

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 16 July 2019

Decision No: N/A

Subject: Serious and Organised Crime

Classification: Part 1 Report – Unrestricted
Part 2 Appendix - Exempt as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

Electoral Divisions: All divisions

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to provide Cabinet Committee with an update on Serious and Organised Crime in Kent.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse KCC's approach to Serious and Organised Crime.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Serious and organised crime (SOC) affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat¹.
- 1.2 It is estimated to cost the UK economy at least £37billion per year, with this cost increasing year on year.
- 1.3 The main categories of serious offences covered by the term 'serious organised crime' are child sexual exploitation and abuse, illegal drugs, illegal firearms, fraud, money laundering and other economic crime, bribery and corruption, organised immigration crime, modern slavery and human trafficking, and cybercrime.
- 1.4 Organised crime is defined as serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Organised criminals working together for a criminal activity or activities are referred to as an organised crime group (OCG).

¹ National Crime Agency National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2019

1.5 At the end of June 2018, the National Crime Agency was aware of 4,542 organised crime groups operating in the UK.

2. The Home Office Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Strategy

2.1 The Home Office Serious and Organised Crime strategy (SOC Strategy) was reviewed and published in November 2018 and calls for local authorities and a range of partners to play an important role alongside the Police to tackle SOC and OCGs.

2.2 The SOC Strategy sets out how the Government 'will use the full force of the State, aligning collective efforts to target and disrupt serious and organised criminals, equip the whole of government, the private sector, communities and individual citizens to play their part in a single collective endeavour to rid society of the harms of serious and organised crime, whether they be child sexual exploitation and abuse, the harm caused by drugs and firearms, or the day to day corrosive effects on communities across the country. The Government will prevent people from engaging in serious and organised crimes; protect victims, organisations and systems from its harms; and prepare for when it occurs, mitigating the impact...'

2.3 The SOC Strategy details four overarching objectives:

- Relentless disruption and targeted action against the organised criminal networks who are causing the most harm.
- Building the highest levels of defence and resilience in vulnerable people, communities, businesses and systems.
- Stopping the problem at source, identifying and supporting those at risk of engaging in criminality.
- Establishing a single, whole system approach.

3. The National Context

3.1 Key national statistics include:

- a 25% increase in firearm offences between 2015/16 and 2017/18.
- 43% of UK businesses identified at least one cyber security breach or attack in 2017.
- A 35% increase in potential modern slavery and human trafficking victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism in 2017.
- Online child sexual exploitation and abuse referrals have risen by 700% in the last four years.
- In the year ending June 2018, there were 3.3 million fraud incidents in England and Wales².

² All stats above have been taken from the Home Office opening statement at the SOC Strategy 2018 London Workshop

- 3.2 Furthermore, 44% of OCGs are connected to at least one limited company³. In 2016/17, the Home Office organised pilots with Local Authorities (1 County Council, 1 District Council, 2 London Borough Councils and their Police counterparts) to understand the threat that serious organised crime poses to publicly procured services in local authorities (LAs) and how to respond to that threat. Procurement is considered to be lucrative and attractive to serious organised criminals because there are multiple ways to commit fraud, including price fixing, bid rigging, double invoicing etc. The pilot adopted a two-phase approach – the first was a data washing exercise which checked LA data against the Police Organised Crime Group Mapping data. From this, 10 ‘direct’ links with criminal activity were found in two pilot areas - one of which was a County Council. The second phase followed up the links identified taking forward joint LA/Police work.
- 3.3 The pilot identified supplier sectors and areas that were potentially of higher risk from organised crime group exploitation – waste firms and taxis were considered the highest risk.

4. SOC in Kent

4.1 Key statistics for Kent include:

- Between April 2010 and September 2018, knife crime in the county increased by 152%.⁴
- In 2018, Kent Police carried out 171 investigations into slavery offences
- 3 of the 9 case studies featured in the NCA National Strategic Assessment featured Kent, 2 in relation to incidents that had occurred at Dover point of entry and 1 in relation to the perpetrator living in Kent.

4.2 More detailed information for Kent is provided in the confidential appendix.

5. The Kent Approach

- 5.1 The SOC Strategy calls for local authorities and a range of partners to play an important role alongside the Police to tackle SOC and OCGs.
- 5.2 Chair of the Local Government Association’s Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Cllr Simon Blackburn, responded to the launch of the SOC Strategy in November 2018 stating “Councils play a key role in tackling organised crime such as serious violence and modern slavery, and protecting children and vulnerable adults from exploitation. It is good that the Government acknowledges this in the strategy, but what we really need to see is long-term investment in local services, so we can identify signs of exploitation and intervene at an early stage. This isn’t just about law enforcement, but communities too.”

³ Independent review into SOC in the waste sector – November 2018

⁴ 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>

- 5.3 The Home Office Serious and Organised Crime Strategy champions the '4P' approach - Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare - to tackle and disrupt serious and organised criminals, groups and gangs.
- 5.4 Generally, Kent Police is the lead responsible agency (however this is not always the case) and the named Lead Responsible Officer manages the creation of a '4P' plan.
- 5.5 Kent Police has established a strategic multi-agency working group with key local and national enforcement partners to enable more coordinated and collaborative working on the issue. is currently represented by Barbara Cooper and Natalie Liddiard.
- 5.6 Two meetings have taken place so far and identified the continuing need for information and intelligence sharing between members.
- 5.7 KCC currently provides a range of frontline services and back office functions which contribute to work under the 4P headings. However, there are opportunities to coordinate better this activity which will serve to increase robustness and ensure that operational activity is underpinned by Kent wide intelligence. The locally based sharing of essential information and impactful interventions will also be developed further.
- 5.8 As one of the largest employers and procurers in Kent, it is essential that the policies, procedures and training for staff is appropriate and that the risk posed to the organisation by Serious and Organised Crime is minimised as much as possible.
- 5.9 Funding has been agreed for a suitably graded officer to lead a cross-directorate county-wide programme reviewing how KCC is responding to, and is prepared for, the issues and threats that serious organised crime poses to the Authority.
- 5.10 Due to the sensitive nature of this work, further details of the approach in Kent, and the actions that KCC are taking in tackling this can be found in the Confidential Appendix.

6. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

- 6.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse KCC's approach to Serious and Organised Crime.

7. Contact details

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