

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 10 January 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ben Curran (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Sue Auckland, Michelle Cook, Dawn Dale, Keith Davis, Roger Davison, Terry Fox, Mark Jones, George Lindars-Hammond, Karen McGowan, Zahira Naz, Kaltum Rivers and Richard Shaw

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anne Murphy.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

4.1 There were no public questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

**5. GUN AND KNIFE CRIME SCRUTINY REVIEW**

5.1 Prior to the meeting, an open information gathering and input to scrutiny session was held as part of the Scrutiny Committee Review on “Gun and Knife Crime in Sheffield – Has the City got it right when it comes to reducing gun and knife crime in Sheffield?”

5.2 The Chair, Councillor Ben Curran, said that following on from the afternoon session, he had invited Saeed Brasab and Will Mason to address the Committee.

5.3 Saeed Brasab introduced himself, stating that he was based in Broomhall and was a volunteer at the Unity Gym which was situated on Wellington Street. He said he had become involved in the charity in 2009 following the death of a young man involved in a drive-by shooting incident. He said that the Unity Gym Project was a registered charity that had been established in the inner city ward of Broomhall in 2010. He added that the Project was committed to community development and the promotion of health and wellbeing by seeking to engage with vulnerable young people and adults who don't always wish to access mainstream services. The aim was to help them make positive life choices and take ownership of their own future development.

5.4 Will Mason, a Lecturer at Sheffield University, was also a volunteer at the Gym. He said that the Project was hoping to do more, due to the increase in youth violence, and was looking at ways to prevent these crimes and also to offer support to the victims and their families after attacks. Will Mason said that he had visited a young person and his family after an attack and had found that often very little support had been given to victims and felt that this was something that needed to be addressed. Research has shown that 16 to 24 year olds were most affected by violent crime and whilst support was given to under 18 year olds, after that age, no support was given and this needed to be addressed. He said that smaller services embedded within communities were trusted rather than larger organisations, but more still needed to be done. Will Mason believed that there were two key factors in tackling anti-social behaviour and violent crime, these being:–

- Education – a lot of research points to school engagement, keeping children in school, rather than exclusions, was important.
- Poverty – a driving pattern of those involved in violence lived in poverty and this needed to be addressed.

5.5 Saeed Brasab and Will Mason stated that, through ongoing consultation with young people, they had found that it is the young people themselves that know more about what's happening. They had learned that young people put up their own individual barriers, or when in public places, sit with their backs to the wall, or when someone innocently runs past them, they automatically guard themselves against attack.

5.6 Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, and responses were given as follows:-

- One-to-one mentoring sessions had helped young people get the most out of life. Each young person seeking help have had their own personal mentor to tailor support according to their needs and help them gain confidence, attend extra-curricular activities, improve attendance in education, gain qualifications, socialise with other young people etc. However, whether a formal Mentor Qualification would prove to be a good thing would need to be properly assessed, as it was important to attain high quality mentoring relationships. The Mentoring aspect to the Project was crucial, to be able to work with a child and get to know the family and offer as much support as necessary. It was a constant challenge and sometimes the experience could be overwhelming.
- The Unity Gym Project worked in partnership with Sheffield Futures, and also had dialogue with South Yorkshire Police and the Neighbourhood Policing Team and an element of trust had been established between those agencies and those who attended the Gym.
- The Gym was open to everyone, not just those resident in the Broomhall area and a mix of different ages, cultures, backgrounds, etc.

- Those affected by trauma are sometimes the ones that don't access the services they so desperately need to offer them encouragement to live a positive and productive life.
- Training at the Gym provides routine and discipline, factors that are needed to be stronger and healthier both physically and mentally.
- Attendees at the Unity Gym were predominantly male but some young girls do attend and it has been acknowledged that females also have issues. Whilst a few might feel intimidated by an organised visit by Councillors, many would welcome the opportunity to share their experiences with them and other organisations.
- The Project has a lot of support from Sheffield Futures and it was felt important that the City Council, the Youth Services and local businesses were all involved and worked together to offer prevention, education and support wherever it was needed.
- It was felt that there was mixed terminology with regard to the public health approach to tackling serious violence, advocated by the World Health Organisation. Whilst extensive research to understand the approaches taken in Glasgow, where a long-term public health approach to tackling serious violence has been in place for more than a decade and has delivered large reductions in violent crime, there was some concern as to whether it would work if adopted in England. The causes of violent crime have been many years in the making and a long term solution will be needed to cut the levels of such crime, and the necessary resources need to be put in place to tackle it.
- Will Mason has visited Leeds to study their approach to tackling violent crime and feels there may be lessons to be learned from the work they do.

5.8 Councillor Curran thanked Saeed Brasab and Will Mason for attending the meeting and outlining the valuable work they were doing as part of the Unity Gym Project.

5.8 Alice Nicholson, Policy and Improvement Officer, gave a brief overview of the afternoon session that had taken place. She stated that she had taken notes and would produce a report following on from this. She asked Members what more could be done as a Committee; was there a need for more activity to be undertaken during February, whether as a whole or in smaller groups; that visits could be arranged to Sheffield Futures, the Unity Gym and Mums United.

5.9 One of the main factors arising from the open session and discussion that followed was children missing education for one reason or another. Members asked a number of questions and raised the following issues:-

- How many children were not in education either through exclusion or not attending at all?
- How many children were home schooled and what level of qualifications are

- gained from home schooling?
  - How were children monitored who were home schooled?
  - Was the Children, Young People and Families Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee looking into knife crime?
- 5.10 Alice Nicholson informed Members that there was an overlap between the remits of the two Scrutiny Committees and along with other Policy and Improvement Officers, both this and the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Committees would look at ways of working together to deal with this issue.

## **6. WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19**

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, to which was attached the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19 for Members' consideration.
- 6.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the Work Programme as detailed in the report.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 7.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 at 5.00 p.m., in the Town Hall.