return to designated investigation units, which has had a significant impact on detection rates
- Council invested £2m additional funding over 3 years against Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) to increase support, work with perpetrators, provide homelessness and housing support, and enhance skills and knowledge of frontline practitioners
- There has been a comprehensive partnership response in Islington during the pandemic to VAWG, which has meant that services have been able to cope
- Youth crime – main highlights - Youth safety strategy is in the process of being finalised, and the number of YOS young people attending school or AP is not as high as would be liked, but is increasing. i work coach has been recruited to increase the numbers in training and employment of at risk young people, and there are gangs borough briefings available for relevant practitioners and now include cross borough incidents
- Key partnerships initiatives – co-ordinated plan for business compliance and social distancing guidance still ongoing, Review of ASB, Hate Crime, Drugs, and Prevent strategies for 2021-24 underway. Finsbury Park initiative focusing on Blackstock Road and EC drug market days of action agreed. New Orleans gang/group partnership response under review, knife crime bins being installed, and hate crime awareness week and links to Council's Equalities programme. Modern day slavery awareness online training and CCTV improvements and control room upgrades, and Domestic Violence daily safeguarding progressing with full partner support
- Tackling rough sleeping - Successes – managed to prevent any COVID related deaths of rough sleepers by getting them all in to access accommodation and support. This has reduced rough sleeping enormously. Funding has been secured to continue immediate accommodations and support. Ongoing challenges – continuing to see flow of new people, including people from outside London, no second night

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- out or Church shelters as not able to offer accommodation this winter, risk of COVID to service users and frontline workers, and working around restrictions
- Islington were performing well compared to other London Boroughs in respect of crime reduction and this was due to effective partnership working
 - The work of the Integrated Gangs team has been a great success
 - Whilst stop and search is a contentious area it has resulted in positive outcomes in 27% of cases
 - Noted that there had been no custodial youth sentences in the past few months and these had reduced over the past year
 - A Member stated that whilst Operation Perch in the Finsbury Park area had resulted in a number of arrests, there were still problems in the area, especially with regard to degradation of behaviour in the area, and that there needed also to be a refocus on Safer Neighbourhood Police Panels which were not as effective as they could be. In addition temporary CCTV, whilst solving problems initially, moved the problem elsewhere and he felt that there was a need for more CCTV. Councillor Lukes responded that there was good partnership working there was a need to involve communities and Ward Councillors and in her new role she would be looking at this. However in respect of CCTV there is a need to address drug dealing, as it is a social problem, and it was not practicable to have CCTV all over the borough
 - A Member congratulated the Police for the work on the New Orleans Estate and hoped that this would continue
 - In response to a question the Borough Commander stated that low level crime is also important to deal with, and outreach work was taking place in relation to Domestic Violence. There are also road traffic police operating in the borough and if Members wished to have further details they could contact him thereon. There is also a scheme in place where members of the public could be issued with speed guns
 - Reference was made to the improvements being made in CCTV and that cameras were being upgraded and would be one of the best CCTV units in London. There is also a plan to purchase a van equipped with CCTV to deal with ASB in 'hotspot' areas
 - Noted that work is taking place in the community in the Finsbury Park area to deal with specific problems with certain community groups
 - Noted that partnership working is taking place in relation to Domestic Violence and weekly meetings are held with partners and extra help has been given to victims of domestic violence, and there has been an increase in referrals. The daily Safeguarding meeting being introduced would assist and give partners a chance to evaluate the situation on a regular basis
 - A Member referred to the Violence Reduction Parental Support Project in EC1 and Cally Ward Councillors and details should be circulated to Ward Councillors
 - In response to a question on modern day slavery training, it was stated that 300 frontline staff had been trained, and this is now moving to an online platform and would be on the Council, Police and Fire Brigade websites and training could be specifically tailored. Noted that the Police were undertaking work on national referrals, and details of this could be provided if necessary
 - In response to a question on fines, it was stated that details of fines issued are not recorded, and that with regard to COVID there are patrols and that they would try to engage residents and encourage them to go home in the first instance
 - A Member referred to the recent HMI Inspectorate report on investigating crimes and that staff needed to be trained better, especially as to the need to carry out investigations more speedily. The Borough Commander stated that not all victims wanted cases to go to Court, and that officers no longer received the training at Hendon that they used to have. Therefore new officers have little experience of

investigating crimes, and there is only a 20%-25% detection rate. Some new officers wanted to be diligent about crimes however there is often little chance of solving a crime and they needed to be aware of this

- Reference was made to Blackstock Road, and it was stated that work is taking place and this information could be provided. In addition a funding bid was being prepared for outreach workers to engage with problem groups in the area and refer them to appropriate services. There was a small criminal element, however it was felt that these were from outside the borough
- A member of the Public stated that the Holloway Neighbourhood Steering Group stated that she would wish to meet with the Borough Commander and the Executive Member to discuss concerns and it was stated that this could be arranged
- A number of questions were asked in relation to crime in the Holloway area, and it was stated that the Council, in partnership with the Police, were focused on reducing crime and that this was reflected in the statistics for reduced crime in the borough. Work is taking place with various communities
- The Executive Member stated that a film showing Bereaved Parents whose children were victims of knife crime was an exceptionally powerful film, and that this should be shown at Safer Neighbourhood Partnership meetings
- Reference was made to the ASB lines and the difficulties in getting calls answered, especially the 101 Police line. The Borough Commander stated that there had been difficulties, however there had been recent improvements and if there was an emergency residents could ring 999 or text, e mail or tweet

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Borough Commander and Executive Member meet the Holloway Steering Group representative in respect of concerns in the Holloway area as referred to above
- (b) That details of the Violence Reduction Parental Support project in Cally and EC1 be circulated to ward councillors

The Chair thanked the Borough Commander, Keith Stanger, Curtis Ashton, Catherine Briody and Councillor Lukes for attending

232 COVID 19 UPDATE - VERBAL (Item C1)

Linzi Roberts – Egan made a verbal report to the Committee during which the following main points were made –

- It was reported that London had now moved to Tier 2 restrictions, and the 7 day incident rate was now 113 cases per 100,000 population. The positive case rate has remained steady at 6.1%, and more testing was taking place, and there is now a test site at Sobell for residents
- Council staffing available for work remained steady at 86%/87%, and local outbreaks were small, and had mainly be seen in the student accommodation. However, successful work had taken place with Universities and this had managed to contain the outbreaks. There had been only 0.18% of the school population affected by COVID
- It was stated that the Council were trying to get a second test site in the south of the borough, as it was felt that there was a different demographic
- It was stated that work is taking place with businesses, and where enforcement was used it had been used appropriately, and there was a high level of communication with partners
- Financial assistance continues to be offered to residents and businesses

- In response to a question, it was stated that discussion were taking place with the Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust on increases in mental health problems and the Council are carrying out staff surveys to see the support that staff need and have the necessary support available

The Chair thanked Linzi Roberts-Egan for attending

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FINANCIAL MONITORING UPDATE (Item C3)

Councillor Gill, Executive Member for Finance and Performance and David Hodgkinson, Director of Corporate Resources were present for discussion of this item during which the following main points were made –

- Overall the Council is currently estimating total COVID related budget pressures of approximately £62m. This is a decrease of £2.4m from month 4 forecast. The Council has received a non-specific government grant funding of £18.5m as a contribution towards extra costs to the response to the pandemic crisis, which leaves a total funding gap of £43m. However it is now forecast that following Government funding there will be a deficit of £20m after grant funding
- The Government has announced an income loss scheme whereby Local Authorities can claim back funding for 75% of lost income from sales, fees, and charges where these losses are greater than 5% of the Council's planned income receivable. Any additional monies the Council will receive is not included in the budget monitoring forecast, and the Council will need to plan for losses in future years
- The forecast for ring-fenced HRA is a deficit of £3.990m which relates to COVID 19 pressures
- The COVID crisis is expected to lead to significant slippage of the 2020/21 capital programme into future years due to the pause in construction activity during the COVID crisis
- Noted that there will be an additional Tier 2 payment of £700,000 which will show an improved financial position in month 6, and an additional payment of £8m, which had been confirmed that day, however this was not the full amount the Council had requested. It was noted that it was felt that the budget would cope in this financial year, but there would be problems if London went into Tier 3, and the Council would need to set a balanced budget in 2021/22
- A Member referred to paragraph 4.7 of the report, and enquired as to the additional costs of agency staff in E&R and that he would e mail the Director of Corporate Resources on this
- In response to a question as to how Islington's financial position compares to other London Boroughs, it was stated that it was roughly comparable
- A Member referred to whether additional help could be given to residents who had difficulty paying their Council Tax. It was stated that the Council provided £22m in Council Tax support to residents, and to provide further support would not be possible in the current financial situation. However, Council Tax collection in Islington is not decreasing at the same level as in many other London Boroughs
- In response to a question it was stated that additional support for businesses would be dependent on the level of support provided by the Government, however if further funding was provided details of this would be advertised

The Chair thanked Councillor Gill and David Hodgkinson for attending

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MONITORING REPORT/WORK PROGRAMME ETC. (Item)

The Chair stated that in view of the proposed number of items on the agenda for the next meeting she would look at revising the agenda for such meeting, and would inform Members thereon

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Councillor Heather referred to the proposed item at the next meeting on determination of Scrutiny topic for 2020/21 and requested that this should be considered at the next meeting. The Chair stated that she would consider this and contact Councillor Heather in this regard

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR