

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Adel Khaireh (Chair), Councillors Ann-Marie Cousins, Ian Hawking, Rajinder James and Clive Mardner

Under Standing Orders

Councillor Jackie Smith (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety & Chair of Licensing Committee)

Officers

Assistant Director for Community Safety & Environment and Corporate Governance Officer

Other People in Attendance

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson from the Metropolitan Police, Chief Executive of GRIP, Director of London Services for Stop Hate UK, representatives from Metro GAD and LGBT Hate Crime Worker METRO Charity

Item

No.

I Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashikodi, Cornforth and Hills.

Councillor Cousins extended apologies for having to leave the meeting early.

The Panel also accepted apologies from Councillor Gardner, Cabinet Member for the Public Realm, that he could not attend this meeting.

2 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cousins advised that she has been a founding member of GrIP but had had not formal association with the organisation for a number of years.

Resolved -

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Minutes

Resolved -

That the minutes' of the meetings' of the Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel held on 27 June 2019 and 25 July 2019 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record's.

5 Action Points Review of the previous meeting

Resolved -

That the status of actions requested at previous meetings of the Panel be noted.

6 Scoping report of the Safer Greenwich Partnership

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Environmental Health introduced the report advising that the report set out the six priorities of the Safer Greenwich Partnerships. That knife crime was an ongoing area of work and burglary was another significant area of concern within the Borough. He noted that a specific report on the work of Greenwich Reset (*Reducing Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation Unit*) was being presented to a further meeting of the Scrutiny Panel which would include aspects of knife crime and gang violence.

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson from the Metropolitan Police concurred with the Assistant Directors introduction.

Scrutiny Panel Members felt that whatever area they requested a further in depth report on must be relevant to all the residents of the Borough and it was noted that knife crime was not be as prevalent as the public perception.

In response to a Member's question the Assistant Director informed the Panel that the Safer Greenwich Partnership priorities were set by the representatives who formed the Partnership and the safer Neighbourhood Board. The priorities were linked to the Council and partners Core Strategies. In addition, substance misuse, drug dealing and reduction of harm from alcohol were statutory responsibilities of the partnership.

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson add that the Safer Greenwich Partnership priorities were also informed by the MOPAC priorities and crime plan, which were publicly accessible on line and could be interrogated to see information specifically relating to Greenwich Borough.

The Chair noted that burglary had an impact on residents across the Borough and believed it was a concern raised by residents with number of Members at their Surgeries

The Chair requested that the Assistant Director provided a short information note relating to the each of the priorities to be circulation to Members to consider the priority to be considered in the further report.

Action: Assistant Direct CS&EH/ Corporate Governance Officer

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

That Members would advise the Chair of their preferred area for further report upon receipt of the Assistant Directors briefing note.

7 Addressing Hate Crime in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Environmental Health introduced the report advising that hate crime remained a high priority for the Council and was one of the principle areas for the Safer Communities Team who were also looking to better understand and address the links between noise nuisance, anti-social behaviour and hate crime.

The Senior Community Safety Officer gave Members details of two separate case studies.

The Panel felt that it was not possible to get every case right but appreciated that good responses were being provided by Council Officer's and the positive partnership working with GrIP, the police and other partners.

Members noted that the increase in incidents of hate crime may be as a result of increased reporting but was, potentially, still an underreporting of the actual situation. The Chair requested that the full figures of reporting rates for respective hate crimes be provided to the Member of the Scrutiny Panel.

Action: DCS&E

In respect of ways of encouraging greater reporting incidents the Senior Community Safety Officer responded to Members that raising public awareness of how to report incidents had to be a continuous process. That a Hate Crime UK leaflet was included with all tenancy statements at the beginning of the year and this will be repeated. There was an online reporting portal through the Council Website and Council Officers worked closely with GrIP to raise awareness.

She continued that hate crime was still significantly under reported by young people, advising that a play, examining hate crime and its implications had been commissioned from the Little Fish Theatre Company and funded through MOPAC. The play had been put on at three Greenwich Schools last year and was well received and had been re-commissioned for this and next year to be put on at a larger number of schools and youth centres. In addition to the play the funding allowed for a number of workshops to be run with young people to address the reasons behind carrying a knife and knife crime.

The Assistant Director advised that a lot of 'low level' crime, such as graffiti and fly-posting, created a negative impact on an area and an enhanced service had been established with Street Cleaning to get any hate related incidents removed quickly and regular incident briefing reports were sent to Ward Councillors. He added that there was an awareness of the need to encourage people who witnessed an incident of hate crime, though they may not have been directly affected, to report the incident.

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety confirmed that a good working relationship and links had been established between Council departments and with partners to address hate crime and resolve any incidents quickly.

Members asked how officer established the right strategies to reach different communities and groups and how were incidents identified and recorded by Council Officers, partners and the private sector.

The Assistant Director accepted that not all incidents were recognised and recorded. Community Services staff were working with GriP to raise awareness both within the authority with front line staff and with partners.

The Senior Community Safety Officer responded to Members that it was felt that the number of incidents referred to the Hate Crime Panel relating to disability, race and sexual orientation did not appear to reflect the reality of the number of actual incidents.

The Senior Community Safety Officer clarified that only complex cases were referred to the multi-agency Hate Crime Panel, to provide the best intervention and support as required. That the Hate Crime Panel could involve partners such as MetroGavs, GriP and the Police. Whilst the Her Centre were not represented on the Hate Crime Panel but did have a close relationship with it and could be called upon to give support, as and when a case required.

She explained that if the victim did not want to make a report to the police but the Hate Crime Panel felt that if there were a situation which required police involvement, a 3rd party report could be made. She noted that the Safer Communities Team had established a close working relationship which involved resolution knowledge sharing as a lot of their complex cases had areas of overlap.

In respect of a Members question as to the time from reporting and incident to resolution the Senior Community Safety Officer stated that this was very much dependent on the individual case and level of complexity. Some incidents would be resolved quickly with mediation such as neighbour disputes over the use or storage of bins, which escalates into rudeness and unacceptable comments. However, where either one or both parties involved had mental health or substance abuse issues it could take much longer to resolve the situation, but it was always important that the victim was kept central through the process.

Members noted a disparity between the number of people supported by the Hate Crime Services in 2018/19, at 51, and the number of hate crime offences recorded by the police, over the same period.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety advised that the disparity was most likely due to not every victim wanting support. The Assistant Director added that the Police MOPAC dashboard, which could be publicly accessed, gave a breakdown of the number, location and type of incidents reported up to the police, currently up to July. He confirmed that he would provide Members with a link to the site.

Action: AD CS&E

The Director of London Services for Stop Hate UK advised the Panel that the recording incidents of Islamophobia, as a specific form of hate crime, had only come into practice in the past year. Before this any incident of Islamophobia was recorded as a religious (not specific) or race hate incident.

In response to Members questioning as to what challenges to improving the service and responses officer faced, the Assistant Director advised there was a need to better understand the linkages between alcohol /substance abuse and mental health to hate crime and steps were being taken, in respect of this with ongoing work with Public Health and Oxleas. Also to develop the skills of the Anti-Social Behaviour Panels to identify cases of low level and noise related anti-social-behaviour which could escalated into incidents of hate crime and develop reporting lines to ensure the appropriate support was gained. He added that the one of the strongest abilities of the Community Safety Officers was their ability to reflect and learn.

The Senior Community Safety Officer confirmed a lot of work was undertaken to raise public and staff awareness of hate crime and how to report it via reaching out at youth clubs, schools, places of employment and Council Offices, as well as via social media. Whilst a lot of work was undertaken during Hate Crime Awareness Week there was an awareness of the need to keep awareness raised throughout the year.

The Assistant Director added that community engagement was a key focus and officers worked to find ways of engaging with communities and expanding links such as a recent promotion with Neighbourhood Watch via the Safer Neighbourhood Board.

A Member sought further information on the implication of the Police three Borough merger on hate crime in the Borough, to which Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson responded that previously the majority of referrals had been via the Safer Neighbourhood Team and were investigated by the Community Safety Unit. That the majority of reports were now coming through 999 and the responding Police Officers would now be the

lead on conducting the investigation. This avoided referral delays and maintain continuity for the victim and investigation lines. He continued that this model was being adopted nationally but would take time to bed in as Police Officers developed their capabilities as primary investigators and caseload management skills. It was anticipated this way of dealing with hate crime would result in better and quicker outcomes for the victim.

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson felt that victim satisfaction was very important and accepted that the time it could take between reporting an incident to a court hearing could be a long journey and maintaining good communication was vital. He accepted that building confidence in the police was going to take time and whilst working with Safer Neighbourhood Groups was one avenue to achieve this there was also a need to build a community focused approach to encourage people to report incidents and see it as an area of priority, not 'just something that happens'.

He noted that one of the most difficult areas to address, in the sense of a continued negative portrait of the police, was social media posts which would often be small, out of context recordings, which gave no background but could viral in a matter of hours. Often these posts would not include any pre-lude to the moment and it was difficult for the Police to comment on or react to the posts, as they often related to an ongoing investigation and rebuttal comments on the post could be seen as sub judice and prejudice investigation of original incident.

The Panel noted that communities would report burglaries to the police but not hate crime was there a reasons for this willingness to report one but not the other to the Police?

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson believed that the reported figures on hate crime were not a true reflection of actual incidents and whilst it may be a confidence issue there was also a high level of acceptance of comments or them being seen as antisocial behaviour rather than hate crime. Further, if it was a verbal incident or one of an individual's attitude to another with no physical aspect people often did not see this as a crime or believed it would not be taken seriously.

Chief Superintendent, Simon Dobinson confirmed to the Panel that the Police were working with housing partners and the Local Authorities to establish good working relationships and build confidence among partners and their clients. In addition Police Officers were working with community leaders and people of influence within their communities to support anti-hate campaigns and act as advocates to help build confidence in the police. A lot of work had

already been undertaken in this area but there were many complex reasons why people did not want to contact or have involvement with the police and it would take time to build that confidence.

The Chair invited the Chief Executive of GrIP to address the Panel who concurred with Chief Superintendent Simon Dobinson that there was a reluctance and social barriers to reporting incidents with National Statistic estimations that only 1 in 10 incidents of hate crimes were reported. He felt that in Greenwich there was a lack of recognition of understanding of what a hate crime was with a high level of belief that it was a part of life and not worth reporting.

He noted that there was a reluctance in migrant communities to make reports as there was a perception it would put their immigration or habitation status at risk. There was also a high level of distrust of police, within a number of these communities, as the police services in their originating countries were often military based services. In addition, many people were put off reporting incidents as they believed they had to go to a police station to make a report, which was not always convenient or easy. He was aware that MetroGAVS and Greenwich Metro were working on challenging a lot of these misconceptions through public information sharing pop ups around the Borough.

The Chief Executive of GrIP continued that it was vital to continue to build on the linkages established with partners and ensure that ongoing training of volunteers and staff was carried out to recognise, log and report incidents that people may not have recognised as hate crime or 'mentioned in passing'. This had to be supported by improving people's awareness and education of hate crime as well as establishing safeguarding leads to act as points of referral. There were also wider benefits to increasing working ties with schools & colleges to provide hate crime support and education with many schools and colleagues making approaches for support and guidance on how to achieve this.

He gave an example of a real case study involving a Housing Association treating incidents as antisocial behaviour (ASB) rather than hate crime and the negative impact of this misidentification resulting in a long delay and anxiety for the victims in finding a resolution. He noted that reports of hate crime from Housing Associations and Registered Housing Providers was below what would be expected and many would not use the term hate crime preferring to refer to incidents as ASB, which diminished the level of understanding of incidents.

The Chief Executive of GrIP felt it was incumbent on all partners to improve the community response to hate crime and raise awareness that it was not something to be tolerate but report. That everyone had to 'Be an up-stander not a by-stander'.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety addressed the Panel advising that it was recognised that there were problems engaging with social landlords and Council Officers were continuing to work on engaging with, educating and challenging landlords.

A Panel Member applauded the work of GrIP, particularly their inroads into schools. Further, that it was not just partner's and social landlords responsibility but all Councillors and Council Staff' responsibility to know how to identify and report hate crime and the Council should be supporting staff, such as traffic wardens, neighbourhood wardens, etc. who could be both victims and witnesses.

The Director of London Services for Stop Hate UK addressed the Panel advising they offered a 24 hour help line for victims and witnesses of hate crime. They believed that there was still a high rate of underreporting even noting that since the EU referendum there had been an increase in reports, which had remained high. Further, rates of incidents saw an increase in line with global incidents, such as the shooting in Christchurch, Australia which resulted in increased incidents and reporting of Islamophobia attacks.

The Director of London Services for Stop Hate UK responded to Members that a lot of work had been undertaken by the Council which was supported by the production of information in 42 languages and a recognised interpreter process in place to help. However, it was vital to both support victims and give them time and the confidence to make a report to police or get the right support and help to make progress.

Members noted that the age of homophobic assailants appeared to be getting younger. The Director of London Services for Stop Hate UK responded that whilst it was not possible say what the exact cause of this was there was a belief that National events, such as the conflicts in Birmingham between some groups and schools over sexual orientation awareness education had wider impacts including an increase in the number of homophobic hate crimes perpetrated by school age and younger people. He continued that there was a danger that many school age and young people were also criminalising themselves as they believed that comments and actions made on line and via social media were not classed as an offence. There was a need to raise

awareness of the impact of their posts, the possible implications, to the victims and themselves and re-education.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety advised the Panel that as of September 2020 all schools must adopt difference sexual orientation teaching and assured the Panel that the Council was working work with schools and partners on developing a programme to progress this. There was an awareness by some schools, such as faith school, that they may face resistance from some parents or groups and work was being undertaken to plan on how to address this and support the school, should this situation transpire.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety also advised that a re-evaluation of the Councils policy and process for reporting and taking action in respect of assaults, physical or verbal, against staff was urgently being undertaken. She felt that there was a need to revise the social acceptance of abuse as people, particularly those in Public Service, did not come to work to be abused.

Sue Elsegood and Carlo Salvatore from MetroGAD addressed the Panel, extending the apologies from the MetroGAD lead on hate crime, who was unable to attend.

They briefed the Panel on the work of MetroGAD in supporting people with disabilities within the Borough, including MetroGAD's role in working with partners and other agencies such as the Council and Police as well as attendance at the monthly Housing Risk Panel. They also ran pop-up events in the Woolwich Centre, Eltham Centre and Thamesmead library, which were often a good point to engage with school age children.

Sue explained that one of their main concerns was the level of underreporting of disability hate crime, wither through the individual's self-perception or false acceptance that it was normal to be abused. An example was given of a person with Down syndrome who was verbally abused at a bus stop and felt it would only be taken seriously if a firework was thrown at them. Many clients felt that an incident had to be significant or it would not be taken seriously or seen as a waste of time.

They advised that the media reporting on the 'crisis' in policing with decreasing numbers of police impinged on people's confidence and a number of disabled people felt that that their situation was too complex or complicated and there was not enough police to deal with indicant's or it they were too low level to trouble the police with. There was a need to

improve the Police's awareness of disability and hate crime as often Police Officers were not always aware of an individual's disability and did not always think to ask, as not all disabilities were visible, resulting in a disability hate crime not being properly reported, if at all.

They continued that austerity was also a factor and there had been a steady increase in hostility towards disabled people and MetroGad was working closely with the University of Greenwich on challenging the disparity of recognising and reporting disability hate crime and a joint action report had been developed. Members requested that, if possible, a link to the report could be forwarded to them.

Action: Corporate Governance Officer

Whilst consideration was being given to recognising disability hate crime as a specific category of aggravated hate crime there was a need to ensure incidents was taken seriously and it was vital that all partners adopted a co-ordinated strategic approach to resolving incidents and tackling the situation.

The Panel was addressed by the METRO Charity LGBT Hate Crime Worker who advised that they supported clients who approached them both directly and 5 via the Hate Crime Panel and they had been seeing a steady rise in incidents. A number of clients expressed that they could not make a report to the police, by phone or in person, as police stations were closed, they did not have internet access or were not IT literate. Clients would use METRO to make reports to the police and it was not unusual for incidents of hate crime to become apparent as part of a client's approach to Metro for another service. She recounted that on one occasions 4 different service referrals arose from one client at a drop in service. She stated that her clients were concern there was no longer a dedicated LGBT police liaison officer and many clients were still cautious due to the historical issues around the police treatment of the LGBT community, which was a difficult perception to overturn.

The METRO Charity LGBT Hate Crime Worker advised that part of her role was to build the clients confidence to make a formal report and their ability to gather evidence, as many could not complete diary sheets or may have a chaotic life style making evidence gathering difficult. However, many clients believe there was a hierarchy to hate crime as race and knife crime incidents resulted in longer sentences than homophobic or gender hate crimes, this created a feeling of 'what's the point' of reporting an incident. This view was often compounded when the client worked with the police to provide evidence but the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided not to pursue a prosecution. Many clients also had an expectation that they would be kept

advised by the police on their cases progress but this was not met with many having to wait over a month to receive confirmation of the initial report.

She explained that clients' decisions to report an incident to the police could also be complicated by their sexual, physical or religious circumstances with a number concerned of retribution from neighbours, or family, particularly where the client or their partner's family were unaware of their relationship. Refugees were concerned at the implication to their immigration status and people who were active in their religious community had concern it may result in them having to leaving their church, mosque etc.

She added there were those who wished to record an incident with METRO or the police but not take it further. There were also situations where it was not clearly a homophobic or transphobic incident and would take longer to clarify and report than the duration of incident itself. In relation to Social Housing the housing officers were not hate crime specialist and it was challenging to find the right people to make reports to.

In response to Members questions the METRO Charity LGBT Hate Crime Worker confirmed that austerity was having an impact on the rates of hate crime. Police delays caused clients anxiety and stress with many clients saying that they would never make a formal police report again.

She advised that it was not appropriate or necessary for every case to be report to the Hate Crime Panel, as it was for situations or clients that required a multi-agency approach. The Metro Charity would also work with other service providers, such as the Her Centre, and signpost clients requiring a holistic if not legal approach to resolve the situation. She added that the Metro Charity had a good relationship with the Police and the Council, being part of a joint party monthly case review panel.

She noted that there were still many occasions where discrimination and hate crime were identified as Anti-Social Behaviour incidents.

Members sought the METRO Charity LGBT Hate Crime Workers' comments on the ongoing situation at the Blackheath Dips, to which she responded that they were working closely, as a conduit for the LGBT community, with the police to address the situation. She noted that there was a need to deal with the situation sensitively to improve awareness and vigilance to protect people and whilst the area may not be safe now, it would be again

Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Community Safety noted that even once the police had conducted a thorough investigation it may not lead to a successful prosecution and the adversarial nature of the legal system would not always make legal action a positive route. Many people would not be in a position to collect diaries and evidence for court and just wanted the situation to be resolved and actions stopped.

The METRO Charity LGBT Hate Crime Worker concurred with Councillor Smith, adding that people were also concerned about legal cases being reported in the papers and fear of their job security, particularly in getting time off work to attend court, without disclosing the reason why when they had not 'come out' at work. Legal actions could have long term unforeseen impacts on the victim.

The Chair thanked all the organisations representatives for their attendance and presentations.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

8 Commissioning Future Reports

Resolved -

1. That the work items that are scheduled to be presented to the meeting of the Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel on 28 November 2019 be noted.
2. That it be noted that Panel Members were asked to advise the Chair and Corporate Governance Officer of any parties that they propose be invited to attend, to give evidence to the Panel in respect of the item on the Safer Neighbourhood Board, by no later than Friday 4 October 2019.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm

Chair