

BRIEFING TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Report Title: Council Motions

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1. Knife Crime

1.1 Background:

At the Council meeting on 10th July 2019 , the following motion was presented by the Youth Council:

“In the Year up to March 2018, in a report by the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS), analysis of knife crime figures showed that the number of fatal stabbings in England and Wales was at its highest level since 1946. With just less than 5,000 young people, aged 10 to 17, cautioned or convicted of a knife related crime and an 45% increase in the number of people, aged 16 to 24, that had been a victim of knife crime, it appears to be at epidemic levels.

It must be mentioned as well that this is not a London based problem as suggested by some media. Thankfully the report showed Oldham was not in the top ten when looking at numbers of homicides per 100,000 population, however, other North West areas were in the top 10 rankings of ‘worst place for killings’.

In our 2018 Make Your Mark consultation, 2,167 young people voted to ‘Put an End to Knife Crime’ as their number one issues that needs to be tackled in Oldham. This was the top issue, coming higher than ending homelessness and equal pay for equal work. Given this was voted by our constituents we have made this a priority. As such Oldham Youth Council wanted to dig deeper into this issue so used 10-forward survey, going out into our communities to consult with young people to find out why they feel knife crime is an issue and what can be done to reduce it.

Our surveys would suggest that most of Oldham’s young people do not carry bladed weapons, but 14% of respondents did admit to having carried a knife. Half of these suggested they carried a knife for legitimate reasons, such as for Duke of Edinburgh Award or for eating their lunches, but the other half felt they needed it for protection. If this result is suggestive of the numbers of young people carrying bladed weapons it would seem to be much higher than the number of young people cautioned or convicted, which represents less than 1% of the 10 to 17-year-old population. The survey responses also showed that nearly 40% of young people knew someone who had carried a knife.

While this doesn't give an indication of levels of knife crime it may suggest that young people who do carry knives or bladed weapons are happy to share this fact to brag or intimidate, which, may lead to more fear in young people and a need for protection that they assume a knife brings.

Those who don't carry knives were concerned that they could be arrested and that they could be injured by carrying knives. This would appear to show that current awareness and education is working for young people but probably only for those who wouldn't pick up knives anyway. We as Oldham Youth Council have pledged to work with local schools and Oldham Council to help develop that training to keep getting the message across but also try and mitigate any fears coming from moral panics around knife crime.

We wanted to flip the questioning on its head by asking why most young people do not carry knives. The biggest response was that young people didn't need to because they felt safe. This leads us to conclude that it is a perception of places being unsafe rather than real lived experience that leads young people to carrying weapons.

Therefore, we feel that work needs to be done, with young people, to challenge the misconception portrayed across the media that UK streets are dangerous. In working with young people to show that Oldham is a safe place to live, work and go to school we would hope to challenge the minority of young people that carry bladed weapons and prevent others from taking up knives.

Indeed, participants indicated that they felt that safety should come from adult support. Responses asked for a higher Police presence, not just to catch criminals but to engage the community. They suggested that organisations, such as the Police and Local Authority, should work with young people outside of the classroom to divert them from any potential negative behaviours, but also engage young people to help them feel safe and prevent the perceived need to carry knives. They asked for support from organisations, to provide places to go where they can receive help, advice and information as well as alternative positive activities to dissuade them from involvement in knife crime. We as Oldham Youth Council recognise the benefits of young people engaging with adults, especially professionals whose role it is to work with and support young people. Recently the All-Parliamentary Group for Youth Affairs reported that the loss of youth services has contributed to the rise in knife crime, plus, that youth work provides a safe environment and a qualified youth worker to build trust and de-escalate conflict. The Report highlighted that those authorities where cuts to youth services were the largest had the biggest increases in knife crime related incidents.

We want Oldham to be a safe place for all, we want Oldham to ensure that all our children and young people are given every opportunity to grow up in a town where they can thrive and where they can reach their full potential.

We recognise that young people need access to high quality youth opportunities. Opportunities that enhance life chances, provide learning and development and enable young people to become positive and active citizens.

We propose that Oldham Council recognises that Oldham is committed to providing quality support and opportunities for all its young people and we ask that Oldham Council carry out an overview and scrutiny of the current youth offer across Oldham to ensure there is a broad range of high quality activities available to all young people, that are accessible, regardless of where they live.”

1.2 Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Board is requested to determine how to proceed with the resolution.

2. Making a Commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

2.1 At the Council meeting on 10th July 2019, the following motion was debated:

“Council welcomes the UK Government’s commitment to the delivery of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the world community at the United Nations in September 2015. The goals form part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which seeks to eradicate extreme poverty, address inequality and injustice, and promote sustainable development and peace.

The goals are to:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development
Wishing to replicate the UK Government's position on the goals, this Council resolves to make a similar commitment to their delivery, as far as is practicable and within its power and resources, and calls upon the Health and Overview and Scrutiny Boards to identify the work that is already being done by the Council and its partners and what more can be done, and to present a report with its finding and recommendations to a future meeting of full Council."

2.2 Recommendation

The Overview and Scrutiny Board is requested to determine how to proceed with the resolution.