

## **LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BOARD**

**25 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **LSCSB UPDATE: OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

#### **Background**

1. At the previous Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board (LSCSB) meeting, in June, an action was taken to provide partners with an overview of the recent community engagement discussions carried out with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
2. Due to Covid-19 and the introduction of social distancing restrictions, the PCC has had to adapt and look at new approaches to the way he carries out his community engagement. This has largely meant utilising online platforms and increasing our digital capability. Since May 2020, as well as introducing a weekly blog, the PCC has hosted, several virtual What Matters To You (WMTY) discussions with representatives of the community.
3. The purpose of this report is to provide partners with an oversight of the key themes and challenges highlighted amongst faith leaders and young people during the online virtual WMTY engagement discussions.

#### **Faith Leaders**

4. On 4<sup>th</sup> June the PCC and the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) met with the leaders of the faith communities from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR). All of Leicestershire's major faiths were represented; including those from the Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Sikh communities.
5. Discussions centred around the challenges facing communities, as a result of Covid-19, and the concern around the recent death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA.

#### **Covid-19**

6. General frustration was felt and questions asked as to why shops were allowed to stay open but places of workshop were not.
7. The closures of places of workshop have greatly impacted on the celebration of religious festivals and restricted numbers at funerals, cremations and burials. This was a general cause for concern as well as how this was negatively

impacting on the wellbeing of the community members who were unable to pay their last respects to loved ones.

8. In addition, the loss of social contact has hit close-knit groups within the faith communities particularly hard. It was widely agreed, the sense of community and belonging was very important to the overall wellbeing. Particular reference was made to elderly members who rely on these groups and were now becoming increasingly isolated.
9. There was wide concern with regards to where members of the community could go for support around issues of domestic abuse or mental health now that the places of worship were closed. Members of the community usually turn to places of faith to obtain counselling and support. This option is no longer available to them.
10. Concerns around funding were raised. Places of worship are hugely reliant on donations to support vulnerable people. This has dramatically reduced due to the closures. MP Jane Hunt has raised the matter of funding to the Houses of Parliament.
11. On a positive note, collective praise was given to the joint collaboration of faith leaders and police in managing the closure of places of worship as sensitively as possible. It was agreed that this was likely to have largely contributed and helped to maintain community cohesion, during this difficult period.

#### Hate Crime

12. Concern was raised about the rise in hate crime and the impact locally due to the death of George Floyd. The DCC confirmed that the police had responded instantaneously by providing assurance and outreach to minority and BAME community groups following the tragic killing.
13. Rabbi Pink confirmed that there had been a rise in anti-Semitic incidents since Covid-19, which the police are dealing with. The Jewish community have set up a system to ensure that everyone continues to be linked in and supported.
14. Praise for the faith cell was given for helping to feedback work and bring it all back together.
15. While community tensions are harder to deal with and resolve due to not being able to discuss issues face to face, it was widely acknowledged that there were some really positive examples of communities coming together and supporting one another. It was pointed out that Leicester has always been a good example of positive relations between diverse populations.

## Young People

### Pre Covid-19

16. As part of the PCCs drive to increase engagement and hear the views of young people, time has been spent visiting and forming links with a range of projects that work with young people. These include: youth clubs, charities and social enterprises as well as central and locally funded government projects.
17. Initial conversations with both the managers of these projects and some of the young people themselves have proved positive. There is an appetite and keenness for both to be involved to increase the overall youth engagement with the OPCC and Violence Reduction Network (VRN). These informal conversations were held pre Covid-19 as part of a piece of work to look at and develop youth engagement.

### Current

18. To continue the work started before the introduction of social distancing measures, the PCC has held a number of Q&A sessions with youth council groups within both the city and county council and more recently with the newly formed group at Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.
19. The aim of the online discussion was to, not only, provide young people with a platform to raise their concerns, but for the PCC to hear the views of young people.
20. The common themes and questions raised across each of the youth groups were:
  - Youth Violence – how has this been effected across Leicester during lockdown?
  - Knife Crime – has there been a reduction?
  - Domestic Abuse – how are the PCC and police dealing with this?
  - Covid-19 Guidelines/Restrictions – what is being done to ensure that young people are aware and understand the guidelines?
  - Youth Engagement – how is the PCC actively seeking the views of young people and those who won't engage, especially in relation to the criminal justice system (CJS)?
  - Mental Health – a lot of young people feel isolated and are not able to access support services
  - Education – many have found it difficult to access work experience with many companies either not responding or are not set up to provide it. It is likely that this will be worse due to Covid-19. What opportunities

will there be for young people to carry out work experience or access apprenticeships?

21. It was acknowledged that a variety of social media platforms needed to be utilised in order for more young people to be reached and engaged with.
22. The PCC asked how widespread drug taking was amongst young people. All groups confirmed that drugs were widely available and easily accessible. Most agreed that peer pressure was largely responsible along with the types of circles you socialised in. Education via campaigns, schools and life experiences to show the effects of drug taking was seen as a good starting point.

### **Coming Year**

23. As we start to move in to recovery and social distancing restrictions ease; with schools re-opening and people start returning to work; the impact of Covid-19 is only just being realised. How will this look for our communities, and what do we need to do to support?
24. Another WMTY with faith leaders, the PCC and Chief Constable has been arranged for 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
25. A youth engagement strategy is currently being developed with the OPCC and VRN. Once completed this will require approval from the PCC. In the meantime, engagement with young people and linking in with various groups will continue.
26. Work is underway to develop the Legacy Programme which will mark the end of the current PCCs term of office. Areas of focus currently being developed and explored are: MUGA Courts, Ex-offenders Programme, Community Leadership Programme, People Zones, Exit Scheme.

### **Recommendations for the Board**

27. The Board to note the contents of the report.

### **Officer to Contact**

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