

COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Community Safety Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 29 April 2019 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Leanne Werner (Chair)
Councillor William Hougbo (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Nick Johnson
Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Alice Macdonald
Councillor Michael Situ
Martin Brecknell

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Evelyn Akoto, cabinet lead for Community Safety and Public Health

OFFICER SUPPORT: Julie Timbrell, scrutiny project manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Karl Eastham. Councillors Nick Johnson, Micheal Situ and Richard Leeming gave apologies for lateness.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Leanne Werner declared she is a governor at City of London Academy.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 5 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. VAWG STRATEGY

Councillor Evelyn Akoto, cabinet lead for Community Safety and Public Health, gave an update on the progress in drafting a strategy, which is due to go to cabinet in June.

The focus of the strategy is prevention and will look more widely than the present Domestic Abuse work, which will also need to continue.

The evidence received so far indicates that sexual harassment is a particular problem for young girls and women in low paid jobs. There are concerns about police action.

People have said that the profile of FGM has risen and they would like to see the same for other harmful practices like 'honour based violence' and 'forced marriages'.

Prostitution is a concern and evidence from Pecan is that this is linked to vulnerability, austerity, and poverty and exchanging sex for drugs. This often takes place in empty buildings.

Coercive control is being addressed and there is work being done so that the Housing Department attempt to evict perpetrators rather than victims and also build relationships with other local authorities to enable re-housing.

The Commission raised a number of questions to which the cabinet member gave the following responses:

- Funding is a challenge given reduced council resources and rising need. The strategy has not yet done a 5 year plan; however the strategy will feed into the council's recommissioning of Domestic Abuse services. Some funding is unpredictable, e.g. MOPAC, making forward planning difficult.
- The strategy will be looking at trafficking as part of work on prostitution.
- Cllr Akoto agreed that the recent police guidance that victims have to supply phone records in cases of rape allegations is very concerning, and will be off putting to victims. This is very controversial and the council will be putting in a submission.
- There is a challenging issue of exploited young people committing crimes, for example by drug dealers in County

Lines. The approach is that both victims and perpetrators must be considered vulnerable young people. However there are fine lines and as well as supporting young people the council also have to work with the police, and there will be occasions where they consider that a young person ought to be dealt with by the criminal justice system.

The chair thanked the cabinet lead for attending.

6. VAWG SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Commission first discussed Healthy Relationships and the focus groups with young people on relationships:

- There are limitations to group roundtables with pro and cons. Young people may gain confidence in the company of their peers however also may be performing or too shy to share to an audience.
- Most young people had no real understanding of what a healthy relationship is; with the exception of Harris Girls, who have a large investment in Relationship & Sex Education (RSE). A COLA young person who went on a study tour for a television programme recommended the Dutch system. A recent Guardian spread looked at teaching on relationships across the globe.
- Salmon Youth Centre young people said they did not receive much RSE at school, although they valued the input from youth workers.
- Many young people did not know where to report incidents at school and did not trust to police to address allegations or take them seriously.

The Commission then addressed the school survey:

- More resources were generally requested.
- It was noted that a Catholic school wanted resources that were in keeping with the school ethos.

The broader recommendations on Healthy Relationships were then discussed:

- As the local authority the council could amend the safeguarding policy to report incidents to the council to improve our data analysis.
- Parents have an important role.
- Investment in Relationship & Sex Education (RSE) in schools is very important and ought to include teaching to prevent sexual harassment and young people being groomed - from the age of 10.
- More investment in the schools resource portal for primary Relationship Education (RE) and secondary Relationship & Sex Education (RSE), which will be compulsory in 2020, would be good. Southwark has a portal with PSHE curriculum and resources to help RSE/ RE teaching, such 'consent' , though not specifically RE/RSE.
- More peer support and input from young people on RE / RSE curriculum development would be beneficial, for example talking to the young advisors.
- A week of public awareness on sexual harassment could help raise the profile and understanding.
- Children need to be confident to report incident at school, including anonymously.
- It can be challenging to engage with secondary schools as they are Academies so it may make more sense to concentrate on the senior end of primary who will engage.

The Modern Slavery and Child Trafficking was then considered and the following points were made for recommendations:

- A task and finish group is needed to coordinate the council's work on this agenda.
- All front line staff ought to be trained.
- Coordination and champions are needed. There was a discussion about whether a unit ought to lead, such as Community Safety, however the challenge here is that Modern Slavery cuts across the whole council with front facing services being more in contact but not necessarily all aware . A centralised body could coordinate, or the responsibility be given to someone. A Special Point of

Contact (SPOC) in relevant teams is considered good practice, which strategic leadership.

- The council could promote businesses doing good work to tackle modern slavery, such as the hotel example.
- The census stats show that the most prevalent at risk population in Southwark is Nigerian, and here the risk factor is Domestic Servitude. A member commented that this is prevalent and it needs to become unacceptable. African United are doing excellent work to tackle child trafficking and could form a recommendation for more partnership work.
- There are good examples of other local boroughs' work to tackle modern slavery, which ought to be circulated.
- The council needs a clear policy on using the procurement process to tackle modern slavery.
- The report needs a snappy title.