

## **CABINET – 20 JUNE 2019**

### **REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 JUNE 2019**

#### **69. Scrutiny Review into Preventing Youth Violence**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Strategy, which set out the final findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review into Preventing Youth Violence, which had been established to scrutinise the Council's work into tackling youth violence. The purpose of the review had been to investigate how the Council might use all of its policies and strategies to contribute to reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour in a more 'Public Health approach' to Youth Crime.

The Chair of the Review Group introduced the report and made the following amendments to the report:

- page 1 – to include 'Councillors Camilla Bath and Maxine Henson' who were had been Members of the Review Group;
- page 20, first paragraph commencing 'Officers said that they have lunch at the Helix ..' – to delete reference to 'those children were from the Helix';
- page 34, last paragraph commencing 'In addition to this, last year, The Helix ...' – to delete reference to 'the Afro-Caribbean community, due to the statistics that supported that largely this sort of crime was perpetrated by the Afro-Caribbean community' and replace it with 'certain groups in the community'.

The Chair of the Review Group introduced the report from the Preventing Youth Violence Scrutiny Panel and referred to her 'Foreword'. She highlighted the following points:

- recognition was needed that young people were individuals and ought to be treated as such;
- the positive work into preventing youth violence in Harrow had exceeded her expectations and that, during the review, the message coming through from young people was that they wanted 'something to do' and it was therefore important that facilities were provided to allow them to engage in activities. She cited the example of Wealdstone Centre which provided various facilities to help engage young people;

- young people who had engaged in the review had been shocked to learn of the consequences of crime and how it could impact on their future. It was important that information and consequences of crime were also conveyed to primary school children. A strategy setting out information on where and how to get help and who young people could talk to was essential. Children would face both good and bad choices and required guidance.

The Chair of the Review Group responded to questions from Members of the Committee as follows:

- it was important to engage with primary school children. She was disappointed that a number of national initiatives to engage with young people had stopped, such as the Junior Olympics and the work that Claire Ginger from the police had done with young people. Harrow Schools had stopped the latter as a result of pressures on funding. She had asked the Safer Neighbourhood Harrow Board to identify resources and provide material such as books that other boroughs had provided. She referred to two books, one provided by Islington Council which had been sponsored by the Arsenal Football Club. She outlined the contents of the book which had also provided children with a useful contact list. A Rotary Club had sponsored a book titled 'Watch Out – Child Guide to Every Day'.
- the Cadet Programme run by the police at Harrow's Nower Hill School was to be disbanded as a result of the withdrawal of funding by MOPAC. Up to 160 young people attended this initiative and the funding had become an issue as the police had to also pay for the venue. The programme also attracted referrals from the Youth Offending Team (YOT). Additionally, some young people had a poor perception of policing and this programme had helped to correct and alter this image. A Member of the Committee expressed her disappointment that the programme would be disbanded and suggested that the representative Deputy Lieutenant, a champion of an inclusive society, might be able to identify other funding streams with a view to continuing this initiative;
- the initiative 'police in charge of schools' was due to commence in primary schools and it was important that the primary and secondary schools were encouraged to take up the offer. However, it was important to recognise that the police too had a resource issue as police recruitment levels were low;
- the recommendations of the Review Group would be added to the VVE Strategy and the YOT Plan with a view to their incorporation in their respective work areas;
- some of the additional points set out on page 48 of the Review Group's report were being addressed by the Council and the remaining ought to be progressed.

The Director of Strategy welcomed the recommendations set out in the report of the Review Group and pointed out that to implement some of the recommendations, new resources would need to be identified which could prove challenging. Improved communication, greater awareness and external funding bids would be explored. The work to consider how to implement the recommendations was already underway. He referred to recommendation 3 of the Review Group's report which stated that 'The Council explore interventions that would prevent young people from using and dealing in drugs' and explained that this recommendation had been a key driver of the report on 'Community Safety, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy - Annual Refresh, Youth Offending Team (YOT) Plan, Knife Crime Action Plan' at agenda item 7. He added that the Council had commenced work in addressing recommendation 2 - 'the Council to work in collaboration with the Police and Schools to address the priorities agreed within the CS, VVE Strategy' and the continued good relationships with schools would help drive this recommendation forward. He added that Recommendation 1, 'each time a strategy or policy was reviewed, a specific perspective on reducing youth violence should be included' was a matter for the Cabinet.

The Director of Strategy and the Divisional Director Children and Young People responded to questions from a Member of the Committee on the funding arrangements at item 7 of the agenda, page 137 of the agenda referred, and its inclusion in the Council's budget. They explained how the YOT was funded. They added that further funding would need to be explored and explained that the voluntary sector might be able to attract other funding streams. They added that funding for Children Looked After (CLA) had been reduced.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Crime thanked the Chair of the Review Group for a comprehensive report. The Portfolio Holder stated that Harrow was a diverse borough and the language barriers meant that constructive discussions were required between parents and schools. He added that effective communication was key to unlocking perceptions.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group and the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Crime for their attendance. The Chair was pleased with the positive response of the Portfolio Holder and expected that the work of officers would help influence and enhance existing policies.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the changes to the report of the Review Group set out in the preamble above,

- (1) the report of the Scrutiny Review Group into Preventing Youth Violence be endorsed;
- (2) **report and recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response;**

- (3) the implementation of the recommendations be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after 12 months.

**Background Documents:**

Agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 4 June 2019: Report on the Scrutiny Review into Preventing Youth Violence

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