

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 March 2015 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: Paul Aladenika (Policy and Partnerships Manager), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), James Bravin (Principal Policy Officer), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Graham Price (Chief Inspector) (Metropolitan Police Service, Lewisham), Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Services Manager), Stewart Snellgrove (Principal Policy Officer) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015

Resolved: to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

None.

## 3. Violence against women and girls review

This item was considered after item six on the agenda.

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

- The Committee had previously received information about action being taken to tackle violence against women and girls in Lewisham.
- In response to the Committee's request for information about work in schools, an overview of awareness-raising and prevention activities had been provided.
- At the last meeting representatives from the Safer London Foundation had provided information about work taking place across London.
- Building on past initiatives, such as the Met Police's Heart programme – the Council sought to support the development of healthy relationships work in schools.
- Work was also being carried out to further understand the impact of early childhood trauma on young people.
- The Safer Lewisham Partnership also supported efforts across the criminal justice system to secure convictions against perpetrators of abuse and exploitation.
- The Council and its partners were in the early stages of developing an approach to online protection.
- A major project had recently been initiated to engage in an online conversation with children about being safe online.

- Innovative work was also taking place in the borough with parents to help young people to stay safe. The 'parents standing together' project was supported by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety.

3.2 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- The Council intended to engage with its partners in the future to further understand the issues of online grooming and exploitation experienced by boys and young men.
- Officers from the Council's Community Services Directorate worked with officers from Children and Young People directorate as well as the police to deliver support to schools when it was required.
- There was pressure on the school curriculum from a variety of different sources to deliver a range of different initiatives and activities.
- Officers in Community Services worked with all heads in the borough to support the Prevent (prevention of extremism and terrorism) programme.
- Take up and support from schools for the Prevent programme had been good.
- This approach to work in schools had demonstrated that professionals had to be empowered to have conversations with children and young people about difficult issues at any time.
- The Council would not lead on every agenda – but it could signpost teaching staff and schools to specialist support and advice, when it was required.
- The Council would also continue to bid for external funding to deliver training for professionals in schools.
- Building the resilience of children and young people – so that they could recognise risks and seek support – was a fundamental part of awareness raising and prevention work.
- It was recognised that the rapidly changing nature of online communication made all young people vulnerable.
- The more people who were able to engage in conversations with children and young people about staying safe, the better.
- The work that was currently being developed around online safety would also engage with children in primary school.
- Conversations would take place with whole families about the range of issues raised by online safety.
- A number of the initiatives highlighted in the report were available in Lewisham schools. Funding had been received to deliver Growing Against Gangs and Violence training in all Lewisham secondary schools.
- Rape Crisis sessions were not currently being delivered in Lewisham schools – but there was a programme in place and funding from London councils had been secured.
- Education on gang violence and sexual exploitation was not included in personal social health and economic education (PSHE) as standard.
- There were no national requirements for PSHE. Each school was required to develop and deliver its own programme.
- The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime was trying to ensure that awareness raising and prevention activities were made available on a consistent basis to schools across London. The Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting people sat on the group to represent local authorities.
- The mayor's office for policing and crime intended to use Home Office innovation funding, if successful in its bid, to deliver a 'menu of support options' to schools that required specialist provision in future.

- 3.3 The Committee discussed the pressures facing schools to deliver PSHE on a range of topics and agendas. Members also discussed the possibility of inviting a head teacher from a borough secondary school to talk about the difficulties of developing and delivering a broad PSHE curriculum, in the context of competing pressures from different agendas.
- 3.4 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety advised the Committee that it would be problematic to ask a head teacher in the borough to attend a meeting of the Committee because of the difficulty of asking a single teacher to give an overview of general experiences in the borough. She recommended that Members engage with schools in their wards about the scope of their PSHE curriculum.

Resolved: to receive the information presented at Committee for the review.

#### **4. Comprehensive equalities scheme - monitoring and update**

- 4.1 Stewart Snellgrove (Principal Policy Officer) introduced a presentation; the following key points were noted:
- The 2010 equality act brought together previous equalities legislation. It also created new duties for public bodies, which required them to have due regard to the need to:
    - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment.
    - Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
    - Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Lewisham's comprehensive equalities scheme (CES) was developed using a wide range of data and analysis as well as engagement with stakeholders.
  - The Council's intention was that all parts of the organisation should be responsible for fairness and equality in the delivery of services.
  - The CES set out the Council's intention to:
    - Tackle discrimination, victimisation and harassment
    - Improve access to services
    - Close the gap in outcomes
    - Increase mutual understanding and respect
    - Increase citizen participation and engagement
  - The CES update was a cross cutting and high level analysis of progress in the past year.
  - The objectives in the CES were met through the day to day delivery of Council services, or 'business as usual'. Examples included:
    - Safeguarding the wellbeing of vulnerable children and adults.
    - Raising educational achievement for all pupils.
    - Providing social homes for priority homeless people.
    - Implementing the London Living Wage across all new council contracts.
    - Supporting local voluntary and community groups through the council's grants programme.
    - Supporting citizen engagement through local assemblies.
    - Taking forward the young mayor scheme into an eleventh successive year.
  - The presentation also highlighted good practice and areas of note, including:
    - LGBT history month
    - The creation of London's first Trans and non-gender conforming swimming club at Glass Mill leisure centre.
    - Be Active, which provides concessionary use of leisure facilities in the borough.

- The development of Lewisham Health and Wellbeing strategy and recent data on life expectancy
- Work with the community and voluntary sector.
- Hate crime reporting
- Work to tackle violence against women and girls
- Educational attainment
- Apprenticeship and employment schemes
- Work to improve literacy
- The work of neighbourhood forums
- Future challenges, including demographic change.

4.2 Stewart Snellgrove (Principal Policy Officer) and Paul Aladenika (Policy and Partnerships Manager) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- The Committee would be consulted on the development of the new Comprehensive Equalities Scheme.
- The previous equalities schemes had reported on a wide range of data sets; actions and targets.
- A decision was taken as part of the development of the new scheme to reduce the level of monitoring required.
- The scheme would be revisited in 2016 – at which point the monitoring process; the use of data and the scheme’s targets could be reviewed.
- It would be over simplistic to look only at the CES in order to define the Council’s approach to equality; there were strategies, plans and interventions across a range of Council functions which contributed to the delivery of the equality objectives.
- Officers would provide a ‘digest of progress’ against key equalities groups to a future meeting of the Committee.
- People were asked to fill out monitoring forms at assembly meetings; this could not capture information about the activities that happened outside of meetings.
- The monitoring did not record the socio economic background of attendees.
- Officers would provide additional information about measuring illiteracy following the meeting.
- People who required support with literacy were regularly identified by libraries staff.
- Officers would continue to work together closely to deliver the main grants programme funding, in line with the objectives of the CES.
- Officers would provide a further demographic breakdown of educational attainment.
- The employment scheme being developed in partnership with Lambeth and Southwark would seek to help 3000 people into work. However, the programme’s target would not necessarily be split equally across the three boroughs.
- Further information would be provided following the meeting about disability hate crime.

Resolved: to note the report; and to request that the Cabinet Member for Community Safety consider how best to share the information in the report with all members.

## **5. Library and information service**

5.1 Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Service Manager) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- Delivery of the library service was a statutory function.
- The performance of the Lewisham library service had been assessed by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy), which indicated that the service was performing well.
- The library service cost approximately 38 pence per week per resident.
- Expected visits to the 13 libraries would be up by 1.5% this year.
- The borough's most successful library was in the Deptford Lounge. Recent attendance had increased from 31 thousand visits per month to 36 thousand visits per month, which made it one of the most successful libraries in London.
- There had been a recent 6% reduction of book issues.
- Previous falls in the number of book issues had been recorded prior to staffing reorganisations; given the pending reorganisation the fall in issues was not unexpected.
- Visits to community libraries were up four per cent.
- New Cross library had been refurbished using crowd funding.
- Libraries continued to act as focal hubs for local activity and events.

5.2 Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Service Manager) and Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- The staffing reorganisation had been agreed as part of the delivery of the Lewisham Future Programme.
- A restructuring of management positions and the business development unit as well as the deletion of vacant posts would create £240k of savings.
- The reorganisation would have no effect on the number of libraries or their opening hours.
- Work was taking place to continually improve libraries services.
- The service would also work to develop its commercial opportunities.
- Libraries staff worked with all library users, including children and young people to ensure that services were comfortable and accessible for everyone.
- If any user was creating a problem, library staff would take appropriate action.
- Work was taking place to publicise Access to Research, the national initiative that offers free access to research papers and journals. This national programme was launched at the Deptford Lounge.
- The service had software which enabled officers to see which books were the most popular in different parts of the borough.
- In Forest Hill the library was working with the occupants of Louise House to engage with the local community.
- In Forest Hill visits were up by 14% in comparison to the previous year.
- Every library had a social media presence.
- More initiatives and activities could be carried out online.

Resolved: to note the report.

## **6. Safer Lewisham strategy monitoring and update**

This item was considered after item two.

6.1 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the update on the 2014-15 plan; the following key points were noted:

- The report provided an update on performance in the previous year.
- A draft version of the 2015/16 plan was included with the report as an appendix.

- Performance over the previous year had generally been good however, there had been an increase in incidents of violence with injury.
- The increase in reporting was, in part, the result of changes in the recording of different crime types.
- The Safer Lewisham Partnership had carried out a number of coordinated, intelligence led operations to target recognised problems; this included the work carried out as part of the Metropolitan Police Service's (MET or MPS) Operation Equinox, which coordinated efforts across local authority services and the police to reduce violent offending.
- Domestic violence continued to be a serious concern. Lewisham previously had the highest levels of recorded domestic violence in London. The volume of crimes had reduced over the past few years, but there were still a high number of incidents.
- In the past year there had been a 19% increase in domestic violence.
- In contrast, serious youth violence had reduced by 38% in the past year.
- Five years previously, serious youth violence had been a problem in Lewisham.
- Work had taken place to tackle knife and gun enabled crime and the reduction in violence was a positive development.
- Work continued through the domestic violence multi-agency risk assessment conference (DVMARAC) and the youth multi-agency risk assessment conference (Youth MARAC) to tackle the most serious cases of domestic violence and youth violence.
- Both MARACs demonstrated significant and sustained reductions in repeat offending.
- The Committee had requested a breakdown of types of anti-social behaviour across wards (a chart providing details of cases reported to the Council was presented to Members at the meeting)
- Work to develop the anti-social behaviour trigger (discussed previously at Committee) had been carried out and a process was now in place.

6.2 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Service Manager) and Graham Price (Chief Superintendent, MPS Lewisham) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- There had been a change in the recording of incidents of violence with injury, which accounted for the increase in the figures. There hadn't been any major changes in recording of crime types which would have resulted in improved performance figures.
- There was nothing to indicate why there had been an increase in the level of domestic violence.
- It was intended that the new VAWG (violence against women and girls) service would create a single streamlined approach to reducing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- The central focus of the service would be on domestic violence, but it would address a range of issues, including violence against men and boys.
- The new service would also provide a central point of information, advice and signposting to other services.
- There had been a change in the law to include younger victims of domestic violence in the figures, but this did not in itself account for the recent increase.
- A review of the Lewisham force's crime recording procedures had been carried out by the Home Office.
- Data from the MPS computer aided despatch system had been compared to records from the crime reporting information system (CRIS); this had helped

the police service in Lewisham to improve the way in which different crimes were recorded.

- Figures fluctuated for different reasons – and it was not straightforward to draw causal links between actions and data.
- The anti-social behaviour (ASB) figures circulated to the Committee only included incidents reported directly to the Council
- Where Members had specific concerns about anti-social behaviour they should bring them to the attention of the police.
- The service described by Members as a ‘methadone prescription service’ in Catford, was in fact a drug rehabilitation centre commissioned by the Council.
- Members should contact the police either in the case of an emergency involving ASB or via their neighbourhood inspector to report problems in their ward.

6.3 Members of the Committee questioned the reliability of the data presented by officers about anti-social behaviour. It was noted that individual Members of the Committee had personally reported more incidents of anti-social behaviour than were recorded in the figures presented to Committee.

- Officers committed to checking the figures.

6.4 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced draft 2015-16 plan; the following key points were noted:

- The partnership was required to develop a strategic needs assessment and a crime reduction annual plan. It set priorities each year to deliver the plan.
- The Partnership was required by the Mayors Officer for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to focus on seven key crime types (the MOPAC 7):
  - Violence with injury
  - Robbery
  - Burglary
  - Theft of a motor vehicle
  - Theft from a motor vehicle
  - Theft from the person
  - Vandalism (criminal damage)
- The Safer Lewisham Partnership incorporated the MOPAC priorities into priorities for the borough: reducing key violent crimes (including serious youth violence and violence against women and girls) and tackling issues of greatest concern to residents.
- Work in the coming year would build on previous good practice in prevention, intervention and enforcement.

6.5 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The probation service was still in the process of developing its approach to community pack back operations following the reorganisation of the service.
- Police cadets were also involved in supporting community activities in the borough.
- Data about detections and convictions could be provided to the Committee.
- Conviction rates did not fall within the responsibility of a single organisation or a single borough, which might make it difficult to track issues from beginning to end.

- It was important to review conviction rates and policing confidence taking into account all parts of the criminal justice system.
- Case failures were problematic for a range of reasons; failure in one part of the criminal justice system reduced confidence in the system as a whole.
- Officers would bring the strategic action plan to a future meeting of the Committee.
- Grooming of young people, in person or online, played a central role in all types of child exploitation.
- In response to a specific request - further information would be provided to Members about parents' right to know the location of their children if they were taken into protective custody.

Resolved: to note the update.

**7. Select Committee work programme**

The Committee did not discuss this item.

**8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

Chair:

-----

Date:

-----