

Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 25 February 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy Chair), Jeet Bains, Jerry Fitzpatrick and Joy Prince

Also Present: Councillors Hamida Ali & David Wood

PART A

15/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

16/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

The Chair advised the Committee that a vacancy had arisen on the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub Committee. It was proposed that Councillor Caragh Skipper would fill the vacancy.

The Committee **resolved** that Councillor Caragh Skipper be appointed as a member of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub Committee.

17/20 **Question Time: Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities**

The Committee considered a report together with a presentation delivered at the meeting from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, which provided an overview of the key activities within the Safer Croydon & Communities portfolio over the past year.

A copy of the presentation can be found at the following link:-

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21167/Cabinet%20Member%20for%20Safer%20Croydon%20Communities%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Following the presentation the Committee was given the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member. The first question concerned the grants awarded to community and voluntary groups and whether they were audited to ensure that the proposed benefits were being delivered. It was confirmed that the performance and delivery of schemes in receipt of Council funding were monitored. The level of monitoring would be proportionate to the size of the grant awarded, with those awarded larger grants subject to more rigorous monitoring.

It was noted that the Resilience team had an excellent reputation for responding to emergencies. Given the current risk presented by the Corona Virus, it was questioned whether there were plans in place for responding to a pandemic. It was advised that at present the Director of Public Health was the lead for the virus and was responsible for providing public advice. The Resilience team had a supporting role and had updated the Council's pandemic plan, but it had not yet been activated at this stage.

It was confirmed that out of the £8,000,000 allocated over three years through the Community Grants Fund, 10% was being held back for the Emerging Needs Fund and £100,000 per annum for the Small Grants Fund.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that she worked closely with the Community Safety leads at neighbouring boroughs to provide support for each other and share ideas. The Council also worked closely with other boroughs on a day to day basis on operational matters such as domestic homicide reviews and was in the process of launching a domestic violence scheme with Sutton and Bromley.

In regard to the funding allocated for youth engagement, it was questioned how this was split between delivering current activities and setting up the structure to deliver the long term vision. It was confirmed that it was important to have a balance of both. Funds were being invested into setting up the long term vision, but there were immediate issues that needed a response. A key aim was to influence practice both across the Council and of others in the partnership to support a more preventative approach.

In response to a question about the availability of grassroots funding it was advised that some of the changes made to the Community Fund had been made to improve access for grassroots organisations. As a result the main challenge was now having to adjudicate the many worthy applications due to oversubscription to the fund.

The Committee welcomed the confirmation that a social worker was in post specifically to deal with the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM). It was noted that there was a wide range of understanding of the issue and questioned whether consideration had been given to undertaking an investigation to improve understanding. It was confirmed that having one of eight FGM clinics in the country located in Croydon allowed facilitated collaboration amongst partners on the issues involved. An FGM Steering Group had also been set up to bring partners together to share expertise. It was suggested that there may be a role for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to feed into the upcoming review of the FGM Strategy during 2020-21.

Given the limited amount of funding available, it was questioned whether the Council worked with other grant providers to pool its funds and whether there was support available for community based organisations to help them grow their funding base. It was confirmed that the Council had worked with other voluntary sector funds when commissioning the Community Fund, but it was acknowledged that further work could be done in this area. It was also

confirmed that there was a dedicated officer at the Council whose role it was to assist the voluntary sector with accessing funding streams.

The work with domestic violence perpetrators and the implementation of the trauma based approach with schools was welcomed, but it was noted that these had been funded through external sources. As the issues involved were entrenched it was agreed that it would be essential to be able to carry on this work once the funding streams had ceased.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the information provided and her engagement with the questions of the Committee.

Information Requests

It was agreed that further information on the Council's ability to remove abandoned vehicles kept on private land would be provided for the Committee.

Conclusions

Following discussion of the report, the Committee concluded that the progress made on sharing pots of funding was to be welcomed, with it agreed that given the limited funds available that it would be important to encourage further work in this area in order to maximise the funding available for the voluntary and community sector.

Recommendations

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities that further work be undertaken on the pooling of grant funding with other partners in order to maximise the amount available for local community and voluntary organisation.

18/20

Review of Safer Croydon Partnership & Violence Reduction Network

The Committee considered a presentation delivered at the meeting from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, along with information provided in the report for the prior item, on the Safer Croydon Partnership (SCP) and the Violence Reduction Network (VRN). The Committee was asked to review the information provided and question the representatives in attendance with a view to reaching conclusions on the performance of both the SCP and VRN. In addition to the Cabinet Member the following representatives were also in attendance at the meeting:-

- Chief Superintendent Dave Stringer – Metropolitan Police
- Superintendent Andy Britton – Metropolitan Police
- Andrew Brown – BME Forum

- Sarah Haywood – Director of the Violence Reduction Network
- Christopher Rowney – Head of the Violence Reduction Network
- Gavin Handford – Director of Policy and Partnerships
- Velvet Dibley – National Management Trainee

The presentations delivered by the Cabinet Member can be viewed on the following links:-

Safer Croydon Partnership

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21168/Safer%20Croydon%20Partnership%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Violence Reduction Network

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21169/Violence%20Reduction%20Network%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Following the presentations the representatives from the Police and the BME Forum were given an opportunity to provide their own insight into the work of SCP and VRN. During the introduction by the Police the following was noted:-

- The SCP was considered to be a strong partnership with representation from both statutory agencies and the local communities. Many of the problems being encountered were long terms ones, such as the willingness to carry weapons, the congregation of young people in the town centre and the changing night time economy.
- The Police Commissioner defined how the Metropolitan Police approached law enforcement on violence.
- Croydon was fortunate that it had one of the lowest levels of knife crime in London, but other pressures still remained, with the theft of mobile phones in particular being a critical issue.
- The Police sat at both the acute and long term end of the public health approach to violent crime reduction, working closely with partners such as the youth offending team and others to prevent reoffending.
- The Government had committed to delivering an uplift in police numbers. In the first year this would be focussed towards tackling violence and the drugs market, which would result in increased visibility in the town centre. There would be an emphasis on having a friendly but firm presence to ensure people felt safe.
- In the longer term the Police were investing in schools to ensure pupils in Croydon felt safe, with a meeting due to be held with head teachers to discuss the issue.

The BME Forum highlighted to the Committee that it was good to have the Director of the Violence Reduction Network in place. It was also good from a community perspective that everyone was working together and it was their view that the partnership was working.

Following the presentation the Committee questioned the representatives on the performance of the SCP and VRN. The first question related to the trauma informed approach and what could be done to persuade schools to adopt this approach. In response it was advised that feedback from schools had been both positive and constructive with many already dealing with the issues involved on a daily basis. It felt to be important that there was an open discussion on the best method for using the trauma informed approach rather than the Police advising schools what to do. It was highlighted that £1,200,000 of funding had recently been awarded through the Mayor of London's Young Londoners Fund to provide support for school leaders in developing this work stream. Issues often arose following school exclusions, which meant that it was important for the Police to work with schools prior to any exclusions to try to find a positive resolution.

It was agreed that there needed to be a meaningful evaluation developed to be able to judge the success of the trauma informed approach. It was highlighted that the need for meaningful evaluation was one of the key aspects of the public health approach, with analysis needed to identify shortfalls that needed to be addressed.

It was confirmed that an approach for trauma informed training had been developed and would be rolled out across the borough. Schools who had already started using this approach had found they were saving money, which would hopefully encourage others to follow the approach.

As the sharing of data was crucial to success of the partnership, it was questioned how good the data sharing arrangements were. It was confirmed that there were existing arrangements in place such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub that provided the opportunity to share data. The sharing of community data between the Council and the Police was considered to be good with monthly meetings of the partners focussed on antisocial behaviour, which reviewed different data sets. There was more of an issue sharing data with other organisations such as the Fire and Ambulance Services which needed to be resolved. It was highlighted that incidents not being reported was a more significant concern with work required to investigate how people could be encouraged to report crimes.

It was queried whether there was sufficient resource available to be able to process the longitudinal data needed to properly inform the work of the SCP and VRN. In response it was highlighted that a senior analyst had recently been employed by the Council to help direct the use of data, but given the large amount of data available this still needed to be prioritised.

As a follow up it was questioned whether the scope for involving academic institutions such as universities to assist with research and data analysis had

been explored. It was acknowledged that this could be an option, but it would usually require funding to undertake any detailed work.

In response to a question about the importance of being located in the local community, it was advised that most of the issues occurred in Croydon town centre. The Chief Superintendent went on regular walkabouts with colleagues to meet with local businesses and residents to gain an understanding of the communities' views. Good quality engagement with schools was also critical to understanding why violence was taking place amongst young people and to establish where pupils felt secure.

It was acknowledged that the promotion of community engagement events by the Police could always be better, but in certain instances the need for speed prevented the wide spread promotion of events.

It was questioned whether the Police were provided with the right level of training to deal with domestic violence issues or to support people with mental health issues. In response it was confirmed that police officers received an enormous amount of training including on domestic violence and mental health issues. However, it was important to remember that the Police were not experts on mental health issues and as such worked closely with the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) to use their expertise during incidents to assess the situation from a mental health perspective, reducing the need for sectioning.

In response to a question about how to judge the performance of the SCP it was advised that crime statistics would be a good indicator as it was unlikely that there would be a sustained decrease in crime without activity to deliver improvement.

As the Government had announced extra funding for policing, it was queried how this would benefit the local area. It was advised that in recent years police funding had been challenging with the number of police in London at its lowest level since 2003 and even though increased funding had for recruitment had been announced, training new officers took time. Furthermore although additional funding had been announced for the Police, partners continued to face funding challenges and as such it was essential to explore creative solutions on how to keep young people out of trouble. It was acknowledged that although the government supported the use of the public health approach to violence reduction, long term funding had not been forthcoming with authorities often having to compete against each other for the limited amount of funding available.

It was noted that a key aspect of the public health approach was evaluating projects to establish what does and does not work, as such it was questioned whether Croydon was following this approach. In response it was advised that although the public health approach was still in the early stages of development, it was essential to have a robust framework of evaluation in place to ensure that interventions were achieving their aims. The Committee agreed that any evaluation framework would need to include a system of ranking to demonstrate why projects had been chosen instance, outline the

key outcomes and a measurable evaluation on whether these have been achieved.

It was confirmed that a Community Safety Strategy was in the process of being developed, which would include high level objectives that were SMART and measurable. The strategy would include provision for setting up project boards to lead on specific areas. The Committee agreed that it would be keen to have the opportunity to feed into the development of the strategy at the appropriate time.

The involvement of local communities was a key aspect of the VRN, with a Network Community Navigators scheme being developed which would work with people in the community to identify those who may be at risk. Community representatives were also involved with other areas of the Network, attending workshops and participating in the Trauma Informed Working Group. It was highlighted that it would be difficult to develop the Network without the community being involved in its co-production.

It was confirmed that the introduction of new software for the VRN had included the input from the Police, health and children services to ensure that it would be able to work across the different agencies involved.

It was noted that the lack of support for victims of domestic violence living in the private rented sector in comparison to the social rented sector was an area of weakness, with a Pan London agreement for secure tenancies available for those in social rented properties. Support available included the Sanctuary scheme which helped to strengthen security for victims of domestic abuse staying in their own home and there was also a number of refuge places provided by the Council. The Council had signed up to a pledge to do all it could to prevent domestic violence, with an ongoing dialogue between the Family Justice Centre and Council Services on specific issues.

It was confirmed that at present there were eight vacancies out of 35 posts in the Neighbourhood Safety Team, who were responsible for monitoring and reporting antisocial behaviour in parks.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the attendees for giving up their time to attend the Committee meeting and providing their insight into the Safer Croydon Partnership and the Violence Reduction Network.

Information Requests

The Committee agreed to request further information on Safer Neighbourhood Boards in the borough, particularly how often they were held and attendance.

Conclusions

Following discussion of the report, the Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. While the Committee welcomed confirmation that schools in the borough were engaged with the Trauma Informed Approach, it was

agreed that further evidence would be needed to provide reassurance that there was ownership of the trauma informed approach amongst the senior leadership of schools in the borough.

2. The Committee welcomed confirmation that the Annual Strategic Assessments were due to be published on the Council's website.
3. The Committee agreed that the Government's current approach of providing short term funding for schemes, when the public health approach was a long term project was unhelpful.
4. The Committee agreed that it was essential to have quantifiable measurements such as an Evaluation Framework in place to allow qualified judgements to be made on the success of schemes commissioned by the Violence Reduction Network in delivering their intended outcomes.
5. The Committee welcomed the move to a more integrated approach to data sharing with partners as this was key to informing the work of the Violence Reduction Network and it was agreed that options for funding the expansion of work on data analysis needed to be explored.
6. The Committee agreed that the use of data should be ingrained throughout the work of the Violence Reduction Network and looked forward to seeing how this was being implemented when the performance of the Network was next reviewed.
7. The Committee acknowledged that the Safer Croydon Partnership seemed to be working well, but agreed that it was difficult to reach any concrete conclusions without quantifiable data being provided to demonstrate that outcomes were being achieved.

Recommendations

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities that:-

1. When the Committee next reviews the work of the Violence Reduction Network it is requested that evidence is provided to demonstrate the ownership of the trauma informed approach amongst the senior leadership of schools in the borough.
2. An evaluation framework needs to be developed to allow quantifiable judgement on the success of schemes commissioned by the Violence Reduction Network in delivering their intended outcomes.
3. Options for expanding the Violence Reduction Network's capacity for data analysis should be explored.
4. When the Committee next reviews the work of the Violence Reduction Network evidence should be provided to demonstrate how the use of data has informed the work of the Network.

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5. Consideration should be given to what quantifiable data on outcomes can be provided when the Safer Croydon Partnership is next reviewed by the Committee to allow a judgement to be made on the performance of the Partnership.

19/20 **Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20**

The Committee received a report for its approval setting out its work programme for those for the three Scrutiny Sub-Committees namely:-

- Children and Young People
- Health and Social Care
- Streets, Environment and Homes

It was noted that Equalities Strategy coming to the next meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 7 April 2020. The work programme for the Children and Young People Sub-Committee had changed with the safeguarding item moving to their April meeting. It was also still to be confirmed whether a climate change item would be included on the Streets, Environment and Homes Sub-Committee agenda for their meeting in April or later in the year.

The Committee **resolved** to note the work programme.

20/20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Signed:

Date: