

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 14 January 2019

Wards: All

Subject: Keeping young people safe in Merton

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director Children Schools and Families

Lead member: Councillor Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children's Services;
Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Contact officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, 0208 545 3864

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet consider the report and recommendations arising from the joint scrutiny exercise with the youth parliament on the issue of keeping young people safe in Merton – attached as Appendix 1;
 2. That Cabinet consider the draft officer response set out in Appendix 2 and decides how it wishes to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny exercise;
 3. That Cabinet decides whether it wishes to formally approve the response and action plan prior to it being submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or whether it wishes to delegate this to the Director of Children Schools and Families.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides Cabinet with information about a Local Democracy Week event that scrutiny councillors held jointly with youth parliament members in order to give them some experience of the council's scrutiny processes. The theme of the event, chosen by the youth parliament, was keeping young people safe in Merton.
- 1.2. A report of the event was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 14 November 2018 and is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission resolved to forward the recommendations to Cabinet. These recommendations and a draft officer response are set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.4. The Director of Children Schools and Families has chosen to submit a draft officer response alongside the scrutiny report in order to signal her support of the work done by the youth parliament and her commitment to encouraging their future involvement in scrutiny activities.

2 DETAILS

Joint Reference from the Youth Parliament and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- 2.1. The Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, asked the Head of Democracy Services to work with the Children Schools

and Families Department so an event could be run during Local Democracy Week that would give young people some experience of and insight into our scrutiny processes.

- 2.2. This innovative and enjoyable event was held on Monday 15 October 2018. Five members of the Youth Parliament joined seven scrutiny councillors from all political groups on the council to take part in a focussed scrutiny exercise to discuss “what is Merton doing to help young people feel safe?”
- 2.3. The theme of the meeting was chosen by the Youth Parliament to provide them with an opportunity to present and discuss the results of a consultation the Young Advisers had carried out with 742 young people aged 11-20.
- 2.4. The meeting was chaired by Beverley, a youth parliament member.
- 2.5. Sergeant Mark Roberts, the Police lead on youth engagement, and Temitayo Oketunji, Victims Champion in Safer Merton, attended to outline their roles and to answer questions.

- 2.6. Each of the recommendations of the Young Advisors was discussed and agreed as follows:

- 1) to continue with making a documentary to raise awareness about crime within the borough
- 2) forums of decision makers should consult regularly in order to understand young peoples’ views and to keep up-to-date on their perspectives
- 3) schools and youth services to provide a link between young people and decision makers. This should include using school assemblies, workshops and class talks.
- 4) to work with young people to help them articulate what safe means to them and to understand what safe should look and feel like at home, at school and in the community. Requested support from the council in order to do this.
- 5) services work to reduce stereotypes and get to know people before judging them

Two further recommendations were agreed at the meeting:

- 6) police officers should invite police cadets to attend events to raise awareness of their role amongst young people
 - 7) headteachers should ensure that the appointment of a new school police officer is announced at school assemblies prior to them taking up the role and should invite them to attend an assembly when they start.
- 2.7. The youth parliament members and councillors agreed that the note of this meeting should be presented to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission so that the recommendations could be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for consideration. It was also agreed to involve young people more in scrutiny in future.
 - 2.8. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission received the report at its meeting and endorsed the recommendations set out the report, with an additional recommendation from the Commission:

- 8) To consider the role that school governors may be able to take in supporting the recommendations made by the youth parliament
- 2.9. The Commission also suggested that recommendation 6) be expanded to include fire cadets and other youth groups.
- 2.10. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission resolved to forward the report to Cabinet for its consideration. Cabinet is requested to provide a formal response to the Commission within two months, setting out for each recommendation whether it is accepted and, if so, when it will be implemented.
- 2.11. The Director of Children Schools and Families has provided Cabinet with a draft officer response to the recommendations, set out in Appendix 2, to assist Cabinet with its consideration of how it wishes to respond.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Cabinet is constitutionally required to receive, consider and respond to scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them at a meeting.
- 3.2. Cabinet is not, however, required to agree and implement recommendations from overview and scrutiny. Cabinet could agree to implement some, or none, of the recommendations made in the scrutiny report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Young Advisors conducted consultation with 742 local young people aged 11-20. The results were presented to the scrutiny meeting and are summarised in the note in Appendix 1 of the report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The report was approved by the Commission at its meeting on 14 November 2018 and it was agreed to present the report to Cabinet. Cabinet is asked to provide a formal response to the Commission at its meeting on 20 March 2019.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this covering report. Any specific resource implications will be identified and presented to Cabinet prior to agreeing an action plan for implementing the report's recommendations.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

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

- Appendix 1 – note of the joint Youth Parliament and Merton Council scrutiny exercise – keeping young people safe in Merton.
- Appendix 2 – draft officer response to the scrutiny recommendations

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

Local Democracy Week – joint Youth Parliament and Merton Council Scrutiny exercise – keeping young people safe in Merton, 15 October 2018

Five members of the Youth Parliament (of whom two were also Young Advisors) were joined by seven scrutiny councillors from all political groups on the council to take part in an exercise to address the question posed by the Youth Parliament - “what is Merton doing to keep young people safe?”

The objectives of this innovative event were to:

- give young people some experience of and insight into the council’s scrutiny processes
- reach agreement on recommendations and future action in respect of keeping young people safe in Merton
- identify ways in which young people could be involved in future scrutiny activities

There was a preparatory hour during which:

- councillors explained the principles of scrutiny and how it works in Merton
- the two Young Advisors talked to the councillors about the results of the consultation they had conducted with 742 young people (aged 11-20) in the borough
- youth parliament members and councillors agreed a number of questions that they would put to the Safer Merton and Police witnesses
- it was agreed that youth parliament member, Beverley, would chair the formal meeting.

Beverley invited the two witnesses, Temitayo from Safer Merton and Mark from the Police to join the meeting.

The Young Advisors, Kimberley and Margaret, provided copies of their presentation and a written report of their consultation results. They gave a thorough and well-received presentation setting out the main findings of the consultation, their views on what the results might mean and their recommendations for action. The main points noted during discussion were:

- boys were much less likely to fill in the survey form than girls
- 23% of respondents gave no response to question “what does safe mean to you in Merton”
- Mitcham is perceived as the least safe area in the borough, Wimbledon as most safe
- 1 in 3 respondents were aware of someone who had committed a crime and 1 in 10 had been a victim of crime
- Stabbing and knife crime are perceived as most common crime

Mark Roberts, Merton Youth Engagement Sergeant, gave an overview of his responsibilities, in particular for school police officers, and the preventative measures taken (such as knife arches and weapon sweeps) to help make young people feel safe in Merton. He also provided detail of police cadet and other activity in Merton designed to divert young people from engaging in crime.

Temitayo Oketunji, Victims Champion in Safer Merton, described the work that Safer Merton carried out in partnership with the police and other organisations. This includes work on anti-social behaviour, hate crime and violence against women and girls.

Mark and Temitayo provided additional information in response to questions from the youth parliament members and councillors:

Police cadets

- The police cadets are publicised in a number of ways including through the school police officers, social media and word of mouth. There is a cadet co-ordinator who follows up enquiries.
- The gender mix is pretty even and membership is ethnically diverse
- There are about 100 cadets at the moment, aiming to reach 160 and to open a new unit

Knife crime

- Knife crime has reduced slightly in Merton over the past 12 months but the fear of crime is acknowledged and the police force is doing its best to reassure young people
- Young people sometimes carry a knife for protection but this is still an offence
- Police find stop and search to be a useful tool in combatting knife crime

Stop and search

- There is a legislative framework and a police officer must have good grounds for carrying out a stop and search, such as a report from the public. On 4 occasions in the past 3 weeks, CCTV footage has been used to follow up on exchange of drugs leading to arrests on each occasion.
- Councillors and youth parliament members endorsed usefulness of stop and search but expressed concerns that certain groups are targeted
- Youth parliament members were invited to attend a training day for police officers to promote understanding of police and young people's perspectives on stop and search

Beverley thanked Mark and Temitayo for their contributions. They left the meeting at this point.

Beverley invited members of the youth parliament to reflect on what they had heard from Safer Merton and the Police and to discuss the recommendations made by the Young Advisors. They said that the police cadet groups were not being actively promoted by the school police officers, that the cadets had a low profile and didn't seem to reflect the diversity within the borough. They cautioned that joining the police cadets might not be attractive to many young people due to perceived stigma around being associated with the police.

In relation to the role of school police officers, one of the youth parliament members said that turnover in their school meant that pupils didn't know them well and therefore found them difficult to approach. They suggested that new school police officers should

be introduced in school assemblies and that there should be an announcement of the change before a new officer starts.

Youth parliament members agreed that they would like to see more activities provided for young people, such as youth clubs and extended library opening hours, to give them somewhere safe to go. There was a discussion about where best to advertise, with some preferring this to be done through schools and others preferring on-line resources and use of social media. The youth parliament members said they would appreciate support from councillors to use their influence to raise some of these issues with schools.

A youth parliament member said that more complex messages are required in relation to gangs to make it clear that gang membership or association with a gang is not a safe option for a young person and nor is carrying a knife. These messages should include asking the young person to consider the impact that this would have on their family.

Each of the recommendations of the Young Advisors was discussed and AGREED as follows:

- to continue with making a documentary to raise awareness about crime within the borough
- forums of decision makers should consult regularly in order to understand young peoples' views and to keep up-to-date on their perspectives
- schools and youth services to provide a link between young people and decision makers. This should include using school assemblies, workshops and class talks.
- To work with young people to help them articulate what safe means to them and to understand what safe should look and feel like at home, at school and in the community. Requested support from the council in order to do this.
- Services work to reduce stereotypes and get to know people before judging them

Two additional recommendations were agreed:

- police officers should invite police cadets to attend events to raise awareness of their role amongst young people
- headteachers should ensure that the appointment of new school police officer is announced at school assemblies prior to them taking up the role and should invite them to attend an assembly when they start.

The youth parliament members and councillors AGREED that the note of this meeting should be presented to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission so that the recommendations could be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for consideration. It was also AGREED to involve young people more in scrutiny in future – ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to discuss with the Participation Manager and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Scrutiny Panels.

APPENDIX 2

Draft Executive response to the recommendations of the joint scrutiny exercise on keeping young people safe in Merton

Recommendations	Executive response	Timeline	Decision making body and lead officer
<p>Recommendation 1. That the Youth Parliament will continue with making a documentary to raise awareness about crime within the borough.</p>	<p>Accepted The Young People’s Participation and Engagement Manager will continue to support the work of the Youth Parliament and to assist them in making the documentary.</p>		<p>Cabinet; Director of Children, School and Families</p>
<p>Recommendation 2. That forums of decision makers should consult regularly in order to understand young peoples’ views and to keep up-to-date on their perspectives</p>	<p>Accepted Children and young people in Merton are affected by changes in the borough, whether they are specifically targeted at children and young people or whether they are more general in nature. There is already considerable consultation with children and young people about CSF activity that is targeted towards them. The Director of Children Schools and Families will work with Cabinet, the Merton Partnership and other forums to identify the best way for them use their resources to draw on the views of young people to influence their decision-making, with the intention that children and young people will be recognised as residents of the borough, with as much of an interest in being consulted on all aspects of borough life as adults</p>		<p>Cabinet; Merton Partnership; Community Forums; Director of Children, School and Families</p>

Recommendations	Executive response	Timeline	Decision making body and lead officer
<p>Recommendation 3. That schools and youth services will provide a link between young people and decision makers. This should include using school assemblies, workshops and class talks</p>	<p>Accepted in principle The Young People’s Participation and Engagement Manager will work with schools and youth services to assist them with providing views to decision makers as set out in the response to Recommendations 2.</p>		Cabinet; Director of Children, School and Families
<p>Recommendation 4. That the Council should work with young people to help them articulate what safe means to them and to understand what safe should look and feel like at home, at school and in the community.</p>	<p>Accepted The Safeguarding Children Board will lead and support further work across the safeguarding partnership to help young people understand and articulate what it means to be safe in Merton.</p>		Local Safeguarding Childrens Board; Director of Children Schools and Families
<p>Recommendation 5. That services work to reduce stereotypes and get to know people before judging them.</p>	<p>Accepted Council services provided to children and young people, or services provided to the public generally, including children and young people, will not make assumptions about young people’s needs and wishes, but will take proactive steps to understand young people as they are. The council will engage with young people as equal residents and citizens of the borough and seek their views at an early stage in policy development and seek feedback on service delivery. The council will set an example through this work to other providers of services in the borough, to show young people as they are and without resorting to stereotypes.</p>		Cabinet; Director of Children Schools and Families

Recommendations	Executive response	Timeline	Decision making body and lead officer
<p>Recommendation 6. That police officers should invite police cadets to attend events to raise awareness of their role amongst young people. Note – the Overview and Scrutiny Commission suggested that this invitation should also be extended to include fire cadets and other youth groups.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle Director of CSF to raise this with police, fire service and other partners via the Children’s Trust.</p>		<p>Police; Fire Services; Director of Children, Schools and Families</p>
<p>Recommendation 7. That headteachers should ensure that the appointment of new school police officer is announced at school assemblies prior to them taking up the role and should invite them to attend an assembly when they start.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle Director of CSF to raise this with Headteachers via the Headteachers’ forums.</p>		<p>Police; Headteachers</p>
<p>Recommendation 8. That Cabinet consider the role that school governors may be able to take in supporting the recommendations made by the youth parliament</p>	<p>Accepted Scrutiny report to be shared with Chairs of School Governing bodies for consideration.</p>		<p>Cabinet; Director of Children Schools and Families</p>