

Lambeth Council leader Lib Peck has called on police and politicians to produce a “joined-up” solution to London’s knife-crime crisis to stop it spiralling into a long-term public-safety problem.

Cllr Peck told a high-profile “knife crime summit”, called by London Mayor Sadiq Khan, that urgent action – including more police - was needed to tackle a crisis that has seen 97 fatal stabbings in the capital in the year to May 2018.

But, in a call for cooperation between police and councils across London, she added: “The challenge today is to balance our response to the current crisis with a longer term plan of action.”

The summit was called one year on from the publication of the Mayor’s knife crime strategy, to enable officials including police and council leaders to agree a joint approach to tackling knife crime across London.

In a keynote speech to the meeting, Cllr Peck, who is the London Councils Executive Member for Crime and Public Protection, said: “The sharp increase in knife crime over this year requires immediate action, we need to provide community reassurance, to get weapons off the street, more police, intensive work with victims and perpetrators.

“But, in parallel, we need a long-term vision and plan, one that starts by unpicking the complex and multi-faceted problems that have led to the normalisation of violence,

“And then we need to acknowledge that only when we have tackled the underlying causes can we feel confident that the knife crime crisis of today won’t become another violent crime of the future.”

Cllr Peck pointed to the community leadership shown by Lambeth mothers who had lost their sons to knife crimes. She also highlighted the work of Pastor Mimi Asher, who brought gang members into her home and steered them away from a life of violence on the Myatts Field South estate in the late 2000s.

She said: “We need action, and leadership; leadership that works with, and supports the strong leadership often shown - in the aftermath of terrible murders - by those same mothers.

“In Lambeth, I think of Tracey Ford who set up a foundation after her son was killed at Streatham Ice Rink or Lorraine Jones of Dwaynatics, who honoured her son’s passion for boxing by expanding his club, and working with the police.

“Let’s be honest, we won’t find a single factor that works in all places [but] we know that, whatever it requires, partnership is key. A whole system approach, a joined-up service.

“There is no monopoly of good ideas; we need the imagination, determination and drive to end this horrible situation.

The Mayor revealed that the new Violent Crime Taskforce had carried out 615 weapons sweeps in the past week, seizing 135 knives and six guns. The rise in violence has been linked in some areas to the drugs trade, with particular focus on so-called “county lines” networks, where urban drug dealers force people to courier banned substances to customers outside the city.

He said: “Every death on our streets is an utter tragedy, leaving families, friends and communities devastated.

“I make no apologies for relentlessly pushing the government to understand that cuts have consequences and that our police service desperately need more funding right now.”