

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 September 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), David Michael (Vice-Chair), Andre Bourne, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, Pat Raven, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Roy Kennedy, Ian Alderson (MPS Lewisham), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Adeolu Solarin (VAWG Co-ordinator) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014

In response to a request from the Committee, Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) provided an update on the actions agreed at the last meeting. It was reported that:

- following discussions with the facilitators of the responsible retailers and City Safe Havens schemes - it was recommended that, rather than attempting to recruit businesses directly, Councillors who wanted to support these schemes could put businesses in contact with organisers.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July be agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

Councillor David Michael declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to items three and four as a member of Lewisham's safer neighbourhood board.

## 3. Safer Lewisham Plan update

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- Over the previous year, there had been significant reductions in the majority of major crime types with the exception of violence with injury.
- One particular areas of success had been the reduction of residential burglaries.
- The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in Lewisham had piloted a system of 'predictive policing'.
- The Lewisham MPS had examined burglary figures over ten years and mapped out the likelihood of crimes occurring in different areas of the borough. Resources were then focused on affected areas.
- This work resulted in a decrease in residential burglary.

- The increase in the figures for violence with injury should be viewed in the context of changes to the definition of this category.
- Some forms of violence, which weren't previously recorded under the category of violence with injury, such as actual bodily harm, were now being recorded in this category.
- Tackling violence against women and girls had been a priority in Lewisham for most of the previous decade.
- There had been a recent increase in recorded instances of domestic violence, which had to be viewed in the context of an overall decline in domestic violence in the past six years.
- It was also important to note that increases in reports of some crime types were the result of targeted police activity or confidence on the part of victims to come forward.
- New legislation was coming into force which would place a statutory duty on the Council to respond to repeated reports of anti-social behaviour.
- The new duties included the 'community trigger', which would come into effect in early 2015. The measure had been put in place following high profile instances, nationally, of multi-agency failure to respond to repeated reports of anti-social behaviour.
- The 'community trigger' for anti-social behaviour would be activated if three instances of anti-social behaviour were reported to the council (or partner organisations) and not dealt with satisfactorily.
- The trigger would also be activated if five different people complained about an issue (without resolution) in a six month period.
- The Council would be required to publish its standards for the trigger, setting out appropriate forms of resolution. These would be agreed by the Safer Lewisham Partnership – and made available to the Committee for scrutiny in due course.
- Once the trigger had been activated, the Council would be required to hold a multi-agency conference within 10 days to provide a response to the complainant(s).
- Officers had been working with other London Boroughs to ensure that there was a joined up approach to the new legislation.
- Lewisham had a good history of tackling anti-social behaviour. The Safer Lewisham Partnership had a consistent victim centred approach. The anti-social behaviour multi agency risk assessment conference process was also widely recognised to be good practice.

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Gary Connors (Crime Reduction Manager), Ade Solarin (Violence Against Women and Girls Coordinator) and Ian Alderson (MPS Lewisham) answered questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- Reports made through the website would be monitored for repeated incidences of ASB in the same area.
- In effect, Councillors already exercised a community trigger by reporting casework so it wasn't anticipated that Councillors would make extensive use of the new system. Officers would continue to work closely with Councillors to ensure that issues were identified and dealt with.
- Data about ASB could be broken down in a number of ways and could be reported with the next safer Lewisham plan update to the Committee.

- There hadn't been any specific analysis or evaluation of the use of predictive policing to demonstrate its effectiveness. Predictive policing was only one part of the approach taken by the MPS in Lewisham to reduce crime – in the case of residential burglary, there had been a concerted efforts in offender management, prevention, information and evidence gathering to prevent and reduce incidences of burglary.
- Amongst the types of anti-social behaviour reported in the borough, dog fouling was not high up on the list of priorities for action.
- There had been work in the past to deal with people who allowed their dogs to foul in public places, including the issuing of fixed penalty notices by street wardens and CCTV in parks, as well as education, dog micro-chipping and awareness raising. These approaches had some success.
- Reports of hate crime in Lewisham were below the London average. Work had been carried out to enable reporting through third party sites (including libraries).
- Whilst it was recognised there was underreporting, there were no specific measures with which to calculate how many hate crimes should be reported in the borough.

The Committee also discussed the following key points:

- The level of nuisance and anxiety created by dog fouling in different areas of the borough.
- The difficulty of tackling some people's poor attitudes to public places; including the small groups of people who thought it was acceptable to swear around children, spit, drop litter or allow their dogs to foul public places.

Resolved: to receive a further update on the SLP plan at the Committee's meeting in March; to include a breakdown of locations (by ward) and types of anti-social behaviour; as well as figures detailing a broader range of crime types and additional information about the implementation of the community trigger.

#### **4. Violence against women and girls**

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- Lewisham previously had the highest reported levels of domestic violence in the country.
- The Safer Lewisham Partnership had made the reduction of domestic violence a priority and had focused resources on a range of initiatives, including; a specialist domestic violence court, individual domestic violence advocates, multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC), victim support and refuges.
- In response to the broader context of inequality and violence facing women and girls; the government and the Mayor of London had developed violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategies which included plans to eliminate:
  - Domestic violence
  - Rape and sexual violence

- Prostitution and trafficking
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Female genital mutilation (FGM)
  - Forced marriage
  - Honor based violence
  - Stalking and harassment
- In Lewisham, it was recognised that there was good information and data about domestic violence but there was a lack of information in the majority of the other areas.
  - Lewisham had piloted the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) conference to improve coordination between agencies. The learning from this pilot had now been adopted by all London boroughs.
  - Lewisham had also commissioned Imkaan (an organisation committed to tackling violence against women and girls) to review the borough's violence against women and girls strategy and make recommendations for improvements.
  - As a result of the consultation, a new combined service was being created to develop a single approach to tackling VAWG in the borough.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- A tendering process for the new service was underway. The new combined service would start in April next year.
- No decision had been taken about the location of the new service. There were no particular domestic violence hot spots in the borough. Crimes were distributed across Lewisham.
- The new service would be required to find its own premises; however there would be an expectation that it would have a presence at Lewisham Police station – which was a considerable source of referrals.
- The service would support all victims, including boys and men.
- There had been 49 responses to the consultation on the violence against women and girls strategy. There was concern that this number was low. However, it should be noted that there were only 69 responses to the Mayor of London's violence against women and girls strategy consultation, so in comparison the response to the Lewisham consultation was good.
- The review highlighted some gaps in the provision of support services in Lewisham. Of particular concern was the experience some victims identified of approaching agencies for support and not being believed.
- It was proposed that the new organisation would develop an approach to prevention and awareness raising - as well as initiatives to encourage healthy relationships.
- There had been five reviews into domestic homicides in the previous two and a half years, which highlighted a number of issues but also enabled Lewisham to consider the combined dangers of poor mental health, substance misuse and violence.
- There was no straightforward definition of what constituted a gang.
- There had been a shift in Lewisham from street gangs of school age children (who fought over territory and status) to looser groupings of young adults that operated as 'criminal cliques'.

- The primary focus of these groups was to run unregulated drug businesses. They used violence to support their businesses as part of their association with wider criminal networks.
- Much of the violence against gang associated girls was hidden.
- Support for gang associated girls was not a separate strand of the VAWG agenda.
- Anecdotally it seemed that there had been an increase in the numbers of women associated with gangs as perpetrators.
- The new VAWG service would focus on three priorities – domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape as well as child sexual exploitation.
- Dealing with gang related sexual violence would not be part of the contract for the new service, but the service would work to support people who were experiencing issues in any of the strand areas.
- The challenge for the police was dealing with the changing nature of criminal activity – some of the young people found to be involved in drug running for criminal groups were unknown to any agency and had no previous contact with police, meaning that their involvement was hidden.
- A range of early intervention, awareness raising and prevention work had been carried out in the borough. There was no single programme. Lewisham had worked with the police service to pilot the 'Heart' project, which focused on developing healthy relationships. Officers continued to build on this work.
- The DV MARAC in Lewisham enabled a comprehensive package of support to be put in place for victims and their families.
- It was recognised that suffering abuse or witnessing violence at an early age was damaging to development.
- Work had been carried out with the nurse family partnership to support vulnerable parents and children.
- Officers in the Children and Young People directorate had responsibility for looked after children. Lewisham and its partners worked well together to ensure that there were good routes into services for young people at risk.
- Training with foster carers also took place to prevent placements breaking down.
- It was important to remember that young people in care were not 'trouble makers'. There was an unhelpful tendency for people to think that all looked after young people were problematic, which was not the case.
- Lewisham offered a menu of training and support options for schools to take up. Each school that wanted support had a bespoke offer.
- There was variability in the take up of support in schools. Schools were being asked to manage intervention programmes and risks from a range of different sources. It would be useful to determine what might constitute a good offer to schools and what might be seen as a reasonable level of uptake.
- Parents teachers and pupils were all targets of work in schools.
- The Council was supporting a new peer advocacy project 'Parents Standing Together' lead by the parents of victims to support other parents and young people, which it was hoped, would be an effective way to spread the message.
- The Council and its partners were working with faith and community groups locally to challenge perceptions and build on the ambitions of the VAWG plan.

- It was recognised that there was some hidden violence committed by older children against their parents, which was an increasing problem as older children moved back in with their parents because of the lack of affordable housing.

Resolved: to note the report and to receive additional information about familial abuse.

## **5. Select Committee work programme**

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report. The Committee then discussed the work programme.

Resolved: to receive a scoping paper for a review into violence against women and girls.

## **6. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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