

## **Citizenship and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2010**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Commons – In the Chair

Councillors Akbar, Boyes, Cameron, Chohan, Hitchen, Rahman, Tavernor and Taylor

Councillor J Battle – Deputy Leader

#### **Apologies**

Councillors Fairweather and Brian O’Neil

#### **CI/10/39 Urgent Business**

A report on Guns and Gangs was submitted as urgent business.

#### **Decision**

To note the Chair’s decision to accept the item as urgent business.

#### **CI/10/40 Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 July 2010 were submitted.

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting.

#### **CI/10/41 Information and Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted providing details of a future key decision relating to the Committee’s remit and tracking the actions arising from the Committee’s recommendations last month.

#### **Decision:**

To agree the work programme.

#### **CI/10/42 Guns and Gangs**

A joint report of the Director of Children’s Services and the Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) was submitted to provide members with an update on the preventative work to address levels of gang activity and use of guns. The report was introduced by the Head of Youth Interventions. She highlighted the recent drop in numbers of firearms discharges as an indicator of the success of the approach the Council and

its partners had taken in this area, as well as the Green Flag in the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The focus of the work was strongly on law enforcement, but with an emphasis on prevention. The drop in firearms discharges had provided the Council with the opportunity to do more preventative work in this area.

A member asked what involvement girls typically had in gangs in Manchester. The Head of Youth Interventions advised that Manchester did not have any girl gangs, and that girls were typically involved on the periphery of a range of different gangs. This was often through friends or family members involved in gang activity.

Many of the gangs in Manchester were long standing, and in some instances generations of families had all been involved in gang activity. Siblings of gang members were usually viewed as being at risk of becoming involved in gangs and preventative action was taken to address this. This would usually be through the offer of support to parents, for example by asking them if they wanted their child to get involved in projects such as 8 'til late. The project was delivered in collaboration with schools and included running exciting and worthwhile activities and enthusing young people about the exciting range of activities the city has to offer. The project aimed to give young people support and confidence to resist becoming involved with gangs, as well as improve pupil's attendance and attainment.

A member referred to an issue within his ward where there was a widespread perception that weapons were being carried by certain community groups. The Team Leader for the Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Service (MMAGS) advised that targeted projects had taken place to address low levels of resilience to gang activity amongst certain communities.

Despite the success of the approach and the positive results, there was still widespread perception that dangerous gang activity and gun crime was prevalent. The MMAGS Team Leader advised that he wanted communities to know that improvements were sustainable, and that this could be communicated through the team's strong links with different communities. The Head of Youth Interventions added that stories and language in the media often made positive communications difficult, and that language such as 'Gunchester' was no longer relevant or accurate. The Deputy Leader added that the Council was trying to draw attention to positive stories through local newspapers, however some areas such as Moss Side and Hulme weren't specifically covered by local newspapers. In these wards local radio stations have portrayed positive messages. A member asked that the officers consider whether the Council could support these radio stations to access larger audiences.

The Deputy Leader paid tribute to the partnership approach that had been successful in reducing gun crime as evidence of the success of neighbourhood policing and building confidence in communities. He stated that he hoped this success could be sustained when resources for public services are reduced.

Members supported continued funding for this important area of work. The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) stated that the Council would have to see what comes out of the Comprehensive Spending Review due towards the end of next

month, but that it always puts resources behind its priorities and will be encouraging its partners to do the same. This would support the city to sustain the low levels of firearms discharges and shake off its association with gun crime.

**Decision**

To note the successes achieved in this area of work, and to support continued funding to ensure that the good results and preventative work are sustainable.