

Opposition Priority Business – Council 14 June 2017

Tonight we will discuss Opposition Priority Business (OPB) on knife crime in our Borough. The purpose of OPB is for the 2nd largest party to bring forward issues to debate that are of importance to the local community. Knife crime over the last 3 months has become a regular occurrence in Enfield with 3 incidents recently happening in one week. That is why it is the subject of OPB this evening. When certain crimes happen frequently people can begin to dismiss them as normality, but as elected Members we have a duty to our community to respond to challenges of this nature.

Enfield has experienced 6 incidents of knife crime since April 2017:

- 17th May – Bush Hill Park;
- 14th May – Ponders End Tesco;
- 13th May – Dharma Centre;
- 2nd May – Cowper Gardens;
- 26th April – Charlton Road;
- 22nd April – Exeter Road.

These crimes are destroying the lives of the victims' families and having a devastating effect on our community. We know Enfield is a wonderful borough to live in with many jewels in its crown, but this level of crime is spoiling its reputation. We owe it to our Borough to work together to tackle this important issue. We could this evening just spend 45 min with the Conservative Group blaming the Labour Mayor of London and the Labour Administration with the Labour Group criticising the Conservative Government. But that would be a wasted exercise and it is doubtful whether our residents given the significance of the issue would thank us much if we did. The public want action to address these deep seated problems not just local elected representatives playing the blame game.

Unfortunately, we have been here before. In 2008 following a similar spate of violent crimes, the Council set up a bi-partisan Scrutiny Commission called Improving Life Opportunities for Young people in Enfield. The Commission reported in 2009 with a detailed report setting out a wide range of recommendations regarding Care and Support within the Family, Housing, Health Care, Education and Attainment, Leisure, Work, safety and security, supporting the Third Sector and improving the Inclusion of Disengaged and Alienated Communities. Times have moved on and the Council's structures have changed and resources are under greater pressure, but in our view a major effort is required again by the Council, the Police and other statutory agencies to re-examine its approach to the problems of Youth alienation and breakdown.

When there are national emergencies normally all parties in the House of Commons stand together. This is a Borough emergency and both parties in this chamber need to work together alongside partners and political colleagues to promote more action to reduce violent crime by gangs and young people generally. The Conservative Group acknowledges that responsibility for tackling crime sits with other levels of government, the Labour controlled Greater London Authority and the United Kingdom Parliament with a Conservative Government. This is why both political

groups need to be united on tackling knife crime in order to try and get the best for our community.

We need to create a new strategy of action to highlight the problems Enfield is facing with key stakeholders in order to canvass support for more resources. We should engage further with the Metropolitan Police, the Greater London Authority, Members of Parliament, and if need be try to communicate further with Ministers. The strategy should also include ways to increase closer working between agencies and schools and improving young people's belief that they are safe and secure in Enfield. As a Council we should endeavour to play a greater part in tackling knife crime as the number of incidents is too alarming for us to stand back and carry on as we have been doing.

The Conservative Group's recommendations are as follows:

1. A joint public meeting with the Borough Commander and community leaders to discuss recent knife crime levels and give reassurance to the community that work is being undertaken;
2. Establish a cross-party Council Commission with partners to examine the recent knife attacks in Enfield;
3. Write to the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, co-signed by our Members of Parliament to review the recruitment and deployment of officers in Enfield to reflect the changing demographic profile of the Borough, increase in population and crime levels;
4. Meet with Deputy Mayor for Policing, Sophie Linden, to discuss further measures that can be delivered in Enfield that will have a positive effect on reducing knife crime;
5. Encourage schools, youth services, FE colleges and young people's organisations to work closely with the Police;
6. Young people and adults should feel safe and secure wherever they are. But there are too many people who do not feel safe on Enfield streets, online, or at home. We need to build confidence by delivering a communications campaign for young people about feeling safer in our community.

Councillor Joanne Laban – Leader of the Opposition Party