

		AGENDA ITEM 4
		PAF/09/19
Committee:	People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	11 April 2019	
Enquiries to:	Name: Graham Hughes Designation: Senior Democratic Services Officer Contact details: 033301 34574 Graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk	

Drug gangs, knife crime and county lines – follow up
The role of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Purpose:

- (i) To consider the report attached in Appendix 2 from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.
- (ii) To consider the attached draft scoping document (Appendix 3) which can be used to framework future work.
- (iii) To consider the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to continue scrutiny work on this issue and appropriate reporting arrangements.

Background:

The incidences and profile of drug gangs, knife crime and county lines operations is increasing nationally and locally. The issue was discussed at Full Council on 12 December 2018 and the following motion passed:

‘This Council recognises the impact of drug gangs, knife crime and county lines as a local, regional and national issue.

This Council commends the work of multi-agency statutory and voluntary partners in Essex, Southend and Thurrock in relation to these issues, particularly given the judgement of “Outstanding” by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, following a recent inspection.

This Council is pleased to see this work is being recognised by the Home Office in awarding the sum of £640k to the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner’s Office to further expand this multi-agency work.

Cont....

This Council therefore:

- *Calls upon all political parties to work together to drive down the impact of drug gangs, knife crime and county lines on the residents of Essex.*
- *Requests that the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee Has oversight of and contributes to the multi-agency strategy and its development.'*

On 14 February 2019 the Committee opened its review by speaking to Tanya Gillett, Head of Youth Offending and Andy Phopphet, Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing/Crime & Public Protection, Essex Police. A copy of the minutes of that discussion are attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A link to the papers for the meeting is here - [PAF 14 Feb 2019 papers](#)

In subsequent discussions with the Head of Youth Offending, regarding context and scoping further work, the Chairman and Vice Chairmen have agreed that the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) should now be invited to attend to outline their role in co-ordinating the Violence and Vulnerability Framework. Accordingly, Greg Myddelton, Assistant Director for Commissioning, PFCC, will be in attendance today to present an introduction to the framework and assist discussion

Specifically, Mr Myddelton has been requested to:

1. Describe the structure and development of the Violence and Vulnerability Framework.
2. Explain how the impact of the V&V strategy is being evidenced.
3. Explain what are the PFCC plans for joint collaborative commissioning.
4. Explain how are the PFCC intending to use recent national and local government funding allocations to add value to system working.

Establishment of Task and Finish Group

Thereafter, the Committee is requested to consider the establishment of a dedicated Task and Finish Group to continue the review of the drug gangs, knife crime and county lines issue. The advantage of continuing the review in that way is that the Group will be flexible and mobile enough to deep dive into issues in a timely manner and members will be able to build up a certain degree of subject matter knowledge through the regular nature of the review. Such a format may permit more frank discussions at times.

Membership and involvement of other ECC members

A recommended size for a Task and Finish Group is approximately six members and volunteers will be sought at the meeting. Those considering volunteering to serve are

advised that the time commitment for the Group's activities and meetings will be additional to the time already being dedicated to the full scrutiny committee.

The Scrutiny Board has agreed that all ECC members should be invited to indicate if they would like to have the opportunity to contribute to any future reviews by Task and Finish Groups. The expectation is that this will usually be as a witness or helping in identifying witnesses and/or information. In exceptional circumstances it may involve being co-opted onto the Task and Finish Group but membership priority will be given to the members of the committee(s) actually setting up the Task and Finish Group.

Timetable for completion

A draft scoping document is attached (Appendix 1) as a guide to framework future work by the Task and Finish Group. Any significant change to the content or focus of the scoping document will require it to be re-submitted to this Committee for endorsement.

Whilst the Scrutiny Board ordinarily expects Task and Finish Group reviews, once commenced, to be completed within three months, dispensation may be sought from it to continue the Task and Finish Group work well beyond that so as to be able to have ongoing oversight of and contribute to the multi-agency strategy and its development.

Reporting arrangements

The Committee will need to consider the reporting requirements for the Task and Finish Group. In particular, regular reports may be required to be made to the full Committee.

Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.15am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 14 February 2019

4. Drug gangs, knife crime and county lines

The Committee considered report PAF/05/19 which was an introduction to the issue of drug gangs, knife crime and county lines. Also attached was a draft scoping document to be considered to framework future work.

The following joined the meeting to introduce the issues:

Tanya Gillett, Head of Youth Offending;
Andy Phopet, Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing/Crime & Public Protection, Essex Police.

During discussion the following was highlighted, acknowledged and/or noted:

- Gangs had evolved and franchised out into rural locations.
- The Youth Offending Service (YOS) had identified county lines as a trend and impacting on local people around two years ago and it had been raised through partnership agency forums. The YOS had an average caseload of 450 people with up to 60 per cent of those cases sometimes connected to County Lines activity.
- There were an estimated 2000 county lines across the country with around 134 thought to cover Greater Essex; at the moment, most of the County Lines operating in Essex originated from London.
- The criminal use of drugs dictated the criminal supply and the main risk and harm did seem to disproportionately affect the young and vulnerable although was not exclusive to these groups.
- A long-term approach and strategy was needed to confront the issues with a strong partnership landscape utilising and joining up the work of safeguarding, education, social care and housing (and other) governance structures. It was acknowledged that agencies needed to recognise that communities change and evolve and they needed to be responsive to this.
- Targeted prevention and intervention activity plus disruption of county lines were all needed. i.e. a holistic focussed approach.
- More joined up working was needed with agencies being advocates

for each other and share information on what each other were doing. It was suggested that districts could use their licensing powers more effectively to build more resilient communities.

- The development and adoption of the Violence and Vulnerability Framework (led by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner) was expected to lead to improved joint working and information sharing with Essex Police.
- There was also often insufficient information or notice of people being rehomed within Essex by London Boroughs and specific support that they may need.
- It could be difficult to affect change if vulnerable children are not in school. Emerging research suggested that the support gained from having good family and personal relationships, access to education and training and employment were important factors in building resilience to the influence of drug gangs and county lines. There was also some emerging evidence about the impact of poverty on families and increased likelihood to be attracted to drug income.
- Education had been identified as a key component in the strategy. Members queried whether support would be stepped-up in primary schools to increase awareness, prevention and early intervention – thereby increasing resilience. However, there was also a counter argument that due to their smaller size there was better interaction between teaching staff and pupils in primary schools anyway and that focus should be more on secondary schools.
- There was also an issue about pupils being on a school roll but not actually in regular attendance at the school and this could also be an indicator of vulnerability. It was a significant step to actually permanently exclude a child so some schools would suggest alternative educational packages often delivered remotely but where they could still stay on the school roll.
- YOS was looking to launch a youth justice team (on a partnership basis) for more considered approach assessing each crime where a child or young person is a main suspect to try and identify early safeguarding, vulnerability or support requirements rather than immediately pushing them through the criminal justice system.
- Knife crime was trending upwards with a significant proportion linked to drug gangs. The Police felt that they needed more targeted visible use of stop and search powers complemented by more educational programmes stressing that carrying a knife did not make someone safer. It was highlighted that recent knife crime prevention orders legislation being promoted by the Home Office would enable control orders being put on people who were found carrying a knife.

- Members queried the amount of advice that was available for parents and carers to access. It was suggested that the Essex Young People Drug and Alcohol Service and also the Family Hubs could provide advice. It was acknowledged that probably more could be made available through schools.
- Information on truents and non-attenders at school was shared between partner agencies.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked Tanya Gillet and Assistant Chief Constable Andy Phopphet for their attendance and they left the meeting.

[Clerks note: In discussion after the formal meeting closed, the Committee agreed that further discussion was needed on awareness within and agency links with schools and that the draft scoping document be used to framework future work.].