

From Councillor Bevan:

At the last planning committee meeting it was reported that the project to deal with the backlog of planning enforcement cases had reduced the number of open cases to just over 1000. As this project and its funding is due to end soon can the Cabinet member confirm that funding to extend the project has been identified to enable the number of open cases to be reduced to a normal / acceptable working level total of approximately 300 / 400 open cases. This will ensure that when the normal arrangements are eventually resumed the normal day to day cases that arise will be able to be dealt with and no further backlog will arise.

Response

As of the end of February 2008 the number of open planning enforcement cases was under 950. The Enforcement service intends to review the progress of the project in June 2008 and will continue to fund the current temporary resource until that time from projected salary under spend.

Based upon benchmarking within the Planning Enforcement Performance Review the service will look to reduce the open caseload to approximately 480 cases, representing a caseload of 120 for each of the 4 established case officer posts.

Questions from Councillor Mughal:

Question 1: Why when knife crime is a real problem in areas like Noel Park, no public information campaigns on local authority public boards against knife crime are evident on the High Road. Why has the local authority not taken a pro-active and consistent approach?

Response:

Between October 2007 and January 2008, there were 80 serious knife violence offences in Haringey. Of these, six occurred on the High Road, N22 and a total of 14 offences occurred in the whole N22 postcode. The N15 and N17 postcodes had a greater number of offences than N22 with 18 and 28 respectively. There were nine serious knife violence offences in the N8 postcode.

In the past there have been a number of prominent knife awareness campaigns along Wood Green High Road (for example, Operation Blunt and Whats da Point). The partnership has also made a concerted effort to balance its proactive work with its concern about fear of crime. For the first time in several years, the recent Residents' Survey registered a decrease in concern about crime from 54% to 46%.

The Safer Haringey Partnership continues to take a consistent and proactive approach to knife crime in the borough and has a full-time, permanent Policy Co-ordinator for this work. The Partnership will also be using good practice from the Home Office Tackling Violence Action Plan at a local level where appropriate.

Question 2: Why are police resources being taken up outside and within the explosion of gaming and betting venues in Wood Green and no public statements around these have been forthcoming from the portfolio holder?

Please refer to the response to question 3 above for a picture of the actual change in betting and gaming venues, which has been minimal over the past few years.

In relation to the first part of this question, the issue with gaming venues in the Wood Green area has been predominantly around the increase in criminal damage to the machines they have on site.

Haringey Police has objected to a couple of individual applications for licences but this does not signify an underlying issue that causes them concern or requires an injection of resources. As stated, the issue with these venues is and has been the increase in criminal damage. This has predominantly been damage to the machines they have on site.

However, the only associated police resources have been two strategic partnership meetings with Area Managers from the betting offices. These meetings have resulted in specific actions to combat the problem (which revolves around a combination of design issues and customer management within the premises themselves).

There has been a small increase in police demand around the reporting of these offences. However, this is on a borough-wide scale and not specifically linked to Wood Green.

Public statements have, therefore, been unnecessary.

Question 3: Does the portfolio holder agree that there has been an explosion of gaming and betting venues in Wood Green and can she state whether there is link to anti-social activity around and within these venues?

Response:

In 2005, the Gambling Act transferred power to Local Authorities to issue permits. At that time, there were 12 existing premises on Wood Green High Road and there have been only a few applications for the Wood Green area since then - as below:

- 1 new Adult Gaming Centre (AGC)
- 1 existing AGC that applied to divide into 2 sections
- 1 new betting shop premises – currently under consultation

The Safer Neighbourhood Team and Street Enforcement Wardens have reported a few incidents with groups of young people congregating in the area causing harassment both inside and outside of gaming venues but this has not resulted in any serious disorder.

It should be noted that these betting and gaming establishments are situated in the middle of the busiest shopping precinct in the borough. The High Road also sits on the main thoroughfare between two major transport hubs, which have been long-standing crime hotspots in Haringey.

We recognise, therefore, that crime does occur in this area but correlation does not mean causation in all causes and the link with betting and gambling establishments is not a given. The peak period for offending is a seven hour interval between 2pm – 9pm, making up 70% of offences. Over 45% of offences recorded for the area between April 2007 and January 2008 were for theft and handling. The main issue, linked with gambling venues, is with criminal damage.

More than two thirds of the criminal damage incidents recorded in the High Road hotspot between Wood Green and Turnpike Lane in the above time period (81 in total) were attributed to gambling venues i.e. William Hill (29), Paddy Power (15), Ladbrokes (5) and Shoppers Pride Amusements (2). The majority of these involved customers damaging gaming machines whilst inside these venues.

Joint working on this issue has been going on for some time now between enforcement officers and the police, as outlined below.

Appendix 1

Examples of activity to address knife crime (see Q1)

Tackling Violence Action Plan

In February 2008, the Home Office published 'Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public. An Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008-11'. This is the first national plan focusing specifically on serious violent crime. It sets out what the government, in partnership with police and local agencies, will do over the next three years to reduce homicide, knife crime, gun and gang related crime and sexual and domestic violence.

The implications identified from the action plan have been considered as part of the forthcoming Haringey Safer Communities Partnership Plan: Safer for All. Serious violence will remain a priority in Haringey and there will be particular emphasis on a coordinated approach to youth violence, early intervention projects regarding weapons and constructive work with perpetrators.

Trading Standards

The Council's Trading Standards Service has been proactive in communicating with traders in the borough known to supply knives. In September 2007 we wrote to approximately 100 traders across the borough advising them of changes to The Criminal Justice Act 1988, which from 1 October 2007 requires a retailer to ensure a person is 18 before selling them a knife.

'Knife' here includes -

- knives, knife blades or razor blades
- axes
- any other article which has a blade or which is sharply pointed, and which is made or adapted for the use of causing injury to the person

In October 2007, a number of premises were visited, by Volunteer Police Cadets, to conduct under cover test purchase operations. This included locations in Wood Green. We are pleased to confirm that no sales took place.

Operation Blunt

Led by the Metropolitan Police, the Safer Haringey Partnership has carried out targeted anti-knife operations using hand-held metal detectors and portable knife arches. These have been used at licensed premises, with cooperation from the licensees, as condition of entry. This has taken place particularly on Friday and Saturday nights in areas where bars and clubs open late.

Operation Curb

This was launched in June 2007 across the Metropolitan Police Service focussing on violence among young people. Operation Curb offences are murder, attempted murder, GBH or gun and knife-enabled crimes, where the offender and victim are both aged under 20. An action plan, detailing a range of prevention and enforcement activities, was written for Haringey and the Operation has been running on borough since July. It is recognised that the Police cannot produce the required outcome alone, and this is very much a partnership operation. A range of

local organisations and services are involved, such as the Youth Offending Service, Youth Service, Safer Schools Project and Partnership, local schools, Neighbourhood Management and the Street Pastors. Operation Curb provides an opportunity for the coordination of local activities that already take place around reducing youth violence.

Operation Kartel

The aims of this operation, which ran during February, were to reduce the risk and incidence of serious youth violence and to safeguard young people at risk of, or in fear of, serious violence. Operation Kartel was targeted at those boroughs with a problem with Operation Curb offences, with particular emphasis on preventing youth homicide, reducing the number Curb offences and reducing the number of knife-enabled crimes in public places when compared to the same period in 2007. The strategy used was to identify, investigate and communicate with those involved in street-level violence; offering support to those at risk and to focus tactics in those areas which are known to suffer significant levels of violence.

Say Yes Challenge

Between September 2007 and January 2008, young people from the Leaders in Training Group at St Thomas More School participated in the Say Yes Challenge. This involved young people, working as mini companies each with their own business mentor, devising practical solutions to local crime, including knife crime, and anti-social behaviour issues. The programme gave the participants the opportunity to contribute to the safety of their community at the same time as teaching them the basics of running a business.

The challenge was funded by the Safer Haringey Partnership and was co-ordinated by Prudential 4 Youth (a partnership between Crime Concern and Prudential).

All of the young people who took part were a credit to their school and demonstrated the positive impact that they can have on their community. The feasibility of implementing their ideas is being examined by the Community Safety Team.

Schools against Weapons and Territorialism

All secondary schools have been given the opportunity to apply for funding to develop projects about weapons and territorialism. Seven schools and the Sixth Form Centre submitted successful applications for projects that aim to:

- engage secondary school students in debates about weapons and territorialism; engage young people to be 'message givers' around weapons and territorialism; introduce the concept of Crimestoppers to secondary schools in Haringey