

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

## 20 MARCH 2018

<b>Chair:</b>	* Councillor Phillip O'Dell	
<b>Councillors:</b>	* Michael Borio (4) * Jo Dooley * Pamela Fitzpatrick * Jean Lammiman	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Jerry Miles * Chris Mote * Paul Osborn (4)
<b>Voting Co-opted:</b>	(Voluntary Aided)  * Mr N Ransley Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors)  None
<b>Non-voting Co-opted:</b>	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	

### 263. Attendance by Reserve Members

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Michael Borio  
Councillor Paul Osborn

Reserve Member

Councillor Barry Kendler  
Councillor Nitesh Hirani

#### **264. Declarations of Interest**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no declarations were made by Members of the Committee.

#### **265. Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2018 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **266. Public Questions and Petitions**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions or petitions were received at this meeting.

#### **267. References from Council/Cabinet**

There were none.

### **RESOLVED ITEMS**

#### **268. Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2018**

The Committee received a report Community Safety and Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategic Assessment, an annual review of the patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour in the Borough which fulfils partnership responsibilities under Sections 5, 6, and 7 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The findings of the Strategic Assessment would help inform the annual refresh of Harrow's Community Safety and Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy.

The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning, explained that efforts had been made to obtain and present information in a way which made year-on-year comparisons easier. The document was being brought to the Committee at this stage so that it could be considered in advance of the report on the formal Community Safety and Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy at its meeting in June. The assessment reflected an overall increase in crime but Harrow was still the London borough with the lowest level of crime on a per capita basis. The principal concern was the growing levels of violence involving young people.

A Member asked whether the information in the assessment document could be relied upon since he did not wish there to be uncertainties about baseline positions when trend information was considered at a later stage by the Committee. He was also concerned that, in the context of the move to the three-borough "Borough Command Units" in the Metropolitan Police Service, it would be important to track trends in Harrow. It was explained that there could be retrospective revisions of crime data when new information was released, but officers had gone to considerable lengths to use the most reliable sources. It was acknowledged that this could complicate comparisons though this had to be balanced against the value of providing timely

information. These concerns and challenges had been encountered over a number of years now. It was suggested that the local Police should “sign-off” the data provide so that it could form a more reliable baseline.

Another Member expressed his concern over the level of aggregation in the data which he felt made it difficult to see the real impact in different areas and masked the distinctions between the wards in the Borough. He wondered whether information was skewed by, for example, the reporting of crime at Harrow Police Station appearing as data for that ward when it actually reflected a broader impact. It was explained that the information was largely based on data provided by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) on a monthly basis. While it would be possible to do further work on ward-level analysis, more detailed drilling-down would be difficult, requiring requests to MOPAC for additional data. Officers would continue to liaise with them about this.

The Member was concerned that without proper analysis of the data at a detailed level, there was a risk that decisions would be made on Police officer allocations in an unformed way and resources would not therefore be targeted to the areas of greatest need. He considered that a “health warning” should be included on the data to register these concerns. The Chair underlined that this particular committee report was about a *strategic* assessment rather than a very localised analysis.

In response to a Member’s question, it was confirmed that the figures on Page 2 of the agenda referred to the total of recorded crimes in London while those on Page 23 included per capita information. The Mayor of London had moved from the previous focus on seven priority crime areas to a focus on crimes which caused significant harm. The Member also asked about the basis of the data on fear of crime at Page 28; it was understood this was based on the results of a telephone survey of a sample of residents. She pointed out that this method was less likely to pick up younger people when an increasing number of them were victims of crime. Further detail of the survey would be sought so that the Committee could better understand how reliable the results were.

In response to a Member’s query about the links between youth crime, gangs and knife crime, it was explained that there were stronger links between, say, gangs and drug misuse, and that young people were more likely to be victims of knife crime.

A Member referred to the worrying figures at Page 48 of the agenda on “hate flagged offences” which indicated 63% increase between 2016 and 2017. He linked this to the passing of a resolution at full Council about the increase in anti-semitic crimes and harassment. In response to his question about which faith groups were most affected, officers agreed to raise this with MOPAC. It was reported that across the country, there had been a rise in far-right harassment of certain faith groups. While there was no particular indication that this was a feature in Harrow, the Council had dealt with abusive graffiti related to this in a couple of locations and were alert to the issue. The Council had a contract with an organisation called Stop Hate UK who worked with Harrow Law Centre to encourage the reporting of hate crime and support

those who were victims of it. It was understood that the Police were encouraged by the success of prosecutions for such crimes.

A Member considered that options to design out crime should be considered further, such as use of CCTV and improved lighting. He suggested that a focus on particular locations in this way stood a better chance of reducing crime and the fear of crime than the adoption of high levels plans and strategies. He had met with members of the Harrow Youth Parliament who had underlined that young people no longer felt safe walking around certain areas in the Borough. He considered that the Council should explore more carefully the possible drivers for this growing sense of insecurity, including social media and the lack of Police presence on the streets. Officers advised that a Council survey was planned and this could be used to examine these issues further including results on a ward-basis. The MOPAC data could be based on small sample sizes in a particular ward and this could obviously undermine the reliability of results.

The Harrow Youth Parliament representative considered that the data should provide a better analysis of the ward differences; for example, the information on Page 39 of the agenda about serious youth violence did not give the actual figures, simply an indication of comparisons between wards. He also regretted that there was little focus on the causes of crime such as poverty and deprivation, and suggested that the Council work more closely with community partners such as the Young Harrow Foundation. The Divisional Director welcomed the suggestion and asked that Harrow Youth Parliament advise him of the relevant contacts and background; the information provided would be used to improve the analysis of crime in the Borough and assist in developing a more effective strategy. It was underlined that the Council was interested in undertaking crime prevention work to the extent that available resources allowed.

The Harrow Youth Parliament representative considered that the Police should be able to provide data at a more detailed level than reflected in the committee report. The Divisional Director would seek more information from the Police, but he was aware that their local analytical resources had been withdrawn as long ago as 2013 and it was uncertain how the move to the new three-borough Borough Command Units would affect this provision. As for the causes of crime, he underlined that it was difficult to discern reliable interpretations from raw data, though the Council would continue to make best use of local intelligence to plan its responses. The Harrow Youth Parliament representative proposed that better use should be made of information available from the Youth Offending Team (YOT). The Divisional Director agreed that the data on offenders and offending held by the YOT was useful, but it was important to recognise that they worked with a relatively small proportion of young people in the Borough. The Head of Business Intelligence acknowledged the problem of serious youth violence, but as relevant data, such as knife crimes, was not published on a ward basis, it would be challenging to provide useful analyses at that level.

In response to a query from a Member about the consistency of information given about Belmont ward at Page 25 of the agenda, officers agreed to check the position.

In response to some queries from a Member, officers made the following points:

- a) The impact of Harrow town centre on the crime figures for Greenhill ward reported at Pages 42 and 46 of the agenda, could be clarified.
- b) The categories for crimes involving death and serious injury reflected the Police definitions.
- c) The more detailed position in respect of hate crime related to religious faiths would be examined.
- d) Information on FGM cases could be sought though this was a sensitive issue and it was uncertain what data could be provided.
- e) Discussions were being held with Harrow Youth Parliament about the regeneration programme. Funding had currently been allocated for preventative work, but consideration would be given to the use of funds in future rounds.

The Member argued that more should be done to link key Council strategies to promote crime reduction and deterrence; for example, connecting to the design of new developments as part of the regeneration strategy. He also suggested that the Council should consider a different policy in relation to drugs since the criminalisation of the use of Class C drugs was increasingly acting as a driver for serious crime.

A Member pointed to the substantial increase in artifice burglary reported at Page 27 of the agenda. She underlined that beyond the crimes themselves, this created a real sense of fear in people within their own homes, significantly affecting their daily lives. She asked about the trend in this type of crime. The Divisional Director advised that this appeared to be a particular issue for North West London and it would be interesting to find out what the local Police planned to address it. He recognised the psychological impact of these crimes on many local residents.

In relation to hate crime, a Member reported that a meeting had taken place with about 50 residents in attendance and many had expressed concern over reluctance by the Police to take action when incidents were reported. The problem was not considered to be any failure to report crimes but insufficient response by the Police. The Divisional Director confirmed that the Council funded Stop Hate UK to support victims and to promote serious treatment of these incidents by the Police.

A Member asked that the rate change chart for domestic abuse offences in London in 2016-17 be included in the relevant section on Page 45 of the agenda; it was confirmed that this would be done. The Member considered that there was under-reporting of domestic abuse and violence in certain communities in the Borough. Officers acknowledged that the data reflected recorded offences and that there were areas in which under-reporting was a

significant issue, including those related to the culture and traditions in the Borough's diverse communities.

A Member argued that the Council should link with, say, Barnet and Brent to press the Police to make sure that the new Borough Command Unit arrangement provided a reliable data collection and production resource. He underlined how important this would be for the effective targeting of resources. Officers suggested that this be taken up in the context of the new Community Safety Strategy in June/July with a request to the new senior Police officer for in the Borough Command Unit.

The Harrow Youth Parliament representative referred to the withdrawal of the Substance Misuse and Treatment service for adults and the implications this would have for young people as they would find support withdrawn once they reached the relevant age. He considered that data ought to be made available so that the impact of such service decisions on levels of crime could be tracked. It was confirmed that there were complex links between the possession, supply and consumption of drugs, and therefore it was difficult to make clear and reliable correlations; nevertheless, efforts would continue to examine the data.

The Harrow Youth Parliament representative suggested that more should be done to build confidence in the Police among young people by consulting them about priorities and focussing on issues which mattered to them. The Divisional Directors agreed to raise the issue with the Police and see whether the data could be analysed by reference to the age of survey respondents; he cautioned that he sample sizes might make it difficult to secure reliable results. The methodology used for the MOPAC data could be shared with members of the Committee so that there was a better understanding of the limits to its interpretation. It was confirmed that the data related to the period to the end of December 2017 and was the latest available.

The Chair thanked members of the Committee for their contributions and suggested that the following points were the principal issues raised in the discussion:

1. The question of the robustness and accuracy of the data in the report.
2. The high level of the aggregated data provided and the difficulty in drilling down to ward and neighbourhood level.
3. The issue of the fear of crime and how this could be addressed in policy/service decisions.
4. The growing problem of hate crime and the need to ensure that both support for victims was provided and Police responses to incidents were appropriate.
5. The value of designing out crime and the relationship of this to the Council's regeneration strategy in terms of new developments.

6. Securing a satisfactory resource for data collection and analysis in the Police service as part of the move to new Borough Command Units.
7. Engaging the Harrow Youth Parliament in advising on young people's perceptions of crime and their priorities for responses by the Police, Council and other relevant agencies.
8. The need for more careful analysis of the issues of youth crime, including the provision of data at ward level.
9. The need to identify "hotspots" for crime in the Borough which, for example, addressed how it occurred across ward and Borough boundaries.

The Committee agreed that these nine issues outlined by the Chair reflected the points they wished to be addressed with the Police service and in the development of the new Community Safety Strategy. With respect to the provision of data by the Police, a Member suggested that the Council should lobby on a cross-party basis to achieve more detailed information, particularly at a local level. Reference was made to the timely and detailed data provided by the Police to neighbourhood panels. The Divisional Director cautioned that it would be difficult to link the raw data provided to neighbourhood panel with the aggregated data supplied via MOPAC, but efforts would be made to explore how the quality of the information could be improved.

**RESOLVED:** That the findings of the Strategic Assessment be noted and that the following issues be taken forward in development of the new Community Safety Strategy:

- (1) The question of the robustness and accuracy of the data in the report.
- (2) The high level of the aggregated data provided and the difficulty in drilling down to ward and neighbourhood level.
- (3) The issue of the fear of crime and how this could be addressed in policy/service decisions.
- (4) The growing problem of hate crime and the need to ensure that both support for victims was provided and Police responses to incidents were appropriate.
- (5) The value of designing out crime and the relationship of this to the Council's regeneration strategy in terms of new developments.
- (6) Securing a satisfactory resource for data collection and analysis in the Police service as part of the move to new Borough Command Units.
- (7) Engaging the Harrow Youth Parliament in advising on young people's perceptions of crime and their priorities for responses by the Police, Council and other relevant agencies.

- (8) The need for more careful analysis of the issues of youth crime, including the provision of data at ward level.
- (9) The need to identify “hotspots” for crime in the Borough which, for example, addressed how it occurred across ward and Borough boundaries.

**269. Any Other Business - Review of the Financing of the Regeneration Strategy**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel for the review of the Financing of the Regeneration Strategy reported on the presentation he and Councillor Anne Whitehead (representing the Panel’s Vice-Chair) gave to cabinet on 27 February 2018 on the finding and recommendations of the review. He regretted that the Leader of the Council had not attended this final meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of this Administration to address the issues.

The Panel Chair wished to thanked all those involved in the review, especially Shumailla Dar of the Policy Unit, who had supported the work of Members. He considered that the review would be very beneficial to the Council in taking the regeneration programme and he looked forward to the Council’s formal response following the election. He also wished to thank Councillors Jerry Miles and Philip O’Dell for their work chairing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since 2014.

The Chair thanked Members for their contribution to Overview and Scrutiny work. He looked forward to further improvement to scrutiny processes building on the recommendations of the LGA Peer Review and the report of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 9.27 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PHILLIP O’DELL  
Chair