

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Police Committee Safer City Partnership	20 th September 2018 27 th September 2018
Subject: The Offensive Weapons Bill	Public
Report of: Office of the City Remembrancer	For Information
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Summary The Offensive Weapons Bill seeks to criminalise the sale of ‘corrosive products’ to persons under the age of 18, their delivery to residential premises, and their possession in public. The Bill also makes provision relating to knives and creates a new offence of possession of an offensive weapon, which will include so-called ‘zombie knives’. Further measures include a ban on delivery of knives to residential premises and a ban on high powered rifles and so-called ‘bump stocks’.	
Recommendation(s) Members are asked to note the report.	

Main Report

Background

1. The Second Reading of the Bill took place on 27 June 2018 against the backdrop of recent knife crime and acid attacks involving young people in London. The Bill proposes to ban the sale of corrosive substances to those under 18, ban the delivery of ‘bladed articles’ to residential premises, and make the possession of a ‘zombie knife’ an offence.
2. Introducing the second reading of the Bill, the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid MP said it would “strengthen powers available to the police to deal with acid attacks and knife crime” and make “it more difficult for young people to use acid as a weapon and to purchase knives online.” The Bill is currently in Committee in the Commons.

Corrosive Substances

3. The Bill proposes to make it an offence to sell corrosive substances to persons aged under 18. Additionally, it would criminalise the delivery of corrosive substances to residential addresses. Possession of corrosive substances in a public place would also become an offence under the Bill, subject to a defence of ‘good reason’ or lawful authority. A defence applies in circumstances where a corrosive product is sold by ‘remote sale’ to a person under 18 if the seller operates a system to check that purchasers are over the age of 18 and the

system is likely to prevent those under 18 from purchasing corrosive substances.

4. Of relevance to the City of London Police is the proposed amendment to 'stop and search' powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. This will enable a constable to stop and search persons and vehicles where the constable has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person has a corrosive substance in a public place and will permit the constable to seize any corrosive substance found.

Knives

5. Provision is made to criminalise the delivery of 'bladed products' to residential addresses following a remote sale. This would include tools such as Stanley knives and saws. Exemptions are provided where the bladed product was designed or manufactured for the buyer in accordance with their instructions, or where the bladed article is supplied for historical re-enactment or sporting purposes.
6. The Bill proposes to create a new summary offence for simple possession of an offensive weapon, whereas the current offence can only be committed where the weapon is "manufactured, sold, hired, offered for sale or hire, or possessed for the purpose of sale or hire, imported, or lent or given to any other person". It will also amend the list of offensive weapons to include so-called 'zombie knives'. Defences are provided where the weapon is possessed by a person acting as an operator, or on behalf of a museum. This may be of potential relevance to the Museum of London if such weapons are included in their collections.

Firearms

7. The Bill proposes to ban rifles which have a muzzle energy of greater than 1,600 joules, which will effectively ban .50 calibre rifles. Additionally, the Bill would ban the possession of so-called 'bump stocks', which are devices that enable semi-automatic weapons to achieve a higher rate of fire by using the recoil energy of the rifle to place repeated pressure on the trigger. Provision is made in the Bill for the surrender of such weapons and devices to the police and for payments to be made by the Secretary of State in respect of the surrendered weapons and devices.

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