

Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 5 March 2019 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Councillor Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Sherwan Chowdhury, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Joy Prince and Andy Stranack
Also Present: Councillors Hamida Ali and David Wood

PART A

15/19 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

16/19 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

17/19 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

18/19 **Safer Croydon Partnership**

The Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, on the performance of the Safer Croydon Partnership over the past twelve months.

In addition to the Cabinet Member, the Chair also welcomed the following attendees who were present at the meeting for this item:-

- Andy Brown: Chief Executive of the Croydon BME Forum
- Colin Carswell: Partnership Superintendent, Metropolitan Police
- Elaine Clancy: Director of Quality & Governance, Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Rachel Flowers: Director of Public Health, London Borough of Croydon
- Gavin Handford: Head of Policy & Communities, London Borough of Croydon
- Anthony Lewis: Head of Community Safety, London Borough of Croydon

- Lucien Spencer: Area Manager, London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- Dave Stringer: South Area Commander, Metropolitan Police
- Jonathan Toy: Programme Director – Community Safety, London Borough of Croydon
- Councillor David Wood: Deputy Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities

During the introductory presentation delivered by the Cabinet Member, the following information was noted:-

- Crime and safety were two of the key priorities set out in the Labour Manifesto which was produced in the run up to the local elections in May 2018.
- The Safer Croydon Partnership (SCP) was a statutory partnership that originally came into force in 1998 with the Crime and Disorder Act, but had evolve since then towards its present format.
- Statutory partners in the SCP included the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Community Rehabilitation Centre, the Fire Service and the Police.
- Voluntary partners included Croydon Voluntary Action, the Croydon BME Forum and CAYSH
- A recent Assessment of Statutory Compliance, had indicated that SCP was achieving compliance in all areas except Information Sharing, which was an issue effecting many Community Safety Partnerships and not just in Croydon.
- There was a requirement for the Partnership to have a Community Safety Strategy, which was reviewed in 2017 and 2018 to ensure it continued to be aligned with priorities.
- The current priorities were:
 - To reduce the overall crime rate in the borough; with a focus on violent crime and domestic abuse
 - To improve the safety of children and young people
 - To tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
 - To improve public confidence and community engagement
 - To improve support and reduce vulnerability for all victims of crime; with a focus on hate crime.

- Working below the main Partnership were five programme boards whose work streams were each aligned with one of these five priorities.
- The strengths of the SCP included partners having a clear line of sight over the area, the involvement of the voluntary organisations was important particularly in regard to tackling knife crime and the DRIVE pilot for London which focussed on domestic abuse.
- Potential areas of weakness for the Partnership included the challenge arising from the different working practices of partners, not all partners contributing equally, the challenge of coordinating the voluntary sector organisations and evaluating performance of the Partnership.
- Forthcoming opportunities for the Partnership included the move towards a greater focus on prevention, the Vulnerable Young People Review and additional resources from the Council providing a greater opportunity for data analysis.
- Potential threats to the success of the Partnership included a 10% reduction in funding from the Mayor's Officer for Policing & Crime, the Police reorganisation to a tri-borough approach, the Information Commissioners Office enforcement made the sharing of data difficult and making sure the work of partners was coordinated.

Following the presentation, the Committee was given the opportunity to question those partners present at the meeting. The Chair stressed that it was the duty of the Committee to make a judgement on the effectiveness of SCP and that the partners were aware of their weaknesses and were addressing these accordingly. As such each partner was asked to give their views on these areas.

- i. The Police advised that the move to the new tri-borough structure was the main risk that would affect the performance of the partnership, but it was their role to ensure there was as little impact from this as possible. There was an effective focus on the key priorities of the Partnership within the borough, with improvement made in the reduction of violent crime. There was a need to ensure that the prevention work was as effective as possible, with a focus on children in Years Five and Six. School exclusions were also an issue and it could be difficult to work across the education landscape in the borough to address this issue, which needed to be focussed towards children remaining in the school system.
- ii. The Director of Public Health advised that the Council was working on its mental health support offer in schools, to ensure this complemented the work on community safety. The engagement of the community and voluntary sector had been positive and as the Partnership moved forward it needed to ensure that there was a clarity of vision and that it continued to be efficient.

- iii. The representative from the Croydon BME Forum advised that there seemed to be a togetherness of purpose from the both the Partnership and the local community. The openness of the Cabinet Member to meet and engage with the local community was also welcomed. It was felt that Croydon was leading the way for London with the Violence Reduction Network.
- iv. The representative from the CRC advised that from their experience of attending a number of different partnership boards across South London, it was important not to underestimate the level of initiative and innovation in Croydon. There were challenges arising from the changes made to the Probation Service, but there was support from partners.
- v. The representative from the CCG echoes the comments of other partners, highlighting the significant financial challenges being faced which increased the need to ensure that the Partnership worked effectively.
- vi. The Cabinet Member welcomed the reflection of her colleagues in the Partnership. The Vulnerable Adolescent Review was highlighted as a priority for the Violence Reduction Network and the Safeguarding Board. Thanks was given to the Community Safety team at the Council for all its work in facilitating the Partnership.

In response to a question about why a focus was needed on pupils staying in the school system and how this could be achieved, it was advised that statistic evidence showed that a disproportionately high number of children involved in serious crime including knife crime were not in the school system. The Police highlighted a School Watch Programme that they had organised in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets which looked at schools as communities and engaged with teachers, pupils and parents on their priorities, which were used to inform the programme. It was essential that work in this area included a before, during and after school approach.

It was advised that it was the role of health to support the other partners working to reduce school exclusions through the provision of school nursing and sexual health support. Mental health provision was important as data showed that almost all young people who had committed crimes had also been referred to mental health services and many had parents or carers with their own mental health issues.

The importance of ensuring that the governance of the Partnership was correct was highlighted and as such it was questioned whether the current structure allowed partners to operate effectively. It was advised that the Partnership had been reviewed in 2017 which had resulted in the present structure with a streamlined Board providing a strategic overview, supported by operational panels. It was agreed by partners that there was a good level of cooperation and commitment throughout the Partnership which could be evidenced in the positive improvements being delivered.

In response to a question about what the partners had learnt from each other, it was advised that the review had provided real data for Croydon and facilitated discussion on other initiatives and ways of working. It had also helped partners to learn about the different cultural identities in the borough and helped schools to engage with community groups.

As knife crime was a high priority not only within the borough, but nationally, it was questioned how the partnership was working to prevent crimes of this nature. It was advised that there was a lot of work focussed on young people including an extensive schools programme aimed at making sure young people felt safe and another aimed at getting young people into voluntary programmes that provided the right role models. There was also work targeted at domestic abuse and ensuring intervention at an early stage.

It was noted that there was a pilot at the Kings College Hospital that provided trained staff to work with young people from the time they were admitted with traumatic injuries, through to their departure from hospital. Work was underway at the Croydon University Hospital to explore the possibility of bringing this scheme to the borough.

It was questioned whether the school structure in the borough was open enough to allow the Partnership to feed into it. It was advised that there was school representation in the Partnership, but it could be difficult to coordinate activities across the different schools in the borough. There was a Fair Access Panel which managed exclusions and the possibility of an annual conference with local schools was being explored. There was also a wide variety of work being carried out by the Youth Engagement Team.

The Chair thanked the attendees for their attendance at the meeting and answering the Committees questions.

Conclusions

Following the discussion of this item, the Committee reached the following conclusions:

1. The Committee agreed that the Safer Croydon Partnership seemed to be on the right track and that the progress reported was positive. A further update in twelve months to review further progress would be welcomed.
2. The Committee was reassured that the correct form of governance was in place for the Safer Croydon Partnership and recognised the commitment from the partners, who were using their resources as adequately as possible.
3. The Committee recognised that many of the potential outcomes were only likely to be delivered in the longer term.
4. As the evidence had demonstrated that schools would need to play a large role if the programme was to be successful, the fractured nature

of education provision in the borough led to significant concern that this may be an impediment to the success of the partnership

5. The Committee was interested to investigate further what resources health organisations would allocate in the areas they were able directly influence and effect.
6. It was agreed that it should be planned into the Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20 that the Children & Young People and the Health & Social Care Sub-Committees should look in greater detail at the education and health aspects of the partnership in light of Conclusions 4 & 5.

Recommendations

1. That the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities and other members of the Safer Croydon Partnership be invited to the meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 25 February 2020 to provide an update on the work of the partnership over the previous twelve months
2. That further consideration needed to be given to how to engage local schools with the work of the Safer Croydon Partnership.

19/19

Question Time: Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities

The Committee received a report set out on pages 17 to 38 of the agenda along with an accompanying presentation on the Portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali. During the introductory presentation to this item the following was noted

- i. Although the Portfolio did not have as large a budget as some of the others, a wide range of areas were covered including community safety work streams and working with the voluntary & community sector.
- ii. The strengths within the Portfolio included the breath of activity arising from partnership work, Croydon Trading Standards playing a role nationally in test purchasing the online acquisition of knives, the Drive project aimed at disrupting domestic and sexual violence, funding had been received from National FGM Centre for a social worker for two years, the Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy and the Council had received recognition for its equalities and diversity work from both Stonewall & the Employers Network for Equalities & Inclusion.
- iii. Weaknesses included the lack of available funding undermining the ambitions of the Council and the lack of available, affordable community space (although provision was being created in the former SLaM premises on Tamworth Road).
- iv. Future opportunities included the expansion of the Credit Union, CCTV investment for smart city applications, the Best Bar None competition planned for 2019/20 and the second phase of Community Empowerment and Devolution also planned for 2019/20.

- v. Potential threats included the impact from the restructure of the Police Basic Command Unit, the large volume of activity across multiple funding streams outside of the Safer Croydon Partnership structure and data protection issues that restricted the sharing of data.

Following the presentation from the Cabinet Member, the Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions about her Portfolio. The first question concerned the potential impact of the Police restructure to a tri-borough arrangement with Sutton and Bromley. The South Area Commander for the Metropolitan Police advised that the purpose of the restructure was to ensure that there was more officers available on the ground and in moving to a tri-borough arrangement it delivered savings from having less senior management to deliver this. It had also presented the opportunity to equalise the work of senior commanders, so there should not be a noticeable difference on a local level.

It was questioned whether all the various partnerships and boards could lead to a risk of duplication, affecting the outcomes. It was advised that the Boards under the Safer Croydon Partnership were arranged to reflect the priorities of the Partnership. The arrangement had recently been reviewed and it was concluded that the partnership was working well, but it would be reviewed again in 2020. Within the Cabinet Member's own Portfolio, there were regular meetings with the three Executive Directors to ensure that there was cohesion across the Portfolio.

The provision of funding for a social worker to work specifically on cases of FGM was welcomed by the Committee, with it questioned when this role would be in place. It was advised that the funding was due to start in April 2019, with recruitment for this role due to start. Furthermore, there would be additional FGM training for existing staff as well.

It was highlighted that modern CCTV equipment was now cheaper and more powerful, but there were issues with increasing its coverage in public areas. As such it was questioned what the Council could do to lobby central Government to achieve better outcomes. It was advised that there was a need to achieve a balance between safety and privacy and in doing so resident expectations also needed to be managed. CCTV was not particularly good at preventing violent crime, but it was useful for the crime detection especially in youth crimes when witnesses were often reluctant to come forward. It was highlighted that at present the Council provided 24 hour monitoring of its CCTV, which was not something that all boroughs offered. The new equipment would offer facial recognition capacity, but there were strict regulations guiding its use.

It was highlighted that there were areas of social infrastructure, such as libraries, that were not open in the evening and at weekends when they would be useful locations for young people to visit. As such it was questioned whether there were any plans to look at social infrastructure as part of the wider crime prevention work within the Cabinet Member's Portfolio. It was confirmed that it the Administration had given a Manifesto Commitment to working with schools to increase the amount of community space available,

but there were issues around who controlled these assets. It was positive that the Council had been able to retain its libraries across the borough. Work was needed to continue the roll out of the safe haven scheme across the borough.

Conclusions

Following the discussion of this item, the Committee concluded that there was concern about the number of working groups operating under the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities Portfolio, which may lead to an increased risk of duplication. As such it was agreed that this may need to be scrutinised in greater detail at a later date.

20/19 Developing a Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction

The Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, on the Safer Croydon Partnership's move towards implementing a public health model for violence reduction in the borough.

During the presentation from Councillor Ali the following points were noted:-

- Serious youth violence in the borough had fallen by 22.9% over the past twelve months, with 368 crimes reported against 477 in the previous twelve months. This reduction compared favourably with the rest of London which had a 5.8% reduction.
- Knife crime in the borough had also reduced in the past year with 531 crimes compared to 637 in the previous twelve month. This represented a reduction of 16.6% against a London wide reduction of 0.4%.
- The reduction in knife crime involving injury had decreased by 27.3% over the past twelve months, with 80 reported crimes compared to 110 in the previous year. The London wide reduction was 13.6%.
- The data demonstrated that Croydon was seeing a greater reduction in knife crime, youth crime and violence with injury than the London average. Croydon actually had a lower level of knife crime offences compared to the London average for the first time since 2015.
- The Safer Croydon Partnership was now developing a public health approach to violence reduction which aimed to deliver long term, sustained reductions in violent crime.
- The public health approach was data driven and focussed on preventing violence before it occurred using community based support, targeted interventions and enforcement.
- The Public Health Approach would be used to look at all forms of violence including domestic abuse and sexual violence against women.

- The priorities for the new approach would be to ensure that all partners understood their roles in helping to reduce violence in the borough, taking opportunities to intervene at an early stage were appropriate, reducing school exclusions and developing community support networks.
- The next steps for the project would be a number of listening event in March and April before the framework and delivery model was finalised by the Safer Croydon Partnership Board in April. The Cabinet would give the project its final sign off in June 2019.

Following the presentation the Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions about the new Public Health Approach for violence reduction. The move towards a data driven approach was welcomed, but reassurance was sought that the approach would be led by data and not overruled by political priorities. Reassurance was given that future work would be driven by evidence as this was a vitally important part of employing a public health approach.

It was questioned what the Council could do to ensure the better use of digital data. It was advised that it was essential to ensure that the data was constantly being refined and developed. Evidence demonstrated that early trauma in the life of a young person was a common factor in many instances of those committing knife crime and as such it was important to use data to allow the Council and its partners to move towards a preventative approach.

It was confirmed that data would form the first principle of the Public Health Approach and it was currently being considered whether the Council needed additional resources from an analytical perspective to help inform the new approach. There were other areas that needed to be considered including social infrastructure as the new approach developed with opportunities to share information and test possible plans amongst partners.

In regard to interventions, it was noted that it may need a multi-stage approach to continue to make a difference in a young person's life. From the Vulnerable Adolescent Review, evidence had demonstrated that a large proportion of the cohort had been known to the Council and its partners from an early stage. It would be important as the use of the public health approach progressed to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of interventions and use this learning to refine and improve practices.

In response to a question about whether the Council was using examples of the best practice from elsewhere, it was advised that there had been a visit to Glasgow who had been using the public health approach to violence reduction for ten years. There were also plans to visit Lambeth and Birmingham, with the partnership keen to learn wherever possible. It was hoped that anything that Croydon learnt from the process could also be passed on to other agencies and the Government to inform the wider approach.

Conclusions

Following the discussion of this item, the Committee reached the following conclusions:

1. The Committee agreed that youth violence was of one the most important issues facing the Council and the information on the proposed Public Health Approach was promising.
2. The Committee felt that Scrutiny would have a role to play by providing additional challenge on the process as it progressed and where possible the key themes from the Public Health Approach should be incorporated into the Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20 to allow for a more focussed approach.
3. The Committee agreed that the use of data would be key to informing the new Public Health Approach and felt that it would be a major challenge to get the data needed to fully inform the process.
4. The Committee agreed that identifying when was the right time to make an intervention was another major challenge in using the Public Health Approach to violence reduction.

Recommendation

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities to use Scrutiny as resource to provide additional challenge to the Public Health Approach as it developed.

21/19 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

Signed:

Date:

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