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London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 2 November 2015

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 2 November 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Gallagher (Chair), O'Halloran (Vice-Chair), Court, Ismail, Kay, O'Sullivan, Russell, Andrews, Chowdhury and Jeapes
Also Present: **Councillors:** Convery

Councillor Troy Gallagher in the Chair

- 168** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**
Councillors Doolan, Klute and Comer Schwartz and Andrews and O'Sullivan for lateness
- 169** **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**
None
- 170** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**
None
- 171** **TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them
- 172** **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)**
None
- 173** **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)**
The Chair outlined the procedures for public questions and filming and recording of meetings
- 174** **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)**
The Chair stated that he had presented the Committee's report on the BEST team to the Executive at its last meeting.

The Chair added that in terms of the agenda that evening the items on Annual Crime report, the Youth Crime strategy and the scrutiny review item on knife crime would be considered together and Members could then ask questions thereon.
- 175** **ANNUAL CRIME AND DISORDER REPORT/PRESENTATION EXECUTIVE MEMBER COMMUNITY SAFETY (Item 8)**
Councillor Paul Convery, Executive Member Community Safety and the Borough Commander, Catherine Roper were present for discussion of this item.

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The SIP Annual report had been circulated for discussion and this was considered in conjunction with the items on the Youth Crime strategy and the Scrutiny review on knife crime.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- There had been an 11% increase in crime from the previous year and this has demanded a strong response with additional police resources and determined efforts on behalf of the Council and partners to adopt a co-ordinated approach to youth offending and a marked increase in knife crime incidents
- Over the past year the priority offence type has been snatch offences which reached high levels in April and May with nearly 400 offences a month
- The partnership is focusing on offenders, rather than the range of different offences, as it is clear there is a crossover between ASB and other more serious crimes. The integrated offender management arrangements have been streamlined to bring multi agency focus on those individuals causing most concern
- Currently, excluding the YOS cohort, there are over 200 individuals identified as persistent and prolific offenders, responsible for a number of offences, ranging from acquisitive crime to serious violence. These individuals are managed across different multi agency arrangements
- Children and young adults (under 25) continue to feature highly in the offending statistics, particularly in relation to knife crime and serious youth violence
- Young people, 15 to 20, continue to dominate the most arrested chart. However, the under 15 year old arrest rate has declined considerably in comparison to last year. This may show that some early intervention strategies have started to work
- Islington, however, continues to have a high youth re-offending rate, which has significantly increased over the first quarter. The sentences given to young people remain fairly short, however it does enable effective interventions whilst they are in prison custody, with better chances of influencing behaviour change post release
- Whilst the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system continue to fall, the borough's triaging process is not proving to be effective, as it was previously. Currently 21% of young people who have been triaged later enter the criminal justice system, compared with only 14% last year
- By concentrating on offenders rather than the offences that they commit, it has become clear that there is a significant crossover between ASB and serious criminality at all levels and that many of the same individuals are involved. The integrated offender management arrangements have been streamlined to bring multi-agency focus on those individuals causing the most concern
- There is relatively a small number of young people who are directly and actively involved, around 200 young people. These have been often been recruited by older adults into loosely organised gangs that have shifting memberships and affiliations. These gangs commit a range of acquisitive crimes to generate cash, in order to participate in the drugs economy in the borough. The typical age of these recruits is becoming younger, and their actions are often unpredictable. Those young people are using violence, especially knives, to settle their disputes or enforce deals. The victims of violence are mainly those young people who have or perceived to have associations with gang members
- There is friction between 3 sets of competing gangs that have been identified – a group called Red Pitch, who congregate around part of Mildmay ward, with a cross border affiliation into Hackney, versus groups of young people in the neighbourhoods bordering Essex Road – young people associated with the Cally Road corridor, in competition and dispute with a gang known as Easy Cash that operates in Clerkenwell and Bunhill, with some elements involved around Shoreditch and south Camden and a group loosely associated with Finsbury Park versus a group connected to Archway

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- The next element of the Youth Crime Strategy is to deal with the current group of young people committing these crimes and an integrated gangs team (IGT) has been established, involving the Council, Police and Probation staff. The team will be co-located in the Police station and in spite of a few outstanding security vetting issues and 3 outstanding vacancies, will be in place by the end of November
- The IGT will work with a targeted cohort of young people and adults, up to 24 years of age, to try to reduce their gang related offending activity. The primary goal is to persuade gang members to change their behaviour by using new legal powers, and family and children's services, but to enforce against those who constantly refuse to engage. In addition, the partnership are committed to track down and remove from the community the adults who are recruiting kids into gangs and who form a link with organised crime
- The second part of the strategy will be to prevent another cohort of young teenagers from being lured into criminal gangs by reducing violence by and against the identified cohort, redirecting some of the youth service resource into detached youth work with individuals who may be at risk. In addition to strengthen partnership with schools to make sure they refer children they are concerned about and review services for all children who are on alternative provision and not attending mainstream schools. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are currently carrying out a scrutiny review into alternative provision
- It is necessary to work with the whole community to help cut crime and parents, families and young people themselves can discourage low level anti-social behaviour and crime, which leads to more serious criminality
- There are some young people, mainly girls, who are considered vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. This is a challenge and the use of vulnerable people to run drugs along the 'County Lines' involving the use of mobile phone lines by groups to extend their drug dealing business is becoming more visible in the Islington gang culture
- There has been a 16% increase in ASB calls to the Council's ASB line so far this year. Fifty one percent of those are from occupants of privately owned dwellings, a substantial shift from 2013. Satisfaction rates for the service are now high and residents have confidence in using the service
- Demonstrating resolution in relation to ASB calls has proved difficult given the volume of calls and limited resources. In addition, it is often difficult to follow up actions that have been transferred to other housing providers
- Two thirds of people who repeatedly call the ASB hotline have been through the Community Risk MARAC process, which provides support to vulnerable victims, resulting in their call rate reducing
- A key focus has been bridging gaps in mental health provision for low level ASB cases, where individuals do not meet the threshold for intervention or refuse to engage with support services. A clinical psychologist from Mental Health Personality Disorder services has been appointed to provide guidance and support to housing and police practitioners for dealing with vulnerable victims and perpetrators with mental health needs. This includes assertive outreach to encourage people to engage including signposting people to the most appropriate support services
- Performance around domestic abuse is declining. The number of domestic violence incidents reported to Police has decreased, but at the same time the number of actual offences has risen. The number of people arrested for these offences has fallen, leading to a decrease in positive detection rates
- Recent analysis of crime against young females highlighted that nearly a quarter of overall crime against females under 25 years old was connected to domestic abuse. This is a very significant finding and current work is underway to understand how many are primary or secondary victims

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- In regard to elderly victims distraction burglaries, fraud and domestic violence are the most significant issues of concern in relation to crimes committed against people over 65 years old. Funding was secured from MOPAC to employ a victim champion for this age group, who will support the multi-agency work, work to join up the approach to tackling distraction burglary and fraud and public awareness would be raised on this
- In response to a question as to whether it was felt that crime would rise again once the offenders currently in prison were released Councillor Convery stated that there were measures in place, such as curfews and restraints that would limit the ability of these people to commit crime. In addition, youth services are engaging with young people to reduce offending behaviour. Regular visits would also be made to offenders to direct them to diversionary activities and education
- There is now a shift to looking at offenders rather than offence type and the recent operation ringtone had targeted mobile phone theft offences
- The youth service will be carrying out more targeted work and partnerships with schools would be strengthened
- There is felt to be increased confidence in reporting of crimes against women and girls and the Police have resources to deal with this
- There is now a single MAGPI board, which has nine priority areas and is proving more effective
- The Borough Commander stated that it had been a challenging 12 months in terms of criminality in the borough, however the MOPAC 7 crime figures had started to reduce in the past few months and a wide range of tactics had been employed and there had been a significant reduction in some offences
- There are a relatively small number of young people committing the vast majority of crimes and there had been significant Police presence in the borough that had resulted in improvements and there is good partnership working. In addition, there is increased Police community presence and they were trying to engage young people in a different way
- In response to a question the Borough Commander stated that with regard to race and hate crime the increase did reflect that residents were now more confident in reporting crime and work was taking place with victims to identify perpetrators
- It was stated that in terms of theft from the person the target of a 20% reduction this year would not be achieved but there had been a reduction from a peak of 15 crimes a day to around 7 crimes in the last few months
- Members expressed concern that there had been a lot of Police resources allocated to the borough in recent months and once these were withdrawn and the most prolific offenders reduced from prison, it was felt that crime would increase again
- Councillor Convery responded that at present there were 122 offenders in custody or under some kind of restraint order and when they are released would be subject to a post – conviction restraint and if these were broken they would return to prison
- Families did not often want their children to be involved in criminal activity
- Mobile phone theft is often looked at as a victimless crime but there are victims who are often distressed at such a crime inflicted on them
- Concern was expressed that youth offending in the borough was the highest in London and what is being done to address this. It was stated that there was a need to change the attitude and behaviour of young people and as a Local Authority it had a responsibility for children who had been drawn into offending and the Youth Offending service were working to address this and provide targeted job offers and apprenticeships
- The Borough Commander stated that she is encouraging an approach of more Police engagement with young people and more work is being undertaken with youth groups, Faith Forums, visits to troubled families and officers were being encouraged to take a more calm and engaging relationship with young people

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- A Member expressed concern at the increase in domestic violence and hate crime offences and enquired if the Council could do more. In addition, in Highbury East ward the Quadrant Estate ball park had been locked and this was not conducive to providing diversionary activities. The Borough Commander stated that she felt that there had previously been under reporting of domestic violence and there is now a holistic process in place that has seen an increase in the awareness of reporting
- Councillor Convery responded that the increase in hate crime was from a low base, a rise of 7 to 15, and that this is not just an Islington problem and that racist and religious hate crime has experienced an increase across London
- There was a need to strengthen community spirit by encouraging TRA's and estates to be funded to make a difference by utilising community centres more and outreach work. Arsenal FC did positive work in schools and on estates
- Discussion took place as to where the Borough Commander visualised Islington being in comparison to crime figures in relation to other London Boroughs and she stated that it was difficult to compare, but she expected Islington to be doing better than it currently is
- In response to a question it was stated that there was now more sophisticated mapping of crime and individuals involved and linking into schools could help identify young people who are more likely to get involved in crime
- Concern was expressed at the forthcoming cuts to Police budgets and that this may have a detrimental effect on levels of crime taking place. The Borough Commander stated that she felt that it was important to retain a neighbourhood presence and with crime mapping resources could be deployed more effectively but there would also need to be smarter policing employed and more effective offender management
- In response to a question Councillor Convery stated that work is taking place with Children's Services to identify children with behavioural problems or who were falling behind at school and exhibiting warning signals. It was stated that a number of these children had experienced trauma in their lives
- The Chair stated that the budget constraints on the Police may result in less neighbourhood policing, which would result in a loss of local knowledge and in addition there should be more scope for working with neighbouring local authorities, in particular City of London. The Borough Commander stated that joint operations had been held with neighbouring boroughs, including the City of London. In terms of community policing she could not specify what this would eventually look like given the budget constraints, however she was keen to maintain a Police community presence and continuity in an area and deploy resources flexibly when required
- Reference was made to the recent theft of Talk Talk data and that there needed to be raised awareness of the possibility of fraud, especially for elderly residents through organisations that assist the elderly, GP surgeries etc.
- In response to a question the Borough Commander stated that she is in favour of stop and search, however she had told her officers that this needs to be done politely, lawfully and effectively and she also felt that stop and account could be used to increase engagement
- Members requested a breakdown of types of crime in Islington to be circulated in terms of residents and those coming into the borough
- The Borough Commander stated that that the Gangs Unit would be used to support young people in moving away from gangs and offer support to families and education and employment services. In addition, there was a focus on the older gang drug leaders to target the 'next level' up
- A Member stated that she welcomed the comments of the Borough Commander that she wanted officers to be part of the community however the issuing of protection orders seemed to be contrary to the spirit of this. The Borough Commander indicated that that these would only be used where a clear message needed to be

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given and used only if necessary. She added that people should be able to use public spaces for their enjoyment

- In response to a question Councillor Convery stated that there had been concerns in Mildmay and discussions were taking place and the Borough Commander stated that she would look at improving communication in this area
- Members were informed that the Community Safety Unit had an intelligence function and co-ordinated and oversee a number of initiatives and 4 of the staff were MAGPI co-ordinators. The Public Protection team, in Environment and Regeneration could undertake enforcement action
- Councillor Convery stated that in terms of assistance to young people attempts were being made to get Children's Services, Environment and Regeneration and Housing to be alert to the problems and assist in making the community a safer place. In relation to youth crime the task is to identify the next generation of young people who may turn to criminality, and empower local residents to use community centres to provide youth facilities
- Reference was made to stop and search and whether these had increased in the last 6 months. It was stated that when stop and search had been decreased there had been a marked increase in the level of crime and officers had undergone a training programme in how to maintain correct standards in stop and search techniques, and stop and search must be proportionate, helpful, professional and polite
- Councillor Convery stated that he would ensure that the figures on crime that are submitted to the Safer Neighbourhood Board are circulated to PPS on a regular basis
- A Member indicated that the recent Police activity on the New River Green Estate had reduced the tension and made residents feel more comfortable, however she enquired how the Police would judge if the strategies put in place were working. In addition, whilst the Council could work with community schools she enquired how the process would work for Academies. Councillor Convery responded that Academies were part of the Islington family of schools, and that to the best of his knowledge they understood the requirements and although the Council had less influence over Academy schools he was not aware of any problems
- It was noted that a regular review of the Youth Crime strategy implementation plan was received on a regular basis and the Borough Commander met regularly with the Chief Executive and relevant Members on performance and there was a yearly report to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee
- In response to a question it was stated that BME people were likely to be stopped and searched 2.5 times more than white people, although this was a reflection of the whole population and BME young people made up a greater proportion of the BME community than other age groups
- The view was expressed that the fostering of community action needed to be spread across departments to increase its effectiveness
- Councillor Convery stated that a number of Executive Members were responsible across areas to combat crime and Councillor Shaikh is responsible for community development and that he would wish to see Islington crime figures fall over time to significantly below the London average
- Reference was made to the forthcoming cuts in Police and Council budgets and that this would no doubt impact on resources available to fight crime
- In response to a question it was stated that the data that would be held on children is intended to assist in identifying where there are problems and where assistance could be given
- The Borough Commander stated that she was of the view that the initiatives that had been put in place would be effective and have an impact on reducing crime

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Executive Member Community Safety be requested to circulate crime statistics on a regular basis to the PPS Committee
- (b) That the Executive Member Community Safety be requested to provide a breakdown of crimes for residents and non residents of the borough

176 YOUTH CRIME STRATEGY (Item 9)

This item was dealt with in conjunction with item 175 above.

177 LICENSING POLICY - EFFECTIVENESS (Item 10)

Councillor Convery stated that he would like to thank Licensing Committee Members, officers and the Police for the effective work that they have carried out.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

178 SCRUTINY REVIEW - KNIFE CRIME/MOBILE PHONE THEFT/CRIME HOTSPOTS (Item 11)

Catherine Briody, Victims and ex-offenders Support Manager was present for discussion of this item and circulated documentation showing the work being carried out on youth engagement in the borough. (Copy interleaved).

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- There has been a new post created as part of the integrated Gangs Unit of Youth Engagement Co-ordinator
- Since the implementation of the Local Policing Model in 2013 police engagement within primary schools has been left to ward PCO's, which has resulted in a large drop off with some primary schools having little or no Police engagement. In order to address this and to bring about a more consistent and sustainable approach, all 46 primary schools have now been allocated a single point of contact, which is an existing Safer Schools Police constable
- Using the existing safer schools officers, all secondary schools now has a single point of contact, including EGA, which has been without a Schools officer since June 2013
- Over the past month, Police have been developing a consistent, sustainable and regular police educational programme for Primary and Secondary schools. The programme will consist of 12 main inputs covering early engagement with Primary schools and following it through with 5 inputs dedicated to secondary schools. The programme looks to introduce the following topics – Introduction to Police, Stranger Danger, Road Safety, Bullying, Decisions and Consequences and Exploitation Gangs and Child Sexual exploitation, Girls in Gangs, Joint Enterprise, Online awareness and cyber crime and knife crime
- All schools will be offered the programme via the Safer Schools Officers from November
- Victim support – Police will be working with Victim Support to create and facilitate bespoke packages for schools and other hard to reach groups within the young community
- Volunteer Police cadets and junior citizens
- Sports and summer programmes
- Police station events and open events

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- For young people and their families across the borough (especially at risk groups of potential vulnerable young people it is planned to host a question and answer session on topics such as gang membership and stop and search, presentation on the warning signs of early gang membership, intervention and diversion options for young people, careers advice service by DWP, young people talking to young people such as Police cadets, and Dragons Den style challenges for young people

The meeting ended at 10.05p.m.

CHAIR