

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Thursday, 12th March, 2020

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Cusworth, R. Elliott, Keenan, Napper, Taylor and Walsh.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Jepson and Mallinder.

154. WELCOME FROM COUNCILLOR STEELE, CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Councillor Steele welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board which was once again supporting the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge (CCTOC) by working with Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC). It was positive to have so many young people there, with many new faces who Members had not worked with before.

155. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillors Allen, Beck, Hoddinott, Lelliott and Watson

Haider Ashiq, Haleema Mubash-Shirah, Aaban Shah and Alex White (Rotherham Youth Cabinet)

Danielle Spencer (SYP), Pepe Di'lasio, Sally Hodges and Tom Smith (RMBC)

156. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER TAKEOVER CHALLENGE SPOTLIGHT REVIEW ON YOUNG CARERS

The Chair reported that this agenda item had been deferred until either June or July 2020.

Amaan Saqlain from Rotherham Youth Cabinet assumed the chair of the meeting.

157. INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION FROM ROTHERHAM YOUTH CABINET - HATE CRIME

Josie and Sam from Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC) provided a short introduction about the group. It was comprised of young people aged 11-18 years old who lived or studied in Rotherham. They provided a voice for young people to represent them in the community and felt passionate

about the issues facing young people. Their aim was to work around these issues to improve the lives of each and every individual young person. The theme of hate crime had been chosen by RYC as it had emerged in the top three issues following the "Make Your Mark" consultation with young people.

158. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH OFFICERS AND PARTNERS

1 Had any of you ever been the victim of a hate incident or hate crime and how was it dealt with?

Three of the witnesses related personal experiences of being a victim of a hate crime/incident. One had reported it to South Yorkshire Police (SYP) who had taken it seriously and dealt with it but without a resolution at that time. Another had experienced hate incidents a number of times, especially cyber-crime through emails, which the police had been dealing with and actively trying to resolve. Young people were advised to report it if they were being targeted. The third had been a few years ago and the incident had been dealt with through a local resolution as it had been fairly low level and a case of needing to educate the person rather than real maliciousness.

In terms of how police officers would deal with hate crimes against themselves, it would still be a victim led process as with members of the public but incidents would be dealt with accordingly. Some might be low level, for example if the perpetrator was drunk with no real meaning behind it but in other cases where officers were racially abused or abused by their sexuality, that would be taken further and the hate element included and taken into consideration. Offences would be dealt by whichever means to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion.

2 How quickly would there be a response from South Yorkshire Police to a victim when an incident had been reported and what was done to keep people in the loop about what was happening whilst a hate crime/incident was being investigated?

SYP hoped to respond very quickly and the protocol called for a response within 24 hours, although that was not always possible. An incident log would be created, the incident allocated to an officer and a plan agreed with the victim in terms of the frequency for contacting them about what was happening, which varied greatly from person to person.

Reassurance was given that it was viewed as serious and a high level priority, as a joint partnership issue. Part of the performance dashboard in relation to preventing hate crime in Rotherham showed that numbers reported increased following a drive to encourage reporting. This was good but people needed to see that something was being done about it, such as finding the perpetrators and getting them in the Criminal Justice System if required.

3a What training was in place for Police Officers so they understood all the issues involved so they were effective in recording and handling cases?

All new police officers received specific input on hate crime awareness and there was a lot more to it than people tended to think. The Hate Crime Coordinator delivered some officer training. Refreshers were also in place for long standing officers. Within RMBC it was a similar approach and a corporate process had been put in place for staff to report incidents, either experienced themselves or if victims reported something to them. RYC probed more deeply into the refresher training for police officers. This was considered important and could be via an online training package which officers could complete between jobs. This was quite effective as it did not take them away from the work for too long as it could be done in stages. Fairly regular refreshers covered all aspects of policing, such as the law and legislative changes, to ensure officers were up to date. All new officers were given in-depth training in the early stages of their career and hopefully they took that with them and used that learning on a weekly basis. It was shown in some of the crime reports and the way that officers dealt with issues.

3b Was there representativeness and diversity within South Yorkshire Police and investigation teams?

South Yorkshire Police was a diverse organisation; however, it did need more representation from certain ethnic groups. The workforce included Black and Minority Ethnic officers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans officers and disabled officers. The key was to remain diverse and inclusive and to improve.

3c I would like to ask about any measures and procedures in place to tackle any discrimination that may already exist within the police force?

As SYP was an all-inclusive organisation the hope was that there was no discrimination within the force and that if there was it would be challenged very quickly. No particular examples could be given but more Black and Minority Ethnic officers and female officers were on the promotion ladder and more disabled people working within the organization than ever before.

4 What happened in schools to raise awareness and educate young people around Hate Crime and also within the community, for example to counter any fears that people had about others who were not the same as them?

The Hate Crime Co-ordinator reported that schools could be quite difficult to get into and in part this was due to fears around Ofsted inspection outcomes if things did not look so good. Nevertheless, SYP had been

into quite a few schools within the area, predominantly secondaries and colleges, rather than primaries, perhaps 40-45%. They offered a bespoke training and awareness package aimed at young people and as a Crown Prosecution Service training pack had also been distributed to all schools some may choose to do that first.

It was acknowledged that young people had greater understanding than people of his generation and were more aware and more accepting. Many people think they knew what hate crime was but it was more than racism. It was a matter of opening people's eyes and getting them to think more deeply about what things meant and the fact that inside people were all the same.

The officer was happy to go into any school to work with students but also with young people who ended up being affected, such as offenders or perpetrators of hate crime issues. Rather than starting to prosecute people of a young age, they could be offered one to one education sessions as part of their community resolution/restorative justice. It was important that people understood what words meant and they did not always appreciate the effect on other people.

The Chair of Rotherham Schools Forum said no incidents had been reported at her school, which was a primary, but they had a mechanism in place. In primaries issues would be covered in the PHSE curriculum and there was also anti-bullying week, so opportunities were there to feed in on impact. Work could take place with secondary colleagues to make the links to support preventative work.

Coordination and links were also in place between this work and that in schools around harms of hate. There had been work with people expressing more extreme views, who were at risk of being manipulated and taken down the wrong route, before it became a major issue, with a written remedy process.

The Community Safety Officer confirmed the importance of enforcement but qualified this by saying how it needed to be appropriate and proportionate, with education and awareness raising also needed. The young people linked this back to freedom of speech versus hate speech, commenting that if people's views were suppressed this could lead to them becoming shut off and that people's opinions could not be controlled but could be challenged.

5 What could be put in place to ensure young people have anonymity when reporting hate incidents?

Anonymity when reporting made it difficult to deal with reported incidents or crimes, for either a prosecution or an educational programme. If a crime had been committed and the person who reported did so anonymously it would never get past the Crown Prosecution Service to take to a prosecution without anybody there making a complaint. It was

appreciated that for some people anonymity was important, which in Rotherham had led to the creation of a simple email address called Operation Solar where people could send an email about a hate crime or hate incident totally anonymously. Messages to this email address were used as intelligence by SYP.

The Community Safety Officer gave a very simple message: “report, report, report” to help build the local picture. He referred to incidents at a public house that had been reported anonymously and this led to interventions that had solved the problem without anyone being named.

6 Media reporting and coverage varies depending on the personal characteristics of the victim and perpetrator, how do we stop this happening and do you think our local press are guilty of this?

The media had a job to do to create headlines but the way they presented some of those headlines created negativity in many cases and had a knock on effect. One example given that was used in awareness raising presentations was the way in which the media portrayed issues regarding ISIS. This created division and hatred so it was a case of trying to educate people that it was a very small group of people involved. Media coverage made it more difficult to tackle and was hard to control but those headlines needed to be challenged. People needed to think about the way things were written and to recognise that things were not necessarily true as presented. There was perhaps a tendency for people to buy the newspapers that reported what they wanted to hear.

The young people inquired if any regular meetings took place with the local press, or if there had been any challenge, particularly as quite often negative stories appeared. Good news tended to be smaller and less prominent. SYP Command Team had met with the press and challenged them as they needed to take responsibility for what they wrote but they also needed to build that relationship with the press.

In terms of far right and terrorist reports, there would be headlines in the news in relation to events elsewhere. If the police identified something as terrorist-related it should be reported as such and if not, it should not be, as it could have a negative, far reaching impact within local communities. Identification of issues quickly was key and make sure the right messages were sent out to the communities.

Following up, the question was asked as to whether the media could actually provoke hate crimes or prompt action from people. Probably not was the response but there was a feeling that the media could manipulate the way people thought about certain aspects and the way that people treated people who were different to themselves. Different media reported issues in very different ways, for example immigration and migration. It was deemed important to challenge perceptions and to ensure the correct terms were used to describe issues.

7 How do you distinguish between an act of terrorism and a hate crime or hate incident such as in the case of the recent stabbing in a London Mosque?

This came down to the mindset of the perpetrator and what they intended when they set out to do something. A terrorist act could also be a hate crime but a hate crime did not necessarily have to be a terrorist act, so it depended on the person's intentions. A terrorist act would be recorded as a hate crime if it had targeted somebody for their specific beliefs or other characteristics. Information needed to go out to the public but it had to be the correct information. The incident referred to has quickly been ruled out as a terrorist attack so information behind that had led to that conclusion.

With regard to procedures for dealing with terrorist incidents compared with hate incidents, it was difficult to answer as in a terrorist incident ground level police would have very little involvement, other than at the start, as it would be dealt with by specialist departments.

8 Many people feared using public transport, what was being done to help this?

SYP were not receiving many reports of people in fear of using public transport although they were aware of some incidents. They worked closely with all the transport companies within South Yorkshire, who all had a training package on recognising and identifying incidents and how to deal with them. The British Transport Police had dedicated transport officers.

Reference was made to an issue that had been happening on buses which had been dealt with successfully. Although the number of incident reports was low probable under-reporting was acknowledged and again young people were encouraged to report any incidents.

9 Following the CSE in Rotherham, there have been incidents of hate crime directed at Taxi Drivers, what systems are in place to support this within RMBC and the Police?

As RYC were aware the Council had recently undertaken a review of its private hire licensing policy and people's views on this had fed into the consultation around the development of that policy. Taxi drivers were very clear in relation to experiencing incidents at significant levels and also in some cases the families of people who drive taxis were feeling in danger and seeing hate crimes and victimisation as a result of their association with taxi drivers.

In 2015 the policy had been changed and at that time probably centred on protecting the public. Now the policy would be much more focused around protecting individual drivers as well as the public after listening to what the trade, family groups and another representative groups had to

say. The Council were looking to further enhance the camera systems within licensed vehicles. They were also placing a duty on taxi companies that they would have to act in a way that did not encourage discrimination in any way. For example, if somebody were to ring a taxi firm and ask for a driver who was White British, the expectation would be for that request to be refused by the company.

Licensing worked closely with the police and there had been instances where camera footage had been requested by the police and provided speedily, which allowed the apprehension of the offender. Such information had been used in prosecutions and ensured conviction of the offender for quite nasty offences against taxi drivers. Signage within vehicles was also being looked at and possibly a warning inside the car might be appropriate to make it clear that people were being video recorded and that any behaviour taking place in that vehicle which could be perceived as a crime, be it hate crime or any other kind of crime, would be referred to the police by the Council.

Taxi drivers were encouraged to report hate crime. One of the requirements to being a taxi driver was to attend safeguarding training and that included hate crime - recognising the signs of hate crime and how to report it but also how to act if you were a victim of hate crime whilst driving the taxi. Other suggestions were welcomed but the view was that progress had been made.

RYC commented that within parts of the community there was a perception that taxi licensing in the Council was racist and the young people queried how this was being addressed to combat those perceptions. Assurance was given that action would be taken if any staff acted in this way but there was no evidence to show that people had acted in a racist manner and public records existed of decisions and the reasons why they had been taken. A system of checks and balances was in place to make sure decisions were correct and any decision to revoke a licence was taken by a group of five Elected Members not by individual officers. Following such a decision there was the opportunity to go through an appeal process, with the decision reviewed by the Magistrates Court in the first instance and overturned if there was any suggestion it was wrong.

Further assurance was provided from the Cabinet portfolio holder for equality that zero tolerance existed regarding any form of discrimination within the Council and any examples would result in strict action. Clearly there was a need to engage with the community to address these perceptions and it was important to work with the taxi trade to ensure balance, transparency and accountability. If there were any examples these should be brought forward for investigation.

10 What specific work was being done in Rotherham on disability related hate crime?

Disability was one of the strands that was probably most under-reported, again because in many cases people did not understand that what was happening to them was hate crime. The SYP Hate Crime Co-ordinator worked with many disability groups in Rotherham and delivered awareness raising with staff and service users and assured people they would be listened to if they reported. Not all disabilities were visible, for example autism or learning disability, hence the importance of the police working with their support groups.

A new South Yorkshire wide Autism Alert card had recently been introduced for people on the autistic spectrum or awaiting diagnosis. The card included details about the person, their particular traits of autism and how best to communicate with them. People could register their card with the police who would then know straight away who the person was and what they needed to be aware of that would cause the person distress. For learning disabilities as well police officers were aware of how to speak with people and would use easy read documents or diagrams to explain things and provide reassurance.

For schools it came down to prevention and to accepting differences and diversity in education. Most primary schools had a very clear taught curriculum that addressed those things, in addition to plenty of opportunity for children to informally debate and consider things experienced in their own lives. This would equip them with the tools and understanding of the wider world and the issues that other people beyond themselves experience.

One of the young people reported that someone had been to Winterhill School to talk about hate crime and had included disability. One of the examples given was of a blind person shopping with their carer and the staff just completely ignored the customer as if they were not there and spoke only with the carer, even about the nature of the person's disability.

Officers were asked what was in place to support people with sensory disabilities. It was agreed this was very depersonalising for the person involved and overlooking somebody in the manner described did make it seem personal and even embarrassing in many cases. SYP would hope their officers were suitably trained to understand that a person had a condition that would prevent them from carrying out some functions that the rest of us just took for granted. It was difficult to educate everybody and more difficult in the private sector than the public sector but education and awareness raising needed to continue.

11 We had chosen Hate Crime as one of our campaigns this year as a lot of young people raised it as an issue, what could we as young people do to help support improving the situation in Rotherham?

The SYP Hate Crime Co-ordinator reiterated his earlier point about young people having a better understanding of many issues than older generations did when they were of a similar age. This sent out a very

positive message as they were the generation making decisions in the future and with the right attitude and right ideas now that would be shared with the next generation. It was vitally important for young people who had witnessed or experienced something to come forward and report it and if not confident enough to do so directly, through one of the third party reporting centres. Another important message was “don't be a bystander” - challenge if something was not right.

Although the question had not been asked about how many hate crimes occurred every month in Rotherham the answer was SYP didn't know as there were so many that went unreported, either because people felt it was not important or they lacked the confidence to report it or they did not want anything to happen about it. Reported hate crimes ranged from 40 to 60 per month but there were no real patterns and then there were incidents in addition.

As RYC had clearly identified hate crime as a priority the young people were encouraged to tell Licensing if they thought the service had got things wrong or had suggestions for how things could be done better, either directly or through the Youth Cabinet. Feedback was welcomed on issues from the community regarding licensing decisions and to build that confidence.

Cllr Alam appreciated that the focus of the young people was on social justice and equality and suggested that the RYC could potentially forge links with the Independent Hate Crime Panel and for young people's views to be captured through engagement with the police and Council.

RYC felt that young people should speak up about it a great deal in a way that shocked people and brought about action from organisations.

12 What were the police doing to help repair relationships with other ethnic groups and between them and the police?

The police liked to work with Rotherham's communities and the local community policing teams went in to speak with lots of different community groups. Some people did have a big fear and mistrust of the police; therefore, the onus was on the police to ensure they were breaking down those barriers and building bridges between our many communities and they had been out to many different groups and schools. There were also issues within communities and inter-group issues. Proactive work had taken place at one particular school and the students have been out doing six week mini projects and workshops with Rotherham United Community Sports Trust, looking at differences but more importantly similarities between different community groups. In addition to sports and beat boxes, work was done around team and trust building with everybody together.

13 Young people spent a lot of time online and it was becoming quite popular to make very offensive jokes regarding race, disability and

sexual orientation. Was the procedure any different from any other type of complaint?

Cyber or online hate crime and online bullying were becoming more prevalent as people could sit and hide behind their keyboard. Online hate crime was treated exactly the same as other forms of hate crime and was just as serious as face to face. One difficulty was people committing these offences could be in different countries. People believed they could not be traced but IP addresses from computers and phone numbers could be traced and with social media on phones people could screen capture evidence. Where physically possible the police would follow up and deal with it. Specialist departments dealt with the technological side if necessary, to interrogate systems.

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Family Engagement commented that policy under the legislation allowed a zero tolerance approach to discrimination but there was still a need to work with people and to educate people in order to create an inclusive, cohesive society. There was no textbook about how to do that work and he believed it started with each individual and their own journey. He was keen to spend time looking at those issues as opposed to the reporting side. It was about how to start to challenge thresholds on education and understanding.

Colleagues in the past may have displayed unacceptable behaviours but if you stuck with people and worked with them you could change people. It was how to strike that balance which was a challenge and there were various skills and approaches and everyone had their own individual values.

Rotherham United did some amazing work, particularly around racism, along with the Football League and some national programmes, as did the voluntary and community sector. If this work programme were to continue thought was needed about ways to involve them.

In terms of CYPS a number of specific “interest in identity groups” including LGBT+, disability, and Black and Minority Ethnic groups were established, although on one level it was a shame such services were still needed to support people. Several of these groups created a safe space for some people in the short term until they felt confident to challenge. It was vital to work with those groups as well because there would be significant learning from their experiences. He was happy to follow this up if people wished to take it further.

14 About the training, was there something that set out kind of a line between hate crime and banter or a joke?

Banter was not a word that the SYP Hate Crime Co-ordinator liked and he was aware that people making hateful comments towards others tried to pass them off as banter and a joke when they were really not. As police officers dealt with some pretty grim things, without a sense of humour they

would find it difficult to get through a lot of days, but it could be a fine line to when banter overstepped the mark. If somebody was receiving so called banter because of their race, religion, disability or sexuality that was not acceptable and needed to be challenged as it was very different to mean comments about being either a Sheffield United or a Sheffield Wednesday fan.

On the Rotherham United Community Sports Trust website was a project he had done with them looking at the five protected characteristics of hate crime. Five video clips were filmed which looked at hate crime from a different angle, from an angle of banter when banter became not funny anymore.

15 In some circumstances when introducing hate crime and how it is wrong to young people, wouldn't you agree that maybe sending someone of the same age, or around the same age, as the age group you're trying to get the attention of would be better than sending someone who was quite a bit older than them?

That could have more of an impact as you could get them to explain it in the terms of those in the target group and the messages might get across more readily?

Maybe you could introduce some form of youth police so that young offenders of hate crime could actually be informed by people their age instead of people much older?

The question would be having people suitably versed and knowledgeable in the specific subject to do that who were of a similar age, as it was quite an in depth subject. People had been young themselves and knew what it was like to be a young person. In terms of the sessions delivered in schools by the SYP Hate Crime Coordinator, they were quite specifically aimed at young people and interactive and he was willing to go into any schools as many times as needed.

The Assistant Director recognised the challenge around the idea in terms of knowledge and experience of what could be called peer educators but felt that young people could work alongside some of the adults, having that combined experience and knowledge. Support would be needed for young people to be able to do that, both in collaboration or until the point where they had the trust and confidence to be able to do that work themselves. OSMB members were supportive and although it might not be able to replace the training that was being delivered it could add value.

The Chair of Rotherham Schools Forum was really interested in peer mentoring education in primary school, perhaps with slightly older children talking to the older primary children with the power of hearing something from a child or a young person. If anybody who was a victim of hate crime was brave enough with support to share that information with children in her school that would deliver a far more powerful message about the

impact of that behaviour than from their class teacher speaking about it in the abstract. It was a good idea to follow up after the meeting.

Amaan thanked everyone for their comments and said it had been great listening to the questions from RYC colleagues and answers from partners, who he would look forward to working with in the future.

The Governance Advisor outlined the next steps which would be to type up the notes from the very good questions asked and then to liaise with RYC in terms of any formal recommendations they would wish to make to the Council and partners for a response. Some points that had emerged were highlighted that could be the basis for recommendations:

- More liaison between primary and secondary schools
- Continuing dialogue with young people
- Links to the Independent Hate Crime Panel
- Feeding back from the community around licensing
- Work with peer educators or peer mentors

Cllr Steele said it had been a fantastic meeting again with some good contributions made and excellent questions from the RYC, especially their follow up questions. He guaranteed that this would be followed up with the review report to come back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. It was a great cause for the young people to focus on as racism, which was learned not inherent, should be challenged and nobody should put up with any kind of hate crime. Officers and Councillors also needed to be challenged if the young people did not believe they had got things right. Everyone was thanked for their attendance and officers thanked for their excellent contributions

159. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be held on Wednesday 18 March 2020, commencing at 11.00 a.m.