

# Cabinet Meeting

## 3 February 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence Strategy	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Sandra Samuels Public Health and Well Being  Cllr Val Gibson Children and Young People	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders Strategic Director People Ros Jervis Service Director Public Health & Wellbeing	
<b>Originating service</b>	Community Safety	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Karen Samuels Tel Email	Head of Community Safety 01902 551341 Karen.samuels@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel	22 September 2015

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the city's Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence Strategy 2016-19.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To endorse the city's Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence Strategy 2016-19.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Tackling gangs and youth violence has been a strategic priority for Safer Wolverhampton Partnership since 2011 and has been progressed through the Reducing Gang Harm Strategic Framework until 2015.
- 2.2 Wolverhampton remains one of fifty two identified Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas in the country and one of three within the West Midlands; this enables sharing of good and emerging practice across areas, with the city called upon to provide support to newly identified areas.
- 2.3 The Home Office launched its cross-government approach for EGYV and Exploitation in January 2016; its priorities, detailed below, are well aligned with Wolverhampton's refreshed strategy.
- Tackle county lines – the exploitation of vulnerable people by a hard core of gang members to sell drugs
  - Protect vulnerable locations – places where vulnerable people can be targeted
  - Reduce violence and knife crime
  - Safeguard gang-associated women and girls
  - Promote early intervention
  - Promote meaningful alternatives to gangs such as education, training and employment
- 2.4 Whilst the strategy will make provision for all-age victims, offenders and those with gang affiliation, there is a particular focus on children, young people and young adults up to the age of 24 years. This is in line with the national programme and reflects the local profile of gang association.

## **3.0 Progress against Reducing Gang Harm Strategy 2012-15.**

- 3.1 Key successes have been achieved over the period of the previous strategy including effective offender management of active gang members involved in criminality; nationally renowned Gangs One Day One Conversation (ODOC) enables partnership case management of offenders. For those involved in low-level offending, which have gang associations, disruption tactics have been adopted to reduce risk and deter offending.
- 3.2 Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) commissioned services have provided responsive and effective interventions for medium/high risk gang members, gang injunctions have been used to restrict behaviour and critical incident interventions have been deployed at times of heightened tensions.
- 3.3 As gang-related crimes require the use of a Police marker during crime recording, and there is no specific 'gang crime' that can be used for recording purposes, SWP has used a range of performance indicators including knife/gun crime, violence with injury and

personal robbery and drug related offences as indicators or progress. During the three year period January 2012 - December 2015, for the 10-24 age range, Violence with Injury (offender) reduced by 5.7%, whilst victims within this age range increased by 6.8%, both knife and gun crime over the period for victims reduced by 38% and 27% respectively, whilst and reduced for offenders by 4.8% and 12.5% respectively, with levels of recorded gun and knife crime falling over the period overall.

#### **4.0 Rationale for a Change in Focus**

- 4.1 Whilst provision around the management of medium/ high risk gang members will remain, their management is sufficiently effective and well established through this partnership approach to enable the scope of the new strategy to be extended.
- 4.2 Although successes are evident, gang-related harm it is still a key risk to the health and wellbeing of those at risk of gang involvement. A refreshed Gangs Problem Profile developed in 2015 has identified good progress, whilst highlighting remaining risks to the City and the need for gang related harm to be a priority. The evidence base from the problem profile and successes of recent years have enabled us to now adopt a shift in focus from harm reduction to prevention.
- 4.3 There is now a better understanding of the city's gang issues with evidence suggesting that the face and operational activity of gangs are changing. Key highlights from the problem profile show:
- Street gangs are becoming less visible to the public, and more fluid in the way they organise themselves;
  - There is an emergence of younger, more chaotic groups as elder members of Urban Street Gangs (USGs) have been removed due to police operations or had their activities curtailed.
  - There is a hard core of gang members who are becoming more organised and sophisticated in their criminality, and they are exploiting vulnerable young people and adults in order to sell drugs.
  - Communities highlight young people succumbing to negative peer pressure to become gang members.

#### **5.0 Delivering a city-Wide Response in Partnership**

- 5.1 Gang association amongst young people is not always easily defined; whilst there are specific crimes that are often linked to gang activity (such as robbery, drug dealing etc) there is no specific crime around gang involvement; consequently, police are reliant on the use of 'gang markers' in identifying young people associated with gangs, which is often based upon intelligence.
- 5.2 The strategy advocates continued joint working across a range of partners including probation providers, Youth Offending Team, Anti-social behaviour team and Police. There is a commitment to strengthen working practices with schools, the health sector, Early Help, Troubled Families and specialist third sector partners to deliver a coordinated response for children and young people, adults, families and communities impacted negatively by gang and youth violence activity and to improve the transition between

children's and adults services. Standard safeguarding risk factors will be applied when assessing the risks around a young person's behaviour with safeguarding concerns reported through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

- 5.3 The City of Wolverhampton Council as a core funder of The Way youth zone in the city centre, has supported proposals for both preventative and targeted services to be provided from this new facility to support delivery of this strategy. Importantly, its city centre location provides neutral ground for the effective engagement of young people impacted by gangs and youth violence.
- 5.4 A continuation of the work to safeguard vulnerable gang-associated girls and young women will be a continuing theme of the revised strategy. Earlier targeted intervention is still needed to challenge the attitudes and behaviours of young men which can fuel violence and lead to women and girls being exploited. This will be aligned with perpetrator programmes within the city's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-19.
- 5.5 There is a commitment to develop an extended role for specialist third sector organisations, which are best placed to identify individuals at risk and deliver targeted interventions. The establishment of a Gangs Community Reference Group in 2015 has enabled a frank dialogue between statutory and third sector agencies operating in this field of work. This provides a useful feedback loop for what works, up to date information about the nature of gang activity on the ground, an insight into community perceptions and, in some instances, a trusted vehicle for delivery.
- 5.6 The strategy will also be closely aligned to the police-led approach to addressing serious and organised crime; the gangs ODOC arrangements currently in place allow for early identification of individuals who are at risk of being drawn into organised criminal networks.
- 6.0** The strategy's overarching objectives are the key drivers and principles for delivery of the strategy over the next three years.
- 6.1 Strategy Objectives:
- i. Preventing young people becoming involved in violence with a new emphasis on early intervention and prevention
  - ii. Support Pathways out of violence and gangs
  - iii. Robust enforcement and offender management to control those individuals involved in gangs and or youth violence, and are refusing the opportunity to exit this life style
  - iv. Partnership working together to prevent harm to families and communities
  - v. Preventing gang related harm and youth-related violence through improved information flow between agencies and communities
  - vi. Keep up to date with the city's gangs profile and improve intelligence flow
- 6.2 Strategy Delivery:  
Delivery will follow the nationally established model of Prevent, Prepare, Pursue and Protect; outcomes have been set against each of these strands.

<b>Delivery Strand</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Prevent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earlier identification of individuals at risk/vulnerable to gang association</li> <li>• Improved targeting of youth diversion</li> <li>• Reduced risk of offending</li> <li>• Reduced harm to families</li> <li>• Improved prevention interventions</li> <li>• A shared definition of gangs adopted across the city</li> </ul>
<b>Protect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced reoffending</li> <li>• Improved understanding of the risk to prevent offending/harm</li> <li>• Strengthened community response to critical incidents</li> <li>• Enhanced intelligence gathering through use of social media</li> <li>• Improved community reassurance</li> </ul>
<b>Pursue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective management of threat and risk</li> <li>• Fewer knife crime incidents</li> <li>• Fewer gun crime incidents</li> <li>• Less youth-related violence</li> <li>• Wider use of legislative powers</li> </ul>
<b>Prepare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community trust and confidence</li> <li>• Improved joint response to critical incidents</li> <li>• Greater understanding of gang issues</li> <li>• A stronger evidence base for what works</li> </ul>

6.3 There is already a well-established performance framework in place to monitor progress and performance of gang and youth violence delivery. This will be revised to reflect the shift in emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

## 7.0 Consultation

7.1 The draft strategy has been subject to consultation over a period of 12 weeks. The consultation was promoted through partnership and community networks, third sector organisations and city websites. A total of 40 partial and 11 full responses were received, three of which were from groups. As part of this process, young people from the local community were asked to design the art work for the strategy. A summary of consultation responses is provided below:

- Various responses indicated the strategy was easy to read
- There was general support for the enhanced focus on prevention
- A request for more work to engage schools and raise awareness of needs
- Better use of social media to communicate progress and counter negative use by gangs
- Workshops needed with parents and carers around dangers of gangs and youth violence
- Improved employment offer needed for those at risk or already involved with gangs
- Community-based mediation needed
- Use of ex-gang members to steer young people away from gang association
- More localised youth services needed

7.2 The consultation process also included a presentation at Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel on 22 September 2015; the strategy was well-received with comments regarding aspects of delivery fed into strategy revisions; Councillors sought reassurance that work with schools and efforts to restrict young people's access to weapons would feature within the prevention work. Practical methods of securing the flow of community intelligence were raised and reassurance provided that the strong partnership arrangements in place would mitigate organisational budgetary constraints around delivery of the strategy. To illicit the engagement of young people within the strategy development, an artwork competition was held for young people from the community to have input into the design of the strategy.

## **8.0 Early Challenges**

8.1 The following challenges will provide an early steer for areas of development:

- Knowledge of the established referral pathway across agencies to access specialist support is limited; wider promotion of the specialist services available is needed to extend their use and effectiveness.
- Whilst joint working between statutory and third sector agencies is collaborative, further development allowing for discussion of confidential issues around key gang individuals, is needed. The development of a Gangs Community Reference Group is positive step towards achieving this.
- There is a requirement for specialist third sector providers to work more collaboratively to avoid competition for funding and duplication of effort.
- The strategy must make better use of the internet and social media to extend the traditional control methods of capable guardian; many young people have knowledge of technology that surpasses that of their families.
- Development of a model for community mediation is underway to enable community members to mediate between groups at times of heightened tension. Effective deployment will require the systematic use of risk assessments and delivery within an agreed operating protocol.
- There is an identified intelligence gap in identifying risks around the city's changing demographics and the need to develop an improved understanding of our communities.

## **9.0 Financial implications**

9.1 Implementation of the Preventing Gang Involvement and Youth Violence Strategy is dependent on multi-agency delivery. SWP commissions specialist services from its annual allocation of Community Safety Fund, issued by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Resource allocations from these funding streams will be finalised early in 2016 for both 2016/17 and 2017/18. Delivery of this strategy will be within the advised allocation of Community Safety Fund. [GS/13012016/D]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

10.1 Sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 require the Council and other responsible authorities to formulate and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder in the area; Section 17 places a duty on the Council to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the area. Implementation of the strategy contributes towards the Council's duties in this regard. [RB/14012016/Z]

## **11.0 Equalities implications**

11.1 A full equalities analysis has been completed which highlights that the strategy will impact positively on victims, offenders and communities. Historically, disproportionate gang membership was seen from young black males, but more recent analysis has shown mixed racial membership across USGs. Young women and girls are recognised as being more vulnerable from gang-associations.

## **12.0 Environmental implications**

12.1 There are no environmental implications.

## **13.0 Human resources implications**

13.1 There are no human resources implications.

## **14.0 Corporate landlord implications**

14.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

## **15.0 Schedule of background papers**

15.1 Presentation to Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel – 22 September 2015.