

**ANNUAL REPORT
SAFEER HALTON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016**



Councillor Dave
Thompson
Chairman

Creating a 'Safer Halton' remains a key priority for the Council and its partners and empowers confidence in our residents and visitors that they are supported and protected from harm.

The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board remains focussed on meeting the needs of the community as well as exploring and anticipating emerging issues.

I am satisfied, as Chair of the Board that we have considered, responded to, and reported on the main issues affecting Halton and we have also focused on new areas that have not previously been scrutinised. We have challenged the use of Novel/New Psychoactive Substances (so called 'Legal Highs'), forming conclusions before even the government was advising of change. We have also examined this year the work by the Border Agency, RNLI, Port Health and other bodies that also contribute to our safety. The Board has also examined new areas of the work undertaken by Cheshire Police which pose emerging threats to Halton, including the control of dangerous dogs and counter terrorism.

'Chairman's Announcements' were added to the agenda this year to ensure that feedback could be provided to members on actions or issues discussed at the previous meeting.

I thank my colleagues who sit on the Board for their contributions and to those officers who presented to the Board for their through and thought-provoking input. In particular I wish best wishes to Cllr Lea who is standing down as Vice Chair and a member of the Council.

We have also been extremely fortunate to have excellent support and reporting from our officers and I would place on record my thanks to: Chris Patino, Mike Andrews, Jimmy Unsworth, Nicola Hallmark, Natalie Chase-Caffyn, Suzanne Shepherd, Janet Guy, Elspeth Anwar, Lyn Derbyshire, John Williams, Christine Lawley, Jackie Rogers; Peter Kenny, Gill Ferguson, Ann Jones and Bill Seabury.

Councillor Dave Thompson
Chairman, Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During the municipal year 2015-16 the Board comprised of 11 elected members: Councillors Thompson (Chair), Lea (Vice-Chair), Bradshaw, Edge, Gerrard, Gilligan, Hill, M. Lloyd-Jones, Nolan, Sinnott, and Zygadlo. I would like to extend our particular thanks to Cllr. Ratcliffe who sat on the Board prior to her defeat in the May 2015 elections.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Adults, Environmental Health and Safer Halton Partnership. The Board is also represented on the Cheshire Police & Crime Panel.

Topic Groups for 15/16:

- Novel/New Psychoactive Substances ('Legal Highs')

The board also agreed a programme of 'scrutiny visits' which are on-going at this time.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met 4 times during the year.

The programme of activity for the Board over the 2015/16 period covers the following:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Mounting concerns over the rising trend in the use and abuse of Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPSs), led the PPB to form a scrutiny topic group. The group met monthly to review actions and initiatives aimed at both monitoring and alleviating the problem.

An early recommendation was taken to Executive Board to impose a ban of NPSs on all Council and premises.

Officers and partner agencies fed into the topic group in order to examine the usages and prevalence of NPSs within the Borough; the enforcement options available; and the activity and initiatives aimed at alleviate the issue, and in particular consideration of the welfare of young people across the community. It was noted that there was use of NPSs being made in the borough and that the Council had a role to play with other agencies in tackling this issue.

An amendment to the Statement of Licencing Policy (SOLP), incorporating a commitment for premises to manage drug misuse, was recognised as a key achievement in identifying and tackling the issue.

During a site visit to the Council's commissioned substance misuse service, CRI, the group were impressed by the outstanding work and wide spectrum of activity

taking place. Work includes education and deterrent programmes, through to support and wellbeing services.

The topic group found that the Council had at its disposal sufficient powers to act against any shop or premises selling NPSs and we had a means of influence to see actions being taken across local authority boundaries.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community Safety remains a high priority for the Council.

Increased concerns around fraud, scams and counterfeiting, and the impact of this on residents, was highlighted in a report from **Trading Standards**. The service, transferred back to Halton in April 2014 from a joint service with Warrington, covers a vast array of activity aimed at protecting the community and its businesses as consumers – from giving advice through to prosecuting on behalf of victims. The services' Annual Report was noted and the Board particularly emphasized the most vulnerable members of the community and how the work of Trading Standards is critical to their protection. The work of our Trading Standards Officers was felt to be outstanding when set against the context of them having very limited resources.

At the June meeting the Board considered a presentation from Cheshire Police on **dangerous dogs**. Dangerous dogs were found to be an issue for Cheshire Police which most affected Halton. The trigger points for attacks were identified, including lack of castration of male dogs and PC Lennox gave an overview of the incident of both injury and deaths, and the cost to the NHS. The presentation included details of enforcement legislation used to tackle the issue and the community work undertaken to engage with dog owners. The Board noted some crucial issues for Halton, including that dogs were being trafficked through Halton. This matter was subsequently raised with the Police and Crime Commissioner as a concern for the Board.

The Council's adults' **substance misuse services** were the subject of a report delivered to the Board in June. The information presented covered a wide array of activity, feeding back on key intervention programmes and forward-thinking project work. The Board noted that the commissioned substance misuse service, CRI, had undergone a major premises change but had seen no interruption of service.

Additional input to the Board was made in relation to **NPSs**, and this supported the findings of the scrutiny review.

Drug use continued to be a focus of concern for the Board in 2015/16. The multi-agency approach taken in Halton was viewed to be highly successful in reducing drug offences, but also thefts, violence, criminal damage and other offences. The Council is also now equipped with new 'tools and powers' to tackle conduct in private lettings and this further supports actions against properties from which drug activity is noted.

The **Local Alcohol Action Area (LAAA)** project concluded its work and presented

its findings. Halton had been one of just 20 to be designated LAAA areas, underling the hard work undertaken in Halton. The Board praised the approaches taken and the achievements accomplished.

In November the Board received details of the education and prevention work of the **Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service**. As with all the early intervention work taking place across the borough, the multi-agency working practices shared with this service are proving successful. The report focussed not only on the reduction of deliberate fires but also on the service's responsibilities to ensure safety in our homes and on the roads.

Anti-social behaviour figures continue to be monitored through Safer PPB. More serious crime, and in particular the **Integrated Offender Management Scheme (Navigate)** was studied during a presentation in January. The service currently works with the 49 most prolific offenders. Navigate was viewed by the Board as an excellent programme managed by Cheshire Police that was delivering considerable success.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

The reports heard by the Board covered domestic abuse figures and actions. The ongoing work of the Domestic Abuse team within Community Safety continues to challenge the issues faced; educating and informing, reporting and scrutinizing and supporting and facilitating. The Board continue to commend the continued work undertaken to reduce incidence and support victims.

The Board has expressed a wish that the Council work to secure corporate 'White Ribbon' status.

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS

The Board retain an overview of the safeguarding of adults across Halton and received performance figures in respect of this.

A presentation was also received by **North West Ambulance Service**. The Board noted challenges relating to hospital transfers and were pleased with the 'first responder' scheme, working with volunteers across the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The geography of Halton, and some of the issues this creates, was a running theme of the reports heard by the Board.

At our September meeting the Board received a presentation from the **Port Authority**. This was requested as part of our bid to widen agendas of the Safer PPB to ensure that members had a rounded picture of those issues impacting on the borough. The Manchester Port Health Authority gave a comprehensive overview of their role in environmental health, and in particular in relation to the transport of organic substances and the control of pests. It was felt that their work

at the Port of Runcorn was extremely important.

As part of our efforts to broaden the schedule of activity covered by the Board I further invited the **UK Visa and Immigration Service** to address Members. The presentation given covered the governance of the service, its main concerns and the work programmes aimed at alleviating illegal immigration. The work of the Service was deemed to be comprehensive and important but the Board were concerned that continuing austerity cuts by government would undermine the work of the service.

Local businesses have their part to play in the health of residents, and the borough's commercial food outlets were the focus of a report from the Director of Public Health. This gave the Board an understanding of the **Food Hygiene Rating system** and the Board resolved to lobby their MPs to request that signage be made mandatory in the windows/ entrances of all food establishments. Ministers responded through Derek Twigg MP and Graham Evans MP that the government would consider making signage compulsory in England as it already was in Wales.

The Council's plans to safeguard the welfare of residents during the **Mischief Night/Halloween** period and during **Bonfire Night (Operation Treacle)** are received annually, and feedback emphasised again that the proactive approach taken was successful.

The Board is open to receiving petitions from the public and to responding to public concerns. Residents of the **Royal Avenue** area of Widnes attended the January meeting to raise concerns in relation to the **Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)** and anti-social behaviour that caused nuisance on site. The Board agreed that a group of members and officers instigate a working group with the involvement of the residents to examine actions that could be taken.

SAFER HALTON PARTNERSHIP

The Board continue to monitor and note the actions of the Partnership, ensuring that significant agenda items are brought to PPB for scrutiny. Feedback from the Board is, in turn, made to the Partnership via my attendance at Partnership meetings.

CHESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Board received regular updates from the Police and Crime Panel, including taking the opportunity to comment on the **Police and Crime Commissioners Annual Report**.

A new operating model within Cheshire Police was introduced this year and the Board was pleased that two LPUs were formed in Halton and that beat and PCSOs were being allocated to wards. Overall, despite £38 million of cuts in government grant, policing in Halton was felt to be working well.