

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 30/04/2013

Agenda item: 8

Wards: All

Subject: Home Office Peer Review and Gang Call-in

Lead officer: Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton

Lead member: Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities and Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton

Recommendations:

- A. That the Commission takes note of the work undertaken for the peer review and the initial recommendations made by the frontline team.
- B. That the Commission determines whether it wishes to receive a further update on the peer review and, if so, when.
- C. That the Commission takes note of the activity undertaken around the Gang call-in event.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides a summary of the recent Home Office Peer Review on gangs and youth violence in Merton and provides details of their initial findings. It also provides a summary of a cross-border Gang call-in initiative, held in March 2013.

2 DETAILS

Home Office Peer Review

- 2.1. The Rt Hon Theresa May MP announced on 27 December 2012 that an additional £500,000 was available to help communities confront the problem of serious youth violence. The support was to be targeted at young people at risk of becoming violent offenders and those already involved in gang and knife crime, to encourage them onto a different path.
- 2.2. The Home Office also announced the expansion of its Ending Gangs and Youth Violence (EGVY) frontline team to cover four more priority areas, including Merton.
- 2.3. As part of this expansion, the frontline team visited Merton between 18 – 22 March 2013 to conduct a peer review. The programme for their visit included:

- A tour of the borough with the Police and Council;
- Meetings with Police Consultative Group chair, the Interim Director of Public Health, the Assistant Chief Probation Officer, Headteachers, Chair of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board and Safer Schools Officers;
- Interviews with senior leaders in the Police and Council, a number of Councillors, Offender Management Panel (OMP) chairs, safeguarding, housing providers;
- Focus groups with the Police, CSF (including a wider range of staff from Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); children's social care; Transforming Families;;YOS;; youth service and education officers; Safer Merton; ; Health, mental Health and the voluntary sector, To support the visit, a comprehensive position statement was compiled, as means of a self-assessment outlining the partnership approach to gangs, youth violence and related criminality for those aged up to 25 years. The statement covered the following 7 key principles as set out in the Ending Gang and Youth Violence report:
 - **Leadership** – the extent of open and collective leadership on gang and youth violence issues from key partners and at all levels.
 - **Mapping of the problem** – the arrangements in place for gathering and using information and intelligence from a range of agencies to take an evidence-based approach to work.
 - **Responding in partnership** – demonstrating how local agencies are coming together to agree shared priorities and commit resources, based on local information.
 - **Assessment and referral** – the processes in place for the assessment of threat, risk and harm posed; safeguarding process to identify those vulnerable to gang and youth violence; responding and referring in a timely manner; and arrangements for the ongoing monitoring of risky and at risk individuals.
 - **Enforcement, pathways out and prevention** - targeted interventions in the right areas, times and people.
 - **Criminal justice and breaking the cycle of reoffending** – the consideration of the links between gangs and custodial estate
 - **Mobilising communities** – how local people are engaged in designing and delivering services that best meet the needs of all members of the community, including 'hard to reach' groups.

2.4. A number of supplementary documents covering children's services and Youth Offending inspection reports, business cases, actions plans, and case studies were also given to the frontline team in advance of their visit.

- At the end of their 4 day visit, the team presented the initial feedback on Merton's strengths and areas for improvement under the 7 key principles, and the good and emerging practice they identified. They also made a number of initial recommendations ranging from looking at

evaluation to considering a Merton specific vision or narrative in relation to ending gangs and youth violence.

- 2.5. We await the full report from the Peer Review team, which will be forwarded to the Commission and to the CYP Scrutiny Panel in due course.

Gang call-in

- 2.6. As part of the gangs diversion programme and following similar initiatives in Glasgow and Enfield, Merton and Wandsworth Borough organised a “gang call-in”. On the afternoon of 6th March 2013, 15 gang members were collected from various pick up points on both Boroughs in minibuses staffed by police officers and CSF youth offending and youth service workers.

- 2.7. The young people were taken to Kingston Crown Court, where they entered via the cell area, were searched by court security and entered the dock. Chief Superintendent Williams, the Borough Commander for Merton Police challenged the young people and set the context for the evening.

- 2.8. Following this a number of invited speakers spoke to the youths including:

- A London Ambulance Service Paramedic who related the story of a stabbing victim he dealt with who died on route to A&E;
- A Surgeon related his first hand experience of battling to save the lives of those suffering life threatening injuries and the hands of gangs, and the pathetic waste of a life of those who die as a result;
- The mother of murder victim told of her anguish and the hole left by the pointless murder of her son who was involved in gang activity.
- A former gang member drove home the message "when you are arrested and imprisoned, your mates don't visit. When you need them most if you are shot or stabbed, they have all run off and police who you despise are the first to work to keep you alive."
- A well known person from the local community explained how they turned away from violence and the gang lifestyle. Luck may have brought them to where they are today but this started with the decision to think for themselves and stay clear of the danger gangs bring you into.
- A CSF Transforming Families manager ended, with a calming approach reconfirming why the assembled mass in the court had turned up to assist the young people to commit to their decision to turn away from their recent behaviour. The majority of the people present then attested to their commitment through a show of hands as to their faith in the young people so that the young people could see they are important and that together we would work for their future.

- 2.9. The Judge summed up what choice the young people had - make the right one and they will gain assistance from all the police and professionals assembled, making the wrong one will in the end lead to a loss of liberty.

- 2.10. The Court was filled with Police officers, Transforming Families &YOS workers, Job Centre Plus, , mentors and other professionals, who engaged with the young people to get them to sign up to a diversion contract.
- 2.11. The young people were then taken back to their boroughs, with any of those undecided visited the following day with a view to signing them up to diversion.
- 2.12. In total, all 15 of the young people who attended were signed up to a diversion contract. 3 others leaving prison custody have also been signed up. CSF key worker mentors have been assigned to them and a programme of targeted intervention is underway.
- 2.13. Constructive feedback has been gathered from the call-in event which will be applied to future initiatives.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Peer Review programme undertaken during the visit, as outlined above.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The final review report awaits receipt, therefore any action outlined in the report will need to have timeframes set.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report - financial, resource and property implications of implementing any recommendations made in the final report will be met by the various council departments and the partnership and this will inform the actions taken, which will need to be delivered within an environment of financial and physical constraint.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. This strategy covers all sections of the community and does not discriminate against any group.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The implications are all positive and crime and disorder specific.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report – risk management and health and safety implications of implementing any recommendations contained in the final report will need to be accounted for.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 11.1. None (although it is hoped that the Peer Review Report will be available in draft form by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Meeting).

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

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