

SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 16 September 2014 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Thompson (Chairman), Edge, Gerrard, Gilligan, M. Lloyd Jones, Sinnott and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillors V. Hill and Lea

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Andrews, L. Derbyshire, N. Hallmark, C. Patino and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: In accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor D Cargill – Portfolio Holder Community Safety

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

| | <i>Action</i> |
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| SAF12 MINUTES | |
| The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2014 were taken as read and signed as a correct record. | |
| SAF13 CHARIMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT | |
| The Chairman, Councillor Thompson, reported that since the last meeting of the Board he had met with the Lead Officer to consider future items for the agenda. He suggested the following items:- | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Police and Crime Commissioner (Annually);• The Ambulance Service (Annually)• Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (Annually)• The RSPCA; and• The RNLI. | |
| The Chairman reported that a list of items had also been established and they would be circulated to all Members of the Board. He encouraged Members to consider any future items they would like to review and contact him directly. | |

SAF14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

SAF15 SSP MINUTES

The minutes from the last Safer Halton Partnership (SHP) meeting held on 14 May 2014 were presented to the Board for information.

Quarterly Alcohol Update – Concern was raised at the increase in the number of females with liver disease and that only a third of the referrals from the alcohol liaison nursing services at Whiston and Warrington actually attended their appointment. In response, it was reported that it was very difficult to track whether individuals attended their appointments or not as attendance was on a voluntary basis and they may choose not to access the service for several months or at all. In respect of the increase in liver disease in females, it was reported that the cause was unknown but it could be related to more young females drinking and more people drinking at home.

Clarity was sought on the attendance at the Pubwatch Scheme in Runcorn. In response, it was reported that the scheme had only recently commenced as it had not been operating for a few years. At the last meeting 4/5 people had attended. However, it was reported that this figure would probably increase in the future, especially during the festive season. It was noted that attendance was by invitation only.

In respect of Halton being the first for an effective engagement rate in the North West at 95% for problem drug users, clarity was sought on why alcohol figures were not as successful. In response, it was reported that it was partly related to perception in the community i.e. drug users were happy to access services in Ashley House whereas individuals misusing alcohol would not, they preferred a community based intervention. In addition, it was reported that a lot of work was being undertaken to address alcohol misuse in the Borough but legislation for alcohol was not as robust as it was for drug misuse and courses offered could only be on a voluntary basis.

The Board noted the number of young people in the

Borough using legal highs and the challenges that it presented. The Board also noted that several people had died this year from helium in balloons (laughing gas) which could now be easily purchased.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and comments raised be noted.

SAF16 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2014 - QUARTER 1

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, regarding the Quarter Monitoring Reports for the first quarter of 2014-15. The report detailed progress of key performance milestones and performance targets relating to Safer Halton and described factors affecting the service.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- Page 16 - Waste Management – The Board noted that all of Halton’s kerbside collection of residual was now being diverted from landfill; and
- Page 30 – Concern was raised at the Leisure Management Contract being over budget. In response, it was reported that this matter was as a result of a technical issue, which was now being addressed by the Finance Director.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

SAF17 PRESENTATION: MISCHIEF NIGHT

The Board received a presentation from Mr J Unsworth, Divisional Manager, Waste and Environmental Improvement on the planning and proposed operation of initiatives being delivered to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour and unauthorised fires on mischief night and in the period up to bonfire night.

The Board was advised that each year, the Safer Halton Partnership delivered a number of activities to reduce incidents of unauthorised bonfires and other forms of anti-social behaviour during the period covering ‘Mischief Night’ and ‘Bonfire Night’. This included preventative measures, diversionary activity and the ‘Bonfire Removal Initiative’ which set out to improve community safety by removing unauthorised and uncontrolled bonfires before they were

ignited. The scheme had been successfully operating in Halton since 1999. As part of the Partnership's efforts to reduce environmental nuisance and anti-social behaviour during this period, education and community safety messages were also delivered across the Borough, and information was directly delivered to households in known 'hot spot' areas.

The presentation:-

- Set out the Partners objectives – to reduce the impact on anti social behaviour on the community of Halton on key nights during the period covering Mischief Night and Bonfire night;
- Explained that Partners met and established action plans based on historical practice and intelligence;
- Explained that there was a number of key themes and that the bonfire initiative had been pioneered in Halton in 2000 and had subsequently been adopted by other Local Authorities;
- Highlighted the prevention activity – the bonfire removal initiative which cleared bonfire materials and waste debris and which was funded by CST, HBC and RSL's. It targeted known historical 'black spot' areas; and was in operation from Monday 27 October to Friday 7 November 2014. Nineteen unauthorised bonfires had also been removed in 2013;
- Outlined that the key aim was to reduce and prevent risk; prevent the use of a fire appliance attending and prevent the negative effect on the local environment and the associated costs in open spaces;
- Detailed other preventative activities – foot patrols on key 'problem estates to reduce anti social behaviour; estate walk-about looking for potential 'hot spots' or problems, visits to retailers, direct engagement with households regarding wheeled bins and erecting fencing on bonfire night at problem locations;
- Highlighted the publicity and promotional campaigns and direct engagement to educate the community and raise awareness of the issues i.e.

the schools poster competition;

- Set out the diversionary activities – youth distraction activities;
- Highlighted that there was an increase in the number of people attending the firework display every year;
- Explained the reassurance given, the clear up undertaken with multi agency clean up vehicles, the safe HUB for staff and how CCTV was monitored on operational nights; and
- Detailed the successful outcomes re the reduction in criminal damage and anti social behaviour and the significant reduction in fire incidents on 30/31 October and 5/6 November for 2012 and 2013.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- The Board congratulated all concerned on the success of the initiative to date, highlighting that everything possible was being done to protect people during the crucial periods;
- The significant progress that had been made in reducing anti-social behaviour and criminal damage since the initiative had been established in 2000 was noted;
- The activities taking place over the last three months to address the unauthorised selling of fireworks was noted; and
- Clarity was sought on whether Members could be involved in some of the diversionary activities on mischief night. In response, it was reported that consideration would have to be given to the health and safety implications for Members and it would not be possible for all Members to participate. However, it was reported that Members could email their interest to Mr M Andrews.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation and comments raised be noted; and

- (2) Mr Unsworth be thanked for his informative presentation.

SAF18 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE

The Board received a verbal presentation from Mr M Andrews, Community Safety Team, which provided the Members with an update on the Anti-social Behaviour Reforms.

The Board received an update on the following areas:-

- Special multi operational group meetings had taken place during the last two months which had been based on intelligent information that had been received. A small peer group had emerged in the Ditton area and in a number of places in Widnes. Intervention had been developed and reports formulated on the individuals. Ten new anti-social behaviour contracts had been established and 64 contracts had been reviewed;
- Work had taken place with HHT resulting in the establishment of 15 anti social behaviour injunctions. Work had also taken place with private landlords and this had resulted in successfully evicting problematic residents;
- Safeguarding – There had been a significant issue at Pex Hill with young people. A successful operation had taken place and parents of the young people concerned had been contacted and reminded of their responsibilities;
- Victim support – 41 individuals were currently being supported and 500 victims of anti-social behaviour/vulnerable people had been supported;
- The Area Profiles for each wards would be circulated to all Members of the Board. The profiles highlighted in detail issues in respect of health and anti social behaviour ward by ward;
- The Alcohol Harm Reduction Team was in operation in pubs, clubs and refreshment establishments. Serious health issues had been found in a popular takeaway and had been subsequently visited by environmental health and closed;

- The guidance for the new tools and powers had been published and a report would be presented to the Board at a future meeting for consideration;
- There had been a 30 % reduction in anti social behaviour during the summer period, which represented the highest reduction in Cheshire. This had been achieved by developing priorities in certain areas; and
- The Respect Halton leaflet was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

SAF19 LOCAL ALCOHOL ACTION AREA - ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Public Health Commissioning Officer, which provided Members with the quarterly progress of the LAAA.

The Board was advised that Halton had been named as one of only 20 Local Alcohol Action Areas (LAAA) as part of a project to tackle the harmful and expensive effects of excessive alcohol consumption. In a scheme established by the Home Office, Halton would be supported in a bid to reduce the damage caused by alcohol to people's health and to local neighbourhoods

The Board was further advised that the Local Alcohol Action Area scheme sought to bring together local action in three key areas – reducing the impact of alcohol on people's health; stimulating and supporting the night time economy and reducing the impact of alcohol on crime and anti-social behaviour. Each action area would receive support and expertise from the Home Office, the Department of Health and Public Health England and would be encouraged to learn from other areas and build upon the hard work of local people and organisations.

It was reported that the purpose of the enclosed Quarterly return was to provide Members with an update on the progress of activity to develop the Local Alcohol Action Area in Halton. The Board noted the information contained in Appendix A and B to the report.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- The Board discussed the feasibility of opening a

non alcoholic bar in Halton a 'Dry Bar'. It was noted that a Dry Bar would have to be financially viable and that work was taking place with Public Health to highlight the demand for such a bar in Halton. The Board also noted the significant cost of alcohol abuse to the NHS and it was recognised that a Dry Bar could help to reduce these costs in the future; and

- The Board noted the numerous interventions taking place to address alcohol abuse in the Borough and that these interventions only realised financial savings via health benefits over many years.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

SAF20 COMMUNITY SAFETY INSPECTORS UPDATE - VERBAL UPDATE BY MIKE ANDREWS

The Board received a verbal presentation from Mr M Andrews, Community Safety Team, which provided Members with an update on the Community Safety Inspectors.

The Board was advised that some of the information relating to this item had been discussed in the anti-social behaviour update earlier on the agenda.

The Board received an update on the following areas:-

- The Navigate Scheme - A scheme to address Cheshire's most prolific and repeat offenders continued to prove successful in reducing the re-offending rates of the county's worst burglars, car thieves, and street and metal-theft criminals. The Navigate scheme brought together key partners, all of whom were focused on reducing re-offending throughout Cheshire;
- Alcohol Harm Reduction – a significant amount of work was being undertaken on the night time economy by the Licensing Team. There was also direct access to CCTV which enabled offenders to be caught quickly. Licensees were also being canvassed to consider breathalising individuals before they entered the premises. The Police had also taken action against a health and safety problem in respect of food in a late night

takeaway and illegal immigrants;

- The Inspiring Families Scheme was very successful in Halton in respect of worklessness, school attendance and domestic violence. Halton, Cheshire East and West and Warrington were considering universal services in order to make efficiency savings;
- It was reported that it was Alcohol Action week and it was reported that premises would be visited and advice given on safe drinking and drugs;
- ArcAngel branding had been successful in the Borough; and
- Illegal Camp sites had been successfully removed to the designated site by the Duty Liaison Officer.

The following comments arose from the verbal presentation:-

- The Board noted that it was an offence to serve excessive amounts of alcohol to an intoxicated individual. However, the Board also noted the difficulties of enforcing action due to the complexities of judging whether an individual had consumed an excessive amount of alcohol;
- The Board noted the incidents at the Stadium during the match between Widnes and Castleford. It was highlighted that the incidents were related to alcohol abuse and as a result 25% of the ground was now designated as an alcohol free, child friendly area. A report would be presented to the next meeting of the Board for consideration; and
- Issues were raised regarding a pub in Runcorn operating after opening times and the anti social behaviour that took place regularly outside of the pub. It was reported, that details could be passed to the Officer concerned and relevant action would be taken.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report and comments raised be noted.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided Members with an update on the proposal to strengthen the law on domestic abuse to offer better protection to victims.

The Board was advised that a new Home Office consultation published on the 20th August 2014 sought views on whether the current law on domestic abuse needed to be strengthened to offer better protection to victims. It was specifically focused on whether a specific offence that captured patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate relationships should be created.

The Board was further advised that there were arguments for and against making a specific domestic abuse offence. At present, there was no specific offence of domestic abuse outlining that coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate relationships was criminal. These behaviours were captured in stalking and harassment legislation, but did not explicitly apply to intimate relationships. In addition, it was reported that some experts had argued that this meant that the law was ambiguous and perpetrators of domestic abuse were committing criminal acts but not being brought to justice.

The Board noted that coercive and controlling behaviour had been brought within the non statutory Government definition. The question the consultation asked was whether the law needed to be strengthened by creating a specific offence making it clear that coercive and controlling behaviours perpetrated in an intimate relationship to control someone or cause them fear were criminal?

It was reported Creating a new offence may also be seen as duplicating existing legislation relating to stalking and harassment, and distracting frontline agencies from the fundamental operational changes that were urgently needed to use the existing framework effectively.

Conversely, the HMIC report on domestic abuse made it clear that the police fail to see domestic abuse, particularly in its non-violent form, as a serious crime. Acts that were clearly criminal were not referred for prosecution and arrest rates varied widely. Creating a specific offence of domestic abuse may send a clear, consistent message to frontline agencies that non-violent control in an intimate relationship was criminal. Explicitly capturing this in legislation may also help victims identify the behaviour they were suffering as wrong and encourage them to report it, and cause

perpetrators to rethink their controlling behaviour.

In conclusion, it was reported that the closing date for responses was 15 October 2014.

After considerable discussion, the Board agreed that Members of the Working Group would consider the proposal to strengthen the law on domestic abuse. It was also agreed that the Working Group would feed back their comments to Mr M Andrews, Community Safety Team.

RESOLVED: That the report and comment raised be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.