1. Purpose

1.1 This report sets out the response to the views and comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee arising from the discussions held on the report entitled "Mayoral response to the comments of the Safer Stronger Select Committee on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel final report, considered at the meeting on the 27th November 2012. This report sets out the requested response.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor:

2.1 Approve the response from the Executive Director for Community Services to the comments from the Safer Stronger Select Committee.

2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Safer Stronger Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Following the riots that occurred in towns and cities across England between 6 August 2011 and 10 August 2011, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition established the Riots Communities and Victims Panel and asked it to consider:

- what may have motivated a small minority of people to take part in the riots;
- why the riots happened in some areas and not others;
- how key public services engaged with communities before, during and after the riots;
- what motivated local people to come together to resist riots in their area or to clean up after riots had taken place;
- how communities can be made more socially and economically resilient in the future to prevent future problems; and
what could have been done differently to prevent or manage the riots.

3.2 On 28 November 2011, a detailed interim report, *5 Days in August* was published which explored the immediate causes and consequences of the riots and set out recommendations for immediate action. Six key themes were set out in the interim report which, if combined, were believed to build social and economic resilience in communities, and it is on these six key themes that the final report 'After the Riots' focuses. The final full report was published in April 2012.

3.3 The overall vision for Lewisham is established in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Safer Lewisham Partnership contribute to the achievement of the Safer strand – where people feel safe and live free from crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse and works together with partners to:

- Reduce the overall level of crime to below the London average.
- Tackle antisocial behaviour and ensure that people feel confident and safe throughout the borough.
- Keep our children and young people safe from harm, abuse and criminal activity.
- A reduction in the rates of crime that impact most upon Lewisham, such as serious violent crime, serious acquisitive crime and repeat incidents of domestic violence.
- A reduction in the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System.
- A reduction in reoffending and substance misuse among Lewisham’s adults and young people.
- An improvement in the stability of placements for looked after children.
- A reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on Lewisham’s roads.

3.4 The work of the Partnership also supports the Council priority - ‘safety, security and a visible presence’ which details the Council’s partnership working with the Police and others to combat anti social behaviour.

4. **Background**

- Following a motion passed at Council on 21 September 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to carry out a local investigation in order to help determine what lessons could be learnt from the events of August 2011.
- At its meeting on 6 February 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of the response to the riots in Lewisham. Members agreed that the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee should consider the final report of the Independent Riots Communities and Victims Panel, when it became available. The final report was published on 28 March 2012.
On 9 May 2012, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee considered the final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel and resolved to share its views with Mayor and Cabinet.

On 11 July 2012, Mayor and Cabinet received a referral which set out the views of the Select Committee. The Executive Director for Community Services was asked to respond.

On 24 October 2012, Mayor and Cabinet received a response to the Committee’s referral prepared by the Executive Director for Community Services. It was agreed that the response be forwarded to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

On 27 November 2012, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee considered the response from Mayor and Cabinet to its comments on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel final report.

The Committee felt that the comments and views expressed in its referral were not fully addressed by the response from Mayor and Cabinet so Members resolved to make a further referral to Mayor and Cabinet.

On 16 January 2013 Mayor and Cabinet received further comments from the Select Committee about the response to its views on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel Final Report. The Executive Director for Community Services was asked to respond.

5. The Safer, Stronger Select Committee Referral and Responses

Following the 27th November 2012 Safer Stronger Select Committee's consideration of the Mayor & Cabinet response to the committee’s own comments on the 'Riots Communities and Victims Panel (final report) the select committee has asked that the following two matters be addressed:

5.1 Referral

The Committee felt that the comments and views expressed in its referral were not fully addressed by the response from Mayor and Cabinet. The Committee would have welcomed further exploration of the issue of sentencing policy in relation to the riots.

5.2 Response

At the time of the original referral by the Select Committee, the Safer Lewisham Partnership discussed this matter on the 25th September 2012 and agreed that the way decisions were made in relation to sentencing and extending court hours was something that was decided at a national level. Locally it was felt that following such a significant event these decisions should be made at this level, however better communication with local areas would have assisted. The impact locally was that officers had to service the courts for the additional periods that they were open, such as evenings and Sundays, and when offenders were remanded and sentenced to custody in some instances. The SLP acknowledged the swift way in which the Police and partners dealt with perpetrators during the riots and that CCTV evidence had played a significant part in convictions being made.
5.3 The SLP were advised that at that time there was a consultation open through the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) called 'Swift and Sure Justice: the Government’s Plans for Reform of the Criminal Justice System'. The White Paper set out the Government’s programme of reforms to the criminal justice system in England and Wales. It formed part of the Government’s much wider programme of reform across crime and justice. It included proposals for extended court sessions. It was agreed that Members would review this report and feedback to the MOJ as deemed appropriate.

5.4 The Sentencing process and stance taken at the time of the civil disturbances was potentially a severe action at a time when significant unrest across the country was taking place. Also it was potentially used as a tactic to make a statement that such behaviour would not be tolerated, and that the Justice system would take immediate and serious action. For Lewisham, whilst officers assisted the courts during the additional opening times, the borough did not experience the significant levels of people being remanded as some other areas did. In addition to this, Lewisham did not experience the high numbers of young people either remanded or sentenced to custodial sentences, in the way experienced by other areas. The young people sentenced to custody were already known to the Youth Offending Service and were highly likely to be given a custodial sentence for other matters.

5.5 Lewisham is committed to both reducing the demand on the criminal justice system and rehabilitation and it is within these agendas a balance needs to be struck when looking at fast track justice, as was seen at this time to deal with a very unique and unusual situation.

5.6 **Referral**

The Committee questioned the ‘noting’ of the final point in their referral. The Committee would have welcomed a response and an indication from the Mayor about whether or not he shared the Committee’s view.

5.7 **Response**

The final point referred to concerns raised over the phrase ‘character attributes’ when used in the report as it assumes character attributes needed for success are widely understood and uniform. In addition some of the use of language in the report could be viewed as pejorative, specifically the phrase ‘usual suspects’.

5.8 The points made in the report were pulled together from a range of sources from across the country and the authors of the report felt it worth identifying possible trends. In Lewisham we always look at our communities’ needs and assess what is appropriate in terms of service delivery rather than apply a broad brush approach. We certainly would not support some of the “character attributes” identified nor accept the use of some of the language. Lewisham supports a number of programmes, for example Community Budgets and Troubled Families which specifically identify families and deliver bespoke services to
assist in a range of positive outcomes such as education and employment.

5.9 The Mayor and Cabinet took on board all recommendations made by the Committee in relation to this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this response.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council’s Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and or recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this response. However, the implementation of the White paper ‘Swift and Sure Justice: the Government’s Plans for Reform of the Criminal Justice System' may have an impact yet to be identified.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 The Safer Lewisham Partnership priorities impact on large sections of the community, including the most vulnerable (e.g. victims of Domestic Violence, victimisation of women and young people). The focus on effective interventions in the Criminal Justice System ensures that Human Rights remain essential to the strategy’s vision, strategic themes and monitoring processes.

9.2 One of the Partnership’s key outcomes is to ensure equity in representation and that equality and diversity issues are followed in the work of the partnership.

10 Environmental Implications

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

Background Papers

After the Riots – the Final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel : 2011

Mayor and Cabinet report – Comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Mayor and Cabinet response on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel Final Report (16 January 2013)
Minutes of the meeting of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee (27 November 2012)

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee report – Mayoral Response to the comments of the Select Committee on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel Final Report (27 November 2012)

Mayoral response to the comments Mayor and Cabinet report - Comments of the Safer Stronger Select Communities Select Committee on the Riots Communities and Victims Panel - 27/Final Report – 11/July 12

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