

Committee: Cabinet	Date: 8 April 2009	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: CAB 141/089	Agenda Item:
Report of: Corporate Director Kevan Collins Originating officer(s) Mary Durkin Service Head		Title: Report of the Commission into the Public Safety of Young People Wards Affected: All		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The attached report summarizes the commission's findings, and makes a number of recommendations. These recommendations will be presented to the Stay Safe Community Plan development Group and to Cabinet, as part of the report, with a view to incorporation in the next Youth Justice Plan, and other relevant planning tools.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to endorse the recommendations of the commission.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Officers were asked in May last year to convene a commission into the public safety of young people in the borough, as part of the overall community safety strategy. The commission met six times from September to December 08.
- 3.2 The commission was composed of senior representatives from relevant organisations including the local authority, Metropolitan Police, academics, those involved in the justice system and members of the community. Witnesses were called and documentary evidence was submitted. In particular, commissioners listened to scores of young people, to their parents and teachers, and to people who had been victims of crime. There were six commission sessions in total between October and December 2008.
- 3.3 The findings of the commission, in line with “Time for Action”, the mayor’s report on youth violence across London (Nov 08), were that reporting is disproportionate, and that violence is not as rampant as we are led to believe. The vast majority of teenagers are law abiding, and the crime rate is falling. Moreover, knife crime and gang culture are less prevalent in Tower Hamlets than in similar boroughs. Nevertheless, a worrying number of young people are nervous travelling within the borough and violence and anti-social behaviour are real features of life on the streets.
- 3.4 Commissioners looked at the causes of violence and the fear of violence. They have made recommendations which they believe will help prevent knife crime, reduce anti-social behaviour, and address the fear of crime on the streets. The recommendations are included here in the body of the report. The full report is appended.

4. BODY OF REPORT

4.1 Outcomes of the Commission’s Report

Having received and heard evidence from various sources, the commission is confident that Tower Hamlets offers a very good environment in which most of the residents, most of the time, can live and learn safely and happily. The recommendations from the commissioners address the exceptional circumstances when young people are at risk, and the environment is less secure.

I One Tower Hamlets

Commissioners noted that there was a disparity between the image and the reality of safety in the borough. In particular, the reputation of young people and the quality of community relations suffered from sensationalist reporting in some newspapers and television programmes. As a result there was a danger of a culture of fear developing, between cultures and generations. Commissioners were convinced that we should counter this with positive reporting and celebrating the successes in the borough. We must value distinct cultures in the borough, and draw young people and adults together, promoting inter-generational and inter-cultural work wherever possible. We should:

- Ensure young people's representation to feed into the Living Safely/ CDRP groups
- Promote and fund inter-generational working in the borough
- Develop and encourage volunteering schemes for the Olympics, where young people and adults work closely together
- Endorse positive action schemes for young people

II A Great Place to Live

Commissioners noted the disparity between popular belief and evidence – particularly in regards to the high fear of crime and the fact that actual crime has fallen over the last 7 years. We should:

- Ensure accurate information exchange between agencies
- Myth busting – narrowing the gap between perceptions and the evidence
- Avoid the vilification of young people
- Ensure resources are directed towards early intervention/family projects (e.g. YIP, YISP & FIP)

III A Prosperous Community

The commission wants our young people to fully engage in the educational, artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities within the borough as well as focussing upon the rich learning experience provided by schools and colleges. We should:

- Ensure greater focus upon the arts and creative projects for the ‘hard to reach’ groups of young people
- Ensure young people have access to improve their skills levels (e.g. social & communication skills) to adequately prepare them for training & work
- Re-settlement pledge for all young offenders leaving custody to ensure ‘wrap around’ services proportionate to their needs and risk

IV A Safe and Supportive Community

The commission believes the use of Restorative Justice (RJ) across agencies is a key model of working with young people. In suitable cases young people to attend a RJ meeting, admit the harm they have caused, and then put in place a process of righting that wrong by understanding the core values of their community. We should:

- Develop a borough-wide policy of central training, and adequate resourcing of RJ
- Promote the value of Play within the borough
- Implement the ‘New Destiny Trust’ model, whereby ex-offenders work with young gang members to de-glamorize and divert these youngsters
- Focus support for young people on the transition period between the end of Primary, and the start of Secondary school
- Ensure that travel for young people is safe, particularly when moving between areas and postcodes
- Support young people to resist bullying in and out of school
- Prioritise early intervention strategies and positive engagement of families – e.g. working with families of young offenders

V A Healthy Community

The commission noted that from the medical evidence presented that young people were getting seriously hurt within our communities. The Consultant Trauma Surgeon at the Royal London Hospital presented his perspective of a ‘parental postcode’: those children raised in poverty may

be less likely to adequately safeguard their own children, and this cycle perpetuates. We should:

- Provide more information to young people about knife crime and its consequences
- Improve the disclosure between the police and NHS around knife crime injuries
- Intelligence sharing and positive partnership working in order that the evidence that the supply of drugs to young people is significantly reduced
- Look at ways of ensuring licensees, parents and older siblings are held to account for an unchecked pattern of underage drinking

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 6.1 In 2008 the East London Borough of Tower Hamlets established a commission which set itself the task of looking at how serious the problem is and what can be done to make young people safe. The report produced a series of recommendations which it believes will help prevent knife crime and reduce anti-social behaviour.

All of the recommendations build on existing youth service delivery within the borough and, as such, the enhanced provision will be contained within existing budgets.

7. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

- 7.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse recommendations made by the Commission into the Public Safety of Young People.
- 7.2 The recommendations are expressly targeted towards the Council's goal of One Tower Hamlets and associated themes expressed in the Community Plan for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of Tower Hamlets.
- 7.3 Endorsement of the Commission's recommendations is consistent with the Council's duty under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that every child whatever their background or circumstances has the support they need to be safe.
- 7.4 It may also be possible to justify the endorsement by reference to the well-being power in section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, having regard to the links made to the Community Plan. That power authorises the Council to do anything it considers likely to promote improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of Tower Hamlets (provided it is not otherwise prohibited by statute).

8. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The thrust of this work is to promote One Tower Hamlets, developing a cohesive community in which young people can move freely geographically and socially.

9. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

9.1 There are no specific implications for a greener environment, although increased involvement of young people in positive activities and volunteering should, long-term, have a positive impact on the condition of the streets, reducing litter, graffiti, and low-level vandalism.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Risk management implications are addressed within the individual plans

11. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

Reports concerned with proposed expenditure, reviewing or changing service delivery or the use of resources must now incorporate an Efficiency Statement.

**Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)
List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of "back ground papers"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
To be completed by author	To be completed by author ext. xxx

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – The Report