

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Meeting of the Executive
15th November 2004

Report from the Director of Policy & Regeneration Unit

For action and information

Wards affected:
ALL

Report Title: BRENT CRIME, DISORDER AND MISUSE OF DRUGS AUDIT 2004

Forward Plan Ref: CE-04/05-01

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report describes the process being followed by the Brent Community Safety Partnership to produce the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of Drugs Strategy 2005-2008 via an audit and public consultation process and seeks the views of the Executive on the proposed priorities.
- 1.2 It also briefs the Executive on the requirements of Section 17 (para 3.12) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and recommends ways in which the Council's implementation of Section 17 can be strengthened through the audit and strategy development process.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive note the report
- 2.2 Endorses the priorities and areas of activity proposed in the Brent Crime Audit for inclusion in the Brent Crime, Disorder and Misuse of drugs strategy 2005-2008 or suggest alternatives. (para 3.5)
- 2.3 Approves the actions taken to ensure that the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the actions proposed therein, is embedded into the operation of the Council. (par 3.15).

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Sections 5 and 6), as amended by the Police Reform Act 2002 (Sections 97 and 98), places a duty upon the 'responsible authorities' in each local authority area of England and Wales to: "formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime, disorder and the misuse of drugs". The 'responsible authorities' who are legally required to undertake this work in Brent are:

- Brent Council
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Brent Teaching Primary Care Trust
- London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
- Metropolitan Police Authority

3.2 The Act prescribes the process by which the strategy will be developed. It stipulates that the responsible authorities must:

1. Carry out a review (or audit) of patterns of crime, disorder and the misuse of drugs in the area.
2. Prepare and publish an analysis of the review
3. Seek the views of people and agencies in the area about the report and analysis
4. Develop and publish a strategy identifying objectives to be pursued and long and short term targets.

Development of the Audit (Stages 1 & 2)

3.3 The responsible authorities, together with other partners including the London Probation Service, Brent Magistrates Court, British Transport Police and representatives of the voluntary sector operate under the title of the Crime Prevention Strategy Group (CPSG) as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for Brent. Brent CPSG established a project board of key officers from the responsible authorities to develop and deliver the crime audit report and the consultation process.

3.4 A written summary of the audit has been completed and published. It has been circulated to all members of the council and is attached as an appendix to this report. Called 'Spotlight on Crime in Brent' it informs readers that theft accounts for 34% of all crime in Brent and burglary for 11%. It says that although gun crime and robbery are down, other forms of violent crime have been increasing over the last 2 years. It confirms that a large number of people arrested for criminal offences have a drug misuse problem and identifies anti-social behaviour involving envirocrime, ticket touting and harassment as a growing issue. The audit therefore proposes four priorities for the next crime reduction strategy. Under each priority specific areas of activity have been defined.

3.5 The priorities and the proposed areas of activity are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Anti-social behaviour | Hate crime, harassment and nuisance behaviour, enviro-crime, fire related anti-social behaviour. |
| Property | Burglary, theft, especially motor vehicle crime |
| Violent crime | Domestic violence, gun related crime, robbery, alcohol related violence and disorder |
| Drug and alcohol | Treatment, community and supply |

3.6 Cross cutting issues will be addressed within the action plans devised to address each priority. These will be:

- Youth involvement in crime
- Vulnerable victims e.g. women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities
- Deterring offenders, particularly prolific offenders
- Fear of crime

3.7 The four priorities will be fixed for the three year period of the strategy. However the areas of activity can be adjusted and changed as work progresses. This arrangement allows the partnership a degree of flexibility that it has not had with the current strategy and which has prevented it from responding promptly to new and emerging issues, such as anti-social behaviour.

3.8 The partnership is required to establish short and long term SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time scaled) targets for crime and disorder reduction within the strategy. The detail of the strategy and the targets will be developed over the next 3 months. The intention is to set specific targets for the areas of activity. The targets will become the key performance indicators for the strategy and the means by which the success of the partnership in tackling crime is measured.

Consultation (Stage 3)

3.9 The partnership is required to consult widely on the audit, in particular to access the views of hard to reach and hear groups. The consultation is taking place from September to December. Its purpose is:

- To check if the audit has correctly identified problems and there are no important omissions
- To check that the audit is not based on misconceptions
- Canvass opinion about priorities

3.10 A questionnaire has been developed and has been circulated through the Brent Magazine, free newspapers, via libraries, one stop shops, police stations and at meetings. The audit will be an agenda item at many officer, public and customer based meetings across the borough during this time. The consultation is being co-ordinated and managed by the Community Safety Team but all partners are participating. Brent council members have received individual copies of the questionnaire

and the presentation of this report to the Executive is part of the consultation exercise.

Implications for the Council and Lead Members

- 3.11 Tackling crime and disorder and promoting community safety is a corporate priority for Brent Council and all council departments and services will have a role to play in delivering the strategy. However, more specifically there is a duty on the council to ensure that community safety is embedded into the day to day activity and planning of all the various Council services. This duty comes from Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 3.12 Section 17 places a legal duty upon all local authorities to consider crime and disorder reduction in the exercise of all their duties. The exact wording of the legislation is:
- "...it shall be the duty of each authority...to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of these functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area."*
- 3.13 The Home Office guidance describes that in plainer language as:
- "...a general duty of each local authority to take account of the community safety dimension in **all of its work**. All policies, strategies, plans and budgets will need to be considered from the standpoint of their potential contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder."*
- 3.14 The extent to which the council can show evidence of community safety being embedded across the organisation will be a feature of the CPA assessment, as will the success of the partnership in implementing the strategy and reducing crime.
- 3.15 The publication of the audit and the development the new strategy presents an opportunity to the council to review how Section 17 is working and to ensure that it is embedded into the various departments and services. The following actions have been proposed and agreed by the Corporate Management Team:
- Heads of department are cascading the audit and consultation to all staff.
 - Heads of departments have been asked to ensure that the role and contribution of their services to community safety and reducing crime and disorder is incorporated into the 2005/06 Service Development Plans.
 - With the assistance of the Community Safety Team services and departments will audit their activities, policies, strategies and budgets in relation to Section 17, in particular against the four priority themes and proposed areas of activity that are being proposed for the new strategy.
- 3.16 In the same vein, lead members and members of the Executive are required to bear in mind the requirements of Section 17 when planning and making decisions in relation to any of the Council's functions.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no new financial implications arising from this report. Some aspects of existing provision may need to be re-configured to ensure that the Council is able to play an effective role in delivering the new strategy.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The legal implications are covered within the report. The Council, as one of the 'responsible authorities' is required to conduct the audit, consult on its findings and develop a crime reduction strategy.
- 5.2 Section 17 places a legal duty on the Council to consider crime reduction in all of its functions. Failure to do so could result in legal challenge.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted on the audit and consultation project. It is a specific requirement that minority and hard to reach groups are consulted and included in the data collection process. Translations of the audit and the questionnaire have been arranged and meetings attended with special interest groups, such as the elderly, young people and people with hearing impairment.
- 6.2 Crime impacts on some communities and individuals more severely than others. This issue will be addressed through the action planning process for victims which will identify vulnerable groups and actions that may be taken to protect them from crime and disorder.

Background Papers

Crime and Disorder Act 1998
Spotlight on crime in Brent
Police Reform Act 2002

Contact Officers

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