

## **Public Protection @ Safety PDS Committee—15<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

Questions for oral response from Cllr Richard Williams:

To the Portfolio Holder:

**As Bromley is emerging as a gang Borough, with at least 4 gangs known in the Penge / Anerley area, what support and assistance is the Council giving to the police and local community groups to try and tackle this issue and put the community at ease?**

### **Answer:**

Concerning gangs, the Council supports and provides assistance to the Police and partner organisations in many ways.

Officers in the LBB ASB team work with the Police daily, sharing information and intelligence about youth disorder, ASB and gangs. We have recently provided statements and supporting evidence to support police action against a gang nominal, and we have provided intelligence to support police officers in Operation Omega.

Following the Peer Review report, a Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Board (reporting to The Safer Bromley Partnership) was set up to meet quarterly. Local authority representatives on the Board alongside the Police and Oxleas NHS Trust include the ASB Co-Coordinator, Youth Offending Services, and our Assistant Directors for Housing, Children's Safeguarding & Social Care, and Education. The Board's strategy focuses on Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement and Co-ordination, and their first task was to set up a 15-point Action Plan which is progressing well.

The ASB Co-coordinator for LBB also chairs the Borough Gangs Focus Group which discusses casework around gang members. Members of the Gangs Focus Group include the Police, Schools, Probation and the Youth Service.

The borough has also worked with partners to support a closure order using housing legislation against a known gang member who was identified as dealing in drugs. We have also worked with Police in issuing ABCs (Acceptable Behavior Commitments) to gang members in Bromley. ABCs put together a clear outline of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not, and supports gang members to change their behaviour via means such as mentoring and courses such as the London Fire Brigade LIFE course which is a scheme designed to put the lives of young people back on track.

The Leader, Chief Executive and I, in partnership with the Borough Commander, have recently written to other boroughs, requesting details of the re-location of gang members to Bromley. Currently, when gang nominals have been moved into our borough as part of a gang exit strategy by other boroughs, we have not always been informed. This letter hopes to rectify this situation and will allow us to manage the risk to local residents as well as result in better mapping and tracking of gang members.

The recent peer review findings commented that there was strong local leadership in the authority and that senior officers within the partnership were effectively managing the emerging trends.

Last week I went to City Hall to observe a meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, where London Assembly Members put questions to invited experts on issues relating to gangs and serious youth violence in London. These experts, some from charities working with gangs as well as Police from the Trident Gang Crime Command, stated that the primary motivation for joining gangs has evolved. Gangs in London are not racially motivated, all gangs in London are multi-racial, and gangs are no longer organized in order to 'defend a turf'. Young people join gangs in order to make money, usually via the means of drug dealing, with the aim of living a glamorous lifestyle.

The experts at this meeting said the best way to get young people to leave gangs was to provide them with support around finding a job or gaining skills and education with a structured path to a career. To this end, I contributed £300 from my Portfolio Holder's fund and the Council contributed by way of officer time to the recent Jobs Fair (drop in) event which took place in Penge on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015. This was a free event organized by the Safer Bromley Partnership, Jobs Centre Plus, Affinity Sutton and the Princes Trust, focusing on promoting careers and life long learning which was targeted directly at young people and gang nominals.

As part of our Operation Crystal programme, we have focused on the emerging gang issue by targeting gang members and young people causing ASB with early morning visits by Council and Police Officers. During our recent operations in Penge, Council Officers with the Police Gangs Team knocked on every known gang member's door and strongly encouraged them to attend the Job Fair, whilst also highlighting to them that we know who they are and that we are keeping a watchful eye on them.

The Peer review by the Home Office highlighted the need to do more with regards to prevention. To this end I will assist in funding a programme to be introduced into schools costing £7,000 with the Police contributing £2,000. This programme titled 'Growing Against Violence' is founded on the principles of protection, prevention and partnership, and has already been delivered to 460 schools across London. Chief Inspector Tait is leading this project and will be meeting with the targeted schools next week, all in the north of our borough, in order to finalise the bid for me. Lessons will be delivered to students in school years 6 through to 10 on gang-associated sexual violence, the myths and realities of being in a gang, and knife crime.

Lastly, despite cost pressures on the Council, diversionary activities have been maintained and are run by the Bromley Youth Support Programme at our four Youth Hubs in Mottingham, the Crays, Biggin Hill and Anerley. These centres are open during the day, evenings and weekends and run specific projects and have their own programme of activities targeted to local need.

To the Portfolio Holder and the Borough Police Commander:

**With the announcement that our local PCSO may be scrapped and the reorganising of the police, what work is been taken by LB Bromley and Bromley police to ensure that these actions have the least impact on our communities, and can we have assurance that the Penge office will not be lost if these policies are implemented?**

**Answer:**

The Borough Commander and the Council were only informed mid last week that the number of PCSOs across the Metropolitan Police is under review.

The current position is that the Commissioner and Management Board are still reviewing the options, and no decisions have been made.

Once a decision has been made the Council will consider our options and how we can best support and assist both the police and our residents.