



## AGENDA

### SELECT COMMITTEE - KNIFE CRIME IN KENT

Thursday, 9th May, 2019, at 2.00 pm

Ask for: **Gaetano Romagnuolo**

Darent Room - Sessions House

Telephone **03000 416624** -  
**gaetano.romagnuolo@kent.gov.uk**

*Tea/Coffee will be available before the meeting*

#### Membership

Mr P V Barrington-King, Mrs S Chandler, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr A Cook, Mr P C Cooper, Mr D Farrell, Mr A R Hills, Mr K Pugh and Mr A M Ridgers

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

#### Item No

1. Election of Chair
2. Knife Crime in Kent Topic Review (Pages 3 – 16)

#### EXEMPT ITEMS

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts  
General Counsel

**Tuesday, 30 April 2019**

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By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)

To: Knife Crime Select Committee – 9 May 2019

Subject: Knife Crime Select Committee Topic Review

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To discuss and agree proposed Terms of Reference, timetable, potential witnesses and general approach for the Review

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## **1 Introduction**

At its meeting on 3 April the Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Select Committee would be established to carry out a focused review of Knife Crime in Kent which would submit its final report to County Council on 17 October 2019.

In accordance with the process set out in the Constitution, the Chairman designate, Mr Barrington-King, and Mr Chittenden and Mr Farrell met informally to develop the draft Terms of Reference, including the general nature of the expected outcomes for consideration by this Committee.

## **2 Draft Terms of Reference**

The Committee is invited to consider and approve the following draft Terms of Reference for the review. To assist Members a background briefing paper is attached as an Appendix to this report.

1. To examine the reasons behind the recent increases in knife crime offences in the county.
2. To consider current initiatives in Kent focused on addressing knife crime in the county.
3. To identify opportunities for KCC to help reduce the incidence and impact of knife crime in Kent.

### 3 Proposed Timetable (summary)

<b>17 April 2019</b>	Informal cross-party meeting for the Select Committee to discuss the Terms of Reference of the review
<b>8 May 2019</b>	Update to Scrutiny Committee
<b>9 May 2019</b>	First meeting of the Select Committee, to appoint the Chair and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review
<b>Early May to late May 2019</b>	Research and arrangements for hearing sessions and written evidence
<b>Mid June 2019</b>	Hearings, and the Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations (dates have been circulated to Members of the Committee and are available on the website)
<b>July 2019</b>	Report writing, production of first draft
<b>Late July 2019</b>	Informal meeting of the Committee to discuss the first draft of the report and suggest amendments
<b>Late July/early Aug*</b>	Draft report amended and agreed with the Chairman/Committee by email
<b>27 Aug 2019*</b>	Committee shares the draft report with Cabinet Member(s) and Corporate Director(s) – invite comments by email
<b>w/c 2 Sept</b>	Informal meeting of the Committee to consider comments and finalise report for publication
<b>w/c 9 Sept</b>	Select Committee's formal meeting to agree the final report
<b>18 September</b>	Despatch for Cabinet
<b>28 September</b>	<b>Report presented to Cabinet for comments</b>
<b>9 October</b>	Despatch for County Council
<b>17 October</b>	<b>Report presented to County Council for endorsement</b>

\*NB – Normally there would be an informal meeting of the Select Committee to agree the draft report to be shared with the Cabinet Member(s) and Director(s), and an informal meeting between the Committee and Cabinet Member(s) and Director(s) to hear their comments and decide whether to make any amendments to the report in light of these comments. In order to speed up the process these may need to be undertaken virtually (via email).

### 4 General Approach

The review is proposed to include a short period of desk-based research. Oral and written evidence from identified witnesses/organisations will be obtained during the course of the review. Once the Terms of Reference have been agreed there will be a press release issued by the Chairman of the Committee which will include a general request for written evidence.

## **5 Evidence Gathering – Hearings and written evidence**

To enable a brief, focused review, it is proposed that the Select Committee gathers oral evidence through about twelve hearing sessions of 45 minutes each over four half days. Hearings will normally be open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session due to the likely disclosure of exempt information.

It is proposed that Members of the Committee remain for about 20 minutes after each set of hearing sessions to ensure that all views, key points and emerging recommendations are captured.

This process will be followed by a session where the Committee will make its recommendations, and by the subsequent production of a short draft report for the Committee's consideration.

Details of suggested witnesses/organisations to invite to provide oral or written evidence are outlined below.

- KCC services that could provide relevant evidence and information in relation to knife crime include the following:
  - **Community Safety Team**, Kent County Council
  - **Troubled Families Programme**, Kent County Council
  - **0-25 Service**, Children, Kent County Council (in relation to elements of the Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021)
  - **Early Help and Preventative Services, Kent County Council** (in relation to 'contextual safeguarding')
  - **Trading Standards** service, Kent County Council
  - **Education Safeguarding Team**, Kent County Council
  - **Public Health**, Kent County Council
- **Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Kent Police force area**
- **Kent Police** (in relation to gangs-related crime. Also, Kent Police has launched a dedicated Kent campaign 'Don't let a knife take life' to tackle knife crime and highlight the risks of carrying a knife. The focus of the campaign is prevention, delivered through an education and support initiative, which has been designed to assist schools and youth groups to independently talk to students about knife crime)

- **Representatives of Kent schools/Kent Association of Headteachers**
- **Excelsior Safeguarding**, (in particular their work with primary schools. Excelsior Safeguarding is a 'not for profit' organisation established to provide effective help and support to vulnerable young people and adults affected by group violence, drugs and forms of exploitation such as human trafficking and extremism)
- **Uprising Youth** (Uprising Youth and Community is a charity based in Ashford, Kent, that aims to support young people, families, and communities facing significant challenges to achieve improvements in life, resulting in positive personal and community transformation)
- **Kent Youth County Council**
- **Refocus** (Refocus is a specialist crime prevention and early intervention charity now based in Dartford. The service has helped over 12,000 young people in 13 years, aged between 8 – 21 years old. Its mission is to “refocus “young people who are in danger of, or have already taken, a wrong turn in their lives, helping them to tackle the root causes of their behaviour)
- **KnifeCrimes.Org** (is a registered charity providing information and support to families and friends affected by serious violent crime, or bereaved, as a result of knife, gun and gang-related crime
- **No Knives, Better Lives**, (based in Scotland. Their projects include: online practitioner training packages, peer education training, educational toolkits for schools and youth work settings and a range of supporting resources from high-quality videos and animations to posters, leaflets, reports and evaluations – see <https://noknivesbetterlives.com/>)
- **Academics**, professionals, advisers and other witnesses who can make relevant contributions.
- **YMCA**
- Representatives of **Central Government** who can offer a national level perspective on knife crime
- **National Probation Service**
- Representatives of **other local authorities** that can provide examples of best practice
- **Scotland Violence Reduction Unit** (has a good track record of combating knife crime)
- Representatives of other **local organisations** working to deal with knife crime

## 6 Project Risks

The tight timescale necessitates a focused and rigorous approach to the review with an emphasis on identifying ways in which KCC can assist partner organisations to achieve positive outcomes and avoid duplication.

### 7 Recommendations:

1. To agree the Terms of Reference for the review and general approach, including the timetable as set out in paragraph 3, and sources of evidence - both written and oral - as set out in paragraph 5, with any additions agreed by the Committee.
2. The Committee acknowledges the good work already being undertaken by partner organisations to tackle knife crime, and the review will consider ways in which KCC can contribute to achieving positive outcomes.

### Contacts:

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**Kent County Council**  
**Select Committee – Knife Crime in Kent**  
**Briefing note – 9 May 2019**

After falling for several years, it appears that knife crime in England and Wales is rising again. The Home Office reports that there were 39,818 knife crime offences in the 12 months ending September 2018. This is a two-thirds increase from the low-point in the year ending March 2014, when there were 23,945 offences, and is the highest number since comparable data was compiled. These statistics do not include those from Greater Manchester Police because of data recording issues. Nonetheless, out of the 44 police forces, 42 recorded a rise in knife crime since 2011.<sup>1</sup>

**Hospital admissions for knife assaults**

Data from NHS hospitals in England over a similar period showed an 8% increase in admissions for assault by a sharp object, leading the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to conclude there had been a "real change" to the downward trend in knife crime. Doctors reported that the injuries they were treating were becoming more severe, and that the victims were getting younger, with increasing numbers of girls involved.<sup>2</sup>

**What crimes knives are used for**

In the latest figures released by the Home Office - which include only selected knife offences - about half (19,761) were assaults that caused an injury or where there was an intent to cause serious harm; a further 18,556 involved robberies.<sup>3</sup>

**Homicides committed by knife**

In terms of homicides, the Home Office reports that, in about two out of every five killings, the victim was fatally assaulted with a sharp object or stabbed to death. The number of knife-related homicides went from 272 in 2007 to 186 in 2015. Since then it has risen every year, with a steep increase in 2017-18, when there were 285 killings, the highest figure since 1946. One in four victims were men aged 18-24. The figures also show 25% of victims were black - the highest proportion since data was first collected in 1997.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News (14 March 2019) Ten charts on the rise of knife crime in England and Wales, online, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

### **Most violent attacks involve no weapons**

Although knife crime is on the increase, it is relatively unusual for a violent incident to involve a knife, and for someone to need hospital treatment. Most violence is caused by people hitting, kicking or shoving.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales, which includes offences that aren't reported to police, indicates that overall levels of violence have fallen by about a quarter since 2013. However, the police-recorded statistics - which tend to pick up more "high harm" crimes - have indicated that the most serious violent crime is increasing.<sup>5</sup>

### **Most perpetrators of knife crime are over 18**

According to the Ministry of Justice, in the year to September 2018, 21,381 people were cautioned, reprimanded or convicted for carrying a knife in England and Wales, most of whom were adults. One in five (4,459) was under the age of 18 - the highest number for eight years.<sup>6</sup>

### **Regional variation in knife crime offences**

The Home Office reports that knife crime tends to be more prevalent in large cities, particularly in London. For every 100,000 people in the capital, there were 168 knife offences in 2017-18, with separate figures, from the mayor's office, showing that young black and minority ethnic teenage boys and men were disproportionately affected, as both victims and perpetrators.

Next highest was the West Midlands, with 72 knife offences per 100,000 population, and Yorkshire and the Humber, 79.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## **Knife crime in Kent**

The Guardian reports ONS figures to show that Kent experienced the largest, recent increase of knife crime in England and Wales. Between April 2010 and September 2018 knife crime in the county increased by 152%.<sup>8</sup>

### **General explanations for the rise in knife crime at national level**

Explanations for rising knife crime have ranged from police budget cuts, to gang violence and disputes between drug dealers. The decline in the use by police of stop and search has also been cited by some as a possible cause.

Anecdotal evidence from the police suggests that young people are now more inclined to carry knives because of growing confidence that they will not be stopped.<sup>9</sup>

### **Additional explanations for the rise in knife crime in Kent**

In addition to general explanations, more specific reasons put forward for the rise in knife crime in Kent are the spillover of violence from “county lines” – drug dealing that involves urban gangs moving drugs and cash between city hubs and provincial areas – as well as London councils’ relocation of homeless families to outside the capital.<sup>10</sup>

The multi-agency Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021 warns of “a steady increase in the number of gangs operating across Kent and Medway – from mostly London-based street gangs venturing into Kent to sell drugs, to the development of local ‘homegrown’ gangs.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Guardian (10 March 2019) County lines drugs blamed for Kent's big rise in knife crime, online, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/10/county-lines-drugs-kent-knife-crime-rise-cuts>

<sup>9</sup> BBC News (14 March 2019) Ten charts on the rise of knife crime in England and Wales, online, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>

<sup>10</sup> The Guardian (10 March 2019) County lines drugs blamed for Kent's big rise in knife crime, online, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/10/county-lines-drugs-kent-knife-crime-rise-cuts>

<sup>11</sup> See the Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021

## National initiatives and strategies to tackle knife crime

Recent national strategies and initiatives to tackle knife crime include the following.

### The Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19

The Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19 is currently being debated by Parliament. New restrictions on the possession, sale and supply of knives are one of the key items covered by the Bill.<sup>12</sup>

The key changes that the Bill (as introduced) would make are as follows:

- new restrictions on online sales of bladed articles and corrosive products, including restrictions on deliveries to residential premises;
- a new offence of possessing certain offensive weapons in private (this includes particular types of knives, such as flick knives, gravity knives and “zombie” knives);
- a new offence of possessing a corrosive substance in a public place;
- a new offence of selling certain harmful corrosive products to under18s; and
- reclassifying certain firearms as “prohibited weapons” under section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968.<sup>13</sup>

### Stiffer sentences

Public anxiety about knife crime, legislative changes and firmer guidance for judges and magistrates have led to the stiffer sentences, although offenders under 18 are still more likely to be cautioned than imprisoned.<sup>14</sup>

The average prison term for those jailed for carrying a knife or other offensive weapon has gone up from almost five months to well over eight months, with 85% serving at least three months, compared with 53% only 10 years ago.<sup>15</sup>

Sentences for all kinds of violent crime have been getting tougher, particularly for knife crime. The Ministry of Justice tracks the penalties imposed for those caught carrying knives and other offensive weapons in England and Wales. In the year ending December 2018, 37% of those dealt with were jailed and a further 18% were given a suspended prison sentence. The figures for 2008, when the data was first compiled, were 20% and 9% respectively. Over the same period, there has been a

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<sup>12</sup> House of Commons Library (25 march 2019) The Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19, online, [file:///C:/Users/romagg01/Downloads/CBP-8349%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/romagg01/Downloads/CBP-8349%20(1).pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> BBC News (14 March 2019) Ten charts on the rise of knife crime in England and Wales, online, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>

<sup>15</sup> BBC News (14 March 2019) Ten charts on the rise of knife crime in England and Wales, online, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>

steady decline in the use of community sentences, and a sharp drop in cautions, from 30% to 11%.<sup>16</sup>

### The Serious Violence Strategy

The Serious Violence Strategy (2018) represents a significant programme of work involving a range of Government departments and partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors. This strategy stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of violence and provide young people with the skills and resilience to lead productive lives free from violence.

The Strategy acknowledges the rise of knife crime across virtually all police forces areas in England and Wales. These increases have been accompanied by a shift towards younger victims and perpetrators.

The strategy is framed on four key themes: tackling county lines and misuse of drugs, early intervention and prevention, supporting communities and partnerships, and an effective law enforcement and criminal justice response.

Activities set out by the Strategy include the following.

- The establishment of a new Inter-Ministerial Group on the Serious Violence Strategy in order to oversee and drive delivery of this strategy. This will be chaired by the Home Office and will meet on a quarterly basis. Membership will include Ministers from the Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, Department for Work and Pensions, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Ministry of Justice, the Wales Office, and the Attorney General's Office, as well as the relevant NPCC Lead and senior representation from the NCA.
- The Home Office will also establish a new cross-sector Serious Violence Taskforce which will include key representatives from national and local government, police and crime commissioners and key delivery partners including representatives from health, education and industry.
- Testing and evaluation of early interventions aimed at preventing violence.
- National events with key sectors and further engagement with key partners including Police and Crime Commissioners, Community Safety Partnerships, police, local authority and health professionals, and academics.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> HM Government (2018) Serious Violence Strategy

## UK Youth Parliament – Make Your Mark

As knife crime has continued to climb over the last few years, the UK Youth Parliament believed that the issue needed to be addressed. In the 2018 “Make Your Mark” ballot, over 196,000 young people aged 11-18 from across the UK voted to put an end to knife crime. Members of Youth Parliament voted at the House of Commons to make this the England only campaign for 2019.

## **Local initiatives and strategies**

There are numerous initiatives and strategies that contribute to tackling knife crime in the county.

### The Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021

The strategy is a multi-agency partnership endeavour involving organisations including both Kent and Medway’s Community Safety Partnerships, and Safeguarding Children Boards. The strategy’s vision is to “protect and prevent young people from becoming involved with gangs; to tackle gang-related harm and youth violence; and to pursue effective enforcement action to deal with those embroiled in gang activities”.<sup>18</sup>

The Strategy informs that the average age of a gang nominal operating in the county is 15, but that younger children can also be part of these gangs – the youngest reported in the county was 10 years old. This highlights the importance of teaching young children about the risks of gangs and gang related crime early, so they are equipped to act appropriately if the circumstances should arise.<sup>19</sup>

Collaborative work has involved organisations and initiatives such as the following:

- In 2016 Kent County Council undertook a review of its youth justice provision and changed the configuration of its service from the criminal justice based model of onward referral and intervention, based primarily on offending behaviour, to an adolescent risk model which recognises and addresses the broader context of adolescent risk – including a greater focus on ensuring that children and young people are engaged in education, training or employment.
- Kent Police has adapted to meet the demands caused by the emergence of ‘home grown’ gangs and ‘county lines’ crime. Under the New Horizon model Kent Police has formed Gangs Investigation Teams, dedicated to tackling gangs in each division. As part of this process a gangs matrix has been developed to help identify and map the individuals involved in gang activities and to assess the threat, risk and harm they pose. Kent Police has also recently been restructured

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<sup>18</sup> See the Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

to enable the force to better protect the most vulnerable people in the county from crime and exploitation. As part of this redesign, 20 Youth Engagement Officers have been recruited specifically to work with young people at risk of abuse and neglect, including through gang involvement.

- The Margate Taskforce has achieved notable success in the proactive identification of individuals vulnerable to gang exploitation. This was achieved primarily through the use of peer group analysis i.e. producing a visual network of individuals known to be involved in gangs, employing intelligence obtained from different organisations to map their relationships. This process was then used to identify schools that would benefit from awareness raising sessions on gangs and individuals who would benefit from a Family Support Panel. In addition, the Taskforce used geo-mapping to assess safeguarding risks by identifying 'hot spots' of activity that could then be targeted.
- Medway Community Safety Partnership, in partnership with the Council's Youth Services and the Woodlands Centre, made a successful bid to the Home Office Knife Crime Fund in 2017. This funding has allowed Medway to pilot early intervention work in schools looking at negative peer groups, joint enterprise, Child Sexual Exploitation and gang association. It has also enabled the Council to undertake training with professionals to educate and inform the workforce about gangs (including gang recruitment processes e.g. via social media) as well as to run youth engagement work and sports events designed to focus young people on positive activities and to divert them from gang involvement.
- The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme aims to create a coherent framework for partners to manage adult and young offenders who are committing the most crimes and causing harm to local communities. The scope of the IOM has recently been expanded to include gang nominals, which is a positive step.<sup>20</sup>

### The Violence Reduction Challenge

When the Government published its national Serious Violence Strategy in 2018, Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Matthew Scott launched a Violence Reduction Challenge - a year-long study working with victims, residents, charities, statutory bodies and others to learn about people's experiences of violent crime, its causes, and how it can be tackled. The publication of a report detailing the finding and recommendations outcomes of the VRC will follow.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Kent Police Crime Commissioner (2019) Violence Reduction Challenge, online, <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-campaigns/violence-reduction-challenge/>

In addition, the PCC has created a £1m Violence Reduction Fund to invest in projects which aim to cut violent crime in Kent and Medway, and a multi-agency task force in Medway to enable partners to work closer together to deal with some of the underlying causes of crime.<sup>22</sup>

### Kent Police Campaign - 'Don't let a knife take life'

Kent Police has recently launched a dedicated Kent campaign 'Don't let a knife take life' to tackle knife crime and highlight the risks of carrying a knife. The focus of the campaign is prevention, delivered through an education and support initiative, which has been designed to assist schools and youth groups to independently talk to students about knife crime. The resource pack includes a class/group discussion exercise, support literature for both students and parents/carers and posters.<sup>23</sup>

### Operation Sceptre in Kent

The campaign, which was designed to support targeted enforcement and raise awareness of knife crime in the country, ran from Monday 11 – Sunday 17 March 2019.

In Kent, more than 26 weapons including knives, blades, a chainsaw and a baseball bat were recovered by officers put on dedicated patrols to support Op Sceptre.

Districts such as Canterbury, Dartford and Tunbridge Wells saw proactive weapon sweeps and community engagement events at key locations such as train stations, shopping centres and high streets in partnership with local councils and the British Transport Police (BTP).

Of the weapons seized, one of them was a large hunting knife found by officers from the Community Policing Team in Medway after they stopped and searched a vehicle in Rochester on Tuesday 12 March. Three people were arrested and suspected class A drugs were seized.

Following the successes of Operation Sceptre in the county, Kent Police announced that it would continue its level of enforcement action targeting knife crime.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kent Police Crime Commissioner (25 March 2019) £1m fund announced to tackle causes of violent crime, online, <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/news/2019/03-march/£1m-fund-announced-to-tackle-causes-of-violent-crime/>

<sup>23</sup> Kent Police (2019) Knife Crime, online, <https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/knife-crime/>

<sup>24</sup> Kent Police (20 March 2019) Robust stance against knife crime to continue following Operation Sceptre successes, online, <https://www.kent.police.uk/news/policing-news/0319/robust-stance-against-knife-crime-to-continue-foll/>