

Public Document Pack



Safer Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 14 July 2020 at 5.00 p.m.
Via public remote access (please contact
the Clerk named below for instructions)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Walsh'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Councillor Dave Thompson (Chair) | Labour |
| Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair) | Labour |
| Councillor Sandra Baker | Labour |
| Councillor Ellen Cargill | Labour |
| Councillor Eddie Dourley | Labour |
| Councillor Valerie Hill | Labour |
| Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones | Labour |
| Councillor Kath Loftus | Labour |
| Councillor Geoffrey Logan | Labour |
| Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe | Liberal Democrats |
| Councillor Geoff Zygadlo | Labour |

Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 511 8059 or e-mail gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 15 September 2020

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

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| <p>Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.</p> | |
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 11 February 2020 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors N. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Baker, E. Cargill, Dourley, P. Lloyd Jones, K. Loftus, Logan, Ratcliffe and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Thompson and V. Hill

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Andrews, S. Ashcroft, C. Patino, M. Cotgreave, D. Perchard and G. Ferguson, M. Ankers (NWROCU), C. Pritchard and R. Stokes (Cheshire Police).

Also in attendance: One Member of the press and Councillor D. Cargill under Standing Order 33

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

SAF22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice Chair thanked Councillor Zygadlo for attending a recent Police and Crime Commissioner Panel meeting on his behalf.

SAF23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2019 were taken as read as a correct record.

SAF24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no questions had been received.

SAF25 INTRODUCTION OF NEW LOCAL POLICE UNIT INSPECTOR

The new Local Police Unit Inspector Stokes addressed the Board on the work carried out in the Widnes Policing Unit and outlined her role and priorities for the local area. Catherine Pritchard was also in attendance and outlined her role.

Action

Inspector Stokes advised the Board that the Police were adopting a proactive and innovative approach which aimed to keep people safe by:

- working with young people;
- engaging with the community including those hard to reach groups; and
- encouraging active citizenships including schemes such as Homewatch and Speed watch.

The Board were advised on the work of the Problem Solving Team which was a dedicated strategic team who were involved in addressing issues such as County Lines and the recent work with Pubwatch in Widnes.

Arising from the discussion, a Member advised on the work of Magistrates in Halton who were working in the community visiting schools to help to educate children on the consequences of their actions which could lead to sentences in the Magistrate Court. Inspector Stokes acknowledged that this was an initiative that the Widnes Police Unit would like to explore further.

On behalf of the Board, the Vice Chair thanked Inspector Stokes for her presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

SAF26 EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Emergency Planning team during the last year.

Members received a presentation which highlighted the teams statutory duties to comply with the following legislation:

- the Civil Contingencies Act 2004;
- Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (COMAH) 2015; and
- Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) Regulations 1996.

Members noted that key plans were in place to ensure resilience within Halton which were regularly tested, public reassurances, examples of risks to Halton, details of the exercises that take place at COMAH sites in the borough, information on Emergency Centres and the work

the Emergency Planning team carried out with partner agencies both within Cheshire and Cross-Border and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Details of those incidents that the team had responded to since February 2019 were provided to the Board. In addition, the Board was advised on an Asbestos training event which would be held in partnership with Cheshire Fire in March and any member who wished to attend should contact Michelle Cotgreave.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF27 DETRIMENT PREVENTED TO HALTON RESIDENTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, People, which outlined the work of the Trading Standards team over the last year in Halton. During 2018/19 the team had saved residents at least £262.2k as follows:

- Consumer Advice Service had saved Halton consumers at least £32,001;
- Through rapid response to doorstep crime incidents Trading Standards had saved Halton residents £10,790;
- Detriment prevented through scam - working with people who had been caught out by scams to prevent a repeat had saved residents £104,618;
- iCAN – an email alert system used to warn residents about doorstep incidents, current scams and product recalls had saved residents £113,582; and
- through the free loan of call-blocking devices, 11 units, £3229 had been saved in Halton.

Arising from the discussion, Members requested that Officers share information on the call blocking device and how to purchase them.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF28 WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

The Board received an update report from Sarah Ashcroft, on behalf of the Community Safety Team, which gave an update on the work with those victims of domestic abuse and the progress on the commissioning of a contract to provide a service which would work with families, victims and the perpetrator. In addition, Members noted information on Stalking Protection Orders which had recently come into force.

Members were also updated on the progress of achieving White Ribbon Status. It was noted that the White Ribbon Action Plan had been completed and the team were now in a position to approach the White Ribbon Council.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF29 NORTHWEST REGIONAL ORGANISED CRIME UNIT (NWROCU)

The Board received a presentation from Mike Ankers on behalf of the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU), which provided Members with an outline of the priorities and themes of their work. The Unit was established in 2009 and was a collaboration between the six North West Police Forces in Cheshire, North Wales, Lancashire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside.

The Board noted that the Unit comprised officers and staff from across the region who brought specialist skills to tackle serious and organised crime that crossed borders in the region. The mission of the Unit was to identify, disrupt and dismantle organised crime groups causing the most harm to the North West. This was done by working with partners to gather intelligence, cracking the most serious and organised crime networks and then seizing the assets of those criminals involved.

Members were advised on each of the following specialist units and areas of work within the NWROCU:

- Protective Persons Unit;
- Regional Organised Crime Threat Assessment Unit;
- Regional Intelligence Unit;
- Sensitive Intelligence Network;
- Regional Asset Recovery Team;
- Regional Fraud Team;
- Asset Confiscation Enforcement Team;
- Cyber Crime Team; and
- Regional Prison Intelligence Unit.

The Board discussed a recent incident at Riverside College, Kingsway, Widnes and were provide with an update on the investigation which was ongoing.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

REPORT TO: Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 14th July 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-
- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
 - (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
 - (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
 - (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
 - (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or

- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

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|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| REPORT TO: | Safer Policy and Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th July 2020 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director People |
| PORTFOLIO: | Community Safety |
| SUBJECT: | Covid-19 – Trading Standards |
| WARDS: | Borough wide |

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report describes the Covid 19 related work of the Trading Standards service between March and June 2020.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The ability to undertake normal duties

- 3.1.1 As the pandemic began, the Service was carrying two vacant enforcement posts and had been since October 18. An agency worker was employed to supplement the two criminal officers in post.

One member of the team is in the high-risk category and began to work from home and to self-isolate on the 12th March. Two team members were living in households with family who were high-risk and one team member was the sole carer for a family member who was high risk. The agency worker lives 135 miles from Halton. Together, this resulted in very limited opportunities to have feet on the ground in Halton.

3.2 New duties

- 3.2.1 The Government gave the responsibility for the regulation and enforcement of business closures to Environmental Health and Trading Standards. Given the resource issues for Trading Standards and some capacity in the Environmental Health Team resulting from the business closures, the decision was taken that Environmental Health would lead on the issue in Halton and Trading Standards would provide support if formal enforcement action was necessary. Environmental Health have dealt with all business closure matters.

3.3 Scams

- 3.3.1 Scammers will target people who they believe are likely to be in vulnerable situations or they will create a vulnerable situation so that the target will act without thinking – bank scam phone calls are an example of the latter. The pandemic has provided scammers with a fertile feasting ground: most of the population has found themselves in a vulnerable situation at some point since the pandemic began. This might be because of worries over personal and family health, finances or the impact of loneliness during the lockdown.
- 3.3.2 Well known scams have proliferated, particularly those involving bank and PayPal accounts, and those services that became even more important during lockdown e.g. mobile phone contracts, movie and TV streaming services and the TV licence.
- 3.3.3 New scams have emerged which are specifically about Covid: fines for breaching the lockdown rules; the sale of fake test kits; the sale fake or non-existent PPE; fake health visitors and fake funeral directors.
- 3.3.4 The Scams Officers have been unable to undertake their normal 1-2-1 visits to the 160 people we are working with on the scams project. Instead, the officers have maintained contact via regular phone calls and some have told us that this contact has been a lifeline for them.
- 3.3.6 We worked with Adult Social Care to introduce protocols for their staff who had moved from visiting to conducting reviews over the phone and we publicised this safe way of working on iCAN.
- 3.3.7 We became aware of a scam email, directed at care homes, offering antibody testing kits when antibody testing was not available. The company was reported to The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency and Adult Social Care were able to advise care homes that they should not respond.
- 3.3.8 The Trading Standards Manager was interviewed about scams on BBC Radio Merseyside in May. The item was broadcast on the same day.

3.4 iCAN and awareness raising

- 3.4.1 Between the 1st March 2020 and 26th June 2020 the Service has issued 74 iCAN warnings about scams. During the same period last year, the Service issued 11 iCAN Warnings.
- 3.4.2 Working with IT, we have expanded the iCAN system to use the corporate address book to send iCAN messages to all HBC staff and members. Using the live corporate address book means that each time a message is sent any new staff or councillors are picked up automatically.

3.4.3 Recognising that most of the Government's information on the pandemic was through digital channels, the Service identified a gap in information provision for people who were not able to access the internet. A Covid-19 information pack was created and posted to 169 people whom we knew did not have digital access. The pack covered scams and how to avoid being caught out; the help available for the shielded and the high-risk groups; information on how to volunteer safely; advice on mental well-being and details of local and national support agencies. An electronic version of the information was also provided to iCAN members.

3.4.4 We identified supermarket delivery box schemes and a telephone ordering service for groceries – confirming with the latter the means of operating the scheme to remove the likelihood of scammers being able to fake the service. The information was circulated via iCAN.

3.4.5 Many of the iCAN messages have been shared on Twitter and have been read 91,268 times.

They have been shared on Facebook and reached 98,700 people.

They have been turned into press releases and several have appeared in the Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News Papers and the Liverpool Echo. Assuming the articles were read according to the papers' normal distribution levels, it means that the messages have reached over 113,00 people via printed media.

The combined figure for the reach of the messages, excluding the number of iCAN members who received the messages directly, is 302,968. Officer time has been the only cost.

3.5 **Price Gouging**

3.5.1 The start of the pandemic saw a minority of retailers hiking prices, or price gouging, on basic food staples, toilet rolls, hand sanitiser and medicines. Retail Price Maintenance (which put controls on the price of food) was abolished many years ago. Since then retailers have been able to charge whatever price they wish for the goods they sell, and increase prices whenever they want, provided the price indicated is the price they charge. Whilst there is no legislation to prevent price gouging, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced that they would take action to make sure that traders didn't exploit the situation and they would consider any evidence that companies may have broken competition or consumer protection law.

3.5.2 The CMA introduced an online reporting form for consumers; information about this was circulated on iCAN. The Service reported two instances of price gouging in Halton to the CMA.

3.6 Personal Protective Equipment

- 3.6.1 The service regulates the safety and labelling of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplied to the consumer market. The Government has eased the labelling requirements for the labelling of PPE for supplies through the Government portal – such supplies such not reach the consumer market. Nationally there have been reports of non-compliant PPE being offered for sale.
- 3.6.2 We investigated one Halton retailer whose online business was diversifying into face masks for the first time. He was offering non-compliant face masks for sale. He accepted advice and removed the products from sale.
- 3.6.3 We investigated a complaint of a Halton trader selling non-compliant face masks but found that the masks were genuine.
- 3.6.4 We investigated a Halton resident who had distributed flyers offering 'Staysafe packs' containing gloves, face masks and hand sanitiser. The resident admitted that he did not have any stocks of the items for sale and he agreed not to distribute any leaflets and not to take any orders. An iCAN warning was issued to warn residents.
- 3.6.5 We investigated a company who had approached the HBC procurement team offering PPE with very quick delivery when most suppliers were out of stock. We found the offer to be bogus and alerted the National Anti-Fraud Network who alerted all member local authorities.

3.7 Loan sharks

Anticipating an increase in loan shark activity, the Service has been working with the national Illegal Money Lending Team to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks.

In April the Illegal Money Lending Team children's competition. Arranged for competition to be circulated on corporate social media account.

In May, the Trading Standards Manager recorded a podcast with the Illegal Money Lending Team to talk about the work the Service had done in partnership with the Police in Halton. The podcast is now available on Apple, Google and Spotify.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES [\(click here for list of priorities\)](#)

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The health impacts associated with being scammed or being involved with a loan shark are well known. Awareness raising helps people to protect themselves by understanding how scammers and loan sharks work and how to deal with them.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Scammers and loan sharks are criminals who affect the safety of residents. Likewise, the supply of fake PPE will fail to provide the claimed protection to the wearer, leaving them vulnerable to the danger they are trying to protect themselves from.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None – the report is for information only

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| REPORT TO: | Safer Policy and Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th July 2020 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Director of Public Health |
| PORTFOLIO: | Environmental Services, Health and Wellbeing |
| SUBJECT: | Covid-19 update Environmental Health |
| WARDS: | Borough wide |

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the board on the work of the Environmental Health service since March 2020. It sets out the routine services that have been maintained or adapted and the activities carried out directly in response to Covid 19.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Direct response to COVID 19.

3.1.1 Business closures and COVID Safe workplaces

The Environmental Health (EH) team assumed responsibility for enforcing the Health Protection (Corona Virus Restrictions) Regulations 2020. Whilst the police focussed on the movement of individuals and gatherings EH dealt with business closures. In accordance with Government guidance EH adopted the 4 E's approach to compliance, Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce.

No formal enforcement action has been required most businesses have complied with the regulations voluntarily. A small number of businesses have been requested to close or amend their trading practices but this has mainly been due to confusion over the regulations as restrictions have been gradually lifted.

Initially all non essential retail, entertainment and hospitality venues where the public could gather were closed. On the 15th June non essential retail premises were permitted to open. EH liaised with the regeneration team regarding the reopening of town centres. From the 4th July pubs, cafes, restaurants and hairdressers will be permitted to open. However close contact services such as beauty, nail bars and tattooists must remain closed.

All businesses that are permitted to open must follow the government guidance to ensure that their premises are COVID safe for both employees and customers. EH are responsible for promoting and enforcing compliance with this guidance in workplaces.

Separate guidance has been issued for a range of businesses sectors but the essential controls relevant to all sectors are;

- Undertaking a COVID 19 risk assessment
- Encourage regular handwashing
- Ensure anyone who has symptoms stays away from work and engages with the test and trace service
- Implement social distancing measures
- Regular cleaning of key areas such as toilets, rest rooms and hand contact surfaces
- Encourage home working where possible

Since March 2020 EH have dealt with 122 requests or concerns raised about business closures or social distancing measures from businesses, employees and the public.

A liaison group has been formed between Cheshire police and regulatory service leads for each Cheshire authority to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to enforcement of the regulations.

In addition the food safety team have provided advice and guidance to 53 food businesses to enable them to adapt their businesses to comply with the corona virus regulations.

3.1.2. Outbreak Management

Each local authority has been required to draw up corona virus outbreak control plans to manage local outbreaks as part of the Government's national testing and contact tracing programme. If a localised outbreak is identified then the outbreak will be managed by the local authority working with Public Health England. EH will primarily be involved in dealing with outbreaks associated with workplaces although the knowledge and experience within the team enables resources to be deployed across a range of settings.

3.1.3 Covid 19 Support HUB

During the early stages of the lockdown while some routine services were suspended the team assisted the council support hub by providing delivery drivers for the community shop food delivery scheme and assisted public health colleagues with the prescription advice and delivery service.

3.2 Routine Environmental Health Work

3.2.1 Business continuity

As soon as the lockdown period was implemented and staff were required to work from home EH implemented the established business continuity plans to ensure it responded to urgent priority 1 services. These services were maintained and included response to a potential food poisoning outbreak, supporting risk and emergency planning following a large fire in Widnes and prohibition of an unsafe house.

3.2.2 Noise complaints

There has been a significant increase in domestic noise nuisance complaints during the lockdown period. In total 210 complaints were received from 16th March to date compared with 53 for the same period the previous year. This represents a 400% increase and has had a considerable impact on the mental health of some residents.

Initially the service was operated remotely and the installation of sound recording equipment was suspended to comply with social distancing requirements. However installation of sound recording equipment has now been resumed following implementation of a revised risk assessment and safe system of work.

3.2.3 Pest control

The team are currently only undertaking treatments for rats outdoors. The service was initially suspended for a short period but reinstated after a revised risk assessment and safe system of work were implemented. Routine Indoor treatments remain suspended. In undertaking a pest control treatment operatives normally have to check most rooms in a property and will potentially visit multiple households a day. The risk to both householders and our staff is considered too high to resume this service at this time. However cases of rats inside properties will be reviewed on a case by case to ensure vulnerable people are protected.

In common with other areas of the UK there has been a considerable increase in rat activity after the last 6 months. Since the start of the year the pest control team have dealt with 1172 rat complaints compared with 703 for the same period in 2019. This represents an increase of 65%. EH have received approval to urgently advertise a vacant pest control operative post to ensure the team can meet demand and resume treatments services for other pest species.

3.2.4 Food Safety Inspections

In accordance with guidance issued by the Government's Food Standards Agency routine food safety inspections have been suspended. The team have continued to respond to urgent cases that suggest an imminent risk to health and have sampled food from business offering a takeaway service. The team are making regular contact with business owners remotely to provide advice and guidance.

With the reopening of the hospitality sector on the 4th July there will be a gradual resumption of the routine food safety inspection programme. A revised risk assessment and safe system of work have been developed to ensure the safety of staff. This will involve an alternative method of conducting an inspection for the foreseeable future.

There has been a significant increase in new food business registrations since April 2020 with 44 new businesses registering in this period. Many of these are small home run operations to provide food for delivery. This is likely to be a direct response to the lockdown. Whilst food shops and takeaways have been allowed to remain open many people have wanted to avoid visits to shops and have opted for delivery or collection services.

3.2.5 Remote working

The environmental team have continued to undertake observations for pollution, nuisance, waste and odour complaints within the borough. This has mostly involved officers travelling from home. Remote working is likely to continue for some time. However with the gradual reopening of the economy it is inevitable a small number of officers will need to operate out of council offices on a rota basis.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The work of the environmental health team contributes to the health and wellbeing of the boroughs residents. The EH team will be involved in covid 19 outbreak managements

6.4 A Safer Halton

The EH team are actively promoting and enforcing the requirement for businesses to be COVID safe

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The work of the EH team to ensure a safe retail environment will contribute to the recovery of our town and local centres

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None – the report is for information only

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| REPORT TO: | Safer Policy and Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th July 2020 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources |
| PORTFOLIO: | Community Safety |
| SUBJECT: | Covid19 – New working arrangements |
| WARDS: | Borough wide |

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The impact of the Coronavirus is being felt in our communities in many different ways, and will be personal to each individual, couple or family. This report sets out the range of services that Halton Community Safety Partnership have put in place during the COVID 19 Pandemic to support the community.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **the report be noted; and**
- 2) **the Board consider the information presented and raise any questions of interest or points of clarification following the presentation.**

3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 **Safer Halton Partnerships number one objective is helping communities to be and feel safe. During this time, a wide range of services and support continues to be available throughout Halton to respond to concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour and other issues that impact on community safety.**

4.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 Community Safety/ASB and Crime/Police

The Constabulary is now shifting between the operational and response phases with regards to COVID-19. This means we are seeking to put the LPU Superintendents back in to their permanent postings. Laura Marler will therefore return to Halton on Saturday 6th June and Martin Cleworth will return to his role at Warrington.

4.2 Widnes Policing Update

Please see below, a summary of the previous month (including weekend)

- The patrol plan is reduced but focused- but we have also been dealing with a wider range of incidents as life returns to a new normal
- The Police are still actively patrolling in high visibility clothing, engaging, explaining and encouraging and enforcing only as a last resort
- Also there has been a strong emphasis and extra attention paid to vulnerable victims, especially from our schools officer and beat managers a top priority during this second phase of lockdown. This is part of our daily briefing.
- There has been a slight increase in crime (10%) - officers are investigating all incidents all but no repeats, patterns or matters for consideration
- We have had a limited amount of - off road bikes this weekend, largely due to the force off road motorbike team that did an excellent job.
- Please note that there has been an increase in ASB, a number of those are COVID related
- The tip appears to have settled down now in terms of vehicles on the highway

4.3 Runcorn Policing Update

Last week we have had an increase in demand both Covid related and normal business.

- Op Scrambler incidents are up- Daresbury Firs is a hotspot for this as well as the usual. The team ran an Operation this week on lates and seized 2 bikes in separate incidents. These particular bikes have been responsible for a great deal of ASB recently. The feedback on social media from our posts relating to the seizures, shows how much concern this behaviour causes the majority in our communities.
- Asylum Seekers- We had just one report stating that large groups of AS' were congregating in Preston Brook. Our continuous patrols have not confirmed this, we have only ever seen them acting safely and appropriately as they walk from and back to the hotel. We are in contact with the Spar and again this week they state they have no issues or concerns, the AS socially distance and are always courteous and considerate. We did have one male reported as missing for a few days this week, who has now been found and returned.

- Reports of Covid breaches are increasing as expected, people are losing patience and also the slight lift of restrictions has led to a more complacent attitude by some. We are still focusing on education and encouraging rather than enforcement. This may increase much more so after the weekends top news story!
- One of this week's great results was the arrest of a Liverpool drug dealer. He was arrested exiting a taxi and entering a house in Runcorn which we had intelligence was involved in the supply of drugs. The 4 local people within the property have also been arrested. The team recovered significant quantities of Crack cocaine and heroin. This is a significant disruption to an established County Lines Team.
- There has been a notable rise in reported incidents in relation to off road bikes a total of 22 over a 7 day period, and much talk over social media around this issue and the impact on the community. We all know the historical difficulties in dealing with this, and we are seizing large numbers thanks to community intel, but the partnership approach is key to this. Insp Khan's team deal with OP Scrambler and we will be working around the target hardening possibilities and a collaborative approach.
- Lastly, Runcorn LPU have concluded Operation Birthday this weekend. We pushed the message to the communities that as our beat teams usually engage with their communities at schools, parish council meetings, religious gatherings, community events and these were all cancelled- this was a way we could still connect with the public whilst putting a smile on faces in difficult times. We all know how important birthdays are to young children, and how upset they all were not being able to celebrate. A PC Panda socially distanced visit and small gift (provided by our valuable retail and housing partners) made all the difference. It's not just the 160 + individuals we visited that this initiative impacted on – almost every visit the whole street would come out and sing and clap along.

4.4 Operation Pandas: What is it?

Operation Pandas is the name of the internal major incident response stood up by Cheshire police. It covers the response, management and coordination of all aspects of Coronavirus and its affects on the internal aspects of the Constabulary. It sits side by side to the external multi agency major incident response (LRF) responding to Coronavirus (Operation TALLA) which is run out of the Joint Tactical Command centre (JTCC). These 2 operations rooms literally sit side by side and work in partnership.

Op Pandas is best described as a hybrid major incident room. It is part major incident command, part major investigation room, part strategic change and projects. It has aspects of all of these and more present and has brought in skill sets as it has stood up to meet the unique challenges that Coronavirus has brought.

Op Pandas command structure has a Gold (Chief Officer) who has oversight.

Op Pandas has a silver commander sitting across the internal and external tactical command and coordination

Op Pandas then has a number of bronze commanders that have responsibility for operation, or functional command aspects and feed into silver. For example Insp Dixon is Community Bronze Supt Crowcroft is Public Order Bronze etc

The operations room has an Operations bronze commander running and coordinating the information and response from all the bronzes, and acting as a hub to problem solve quickly as the incident progresses, or issues are identified.

4.5 School Liaison

The team have been doing home visits in company with a PCSO to students homes who have not been accessing education and the online platforms as expected. We offer them assistance with accessing online apps/school website. Update passwords or print out homework and drop off etc. A VPA will be submitted as and when necessary/required.

Its business as usual regarding crimes and outcomes. If beat manager/uniform colleagues require us to do a RJ/Community outcome. As an example one was done in the hallway of a home address last week. Not ideal but needs must at this time.

We have sent out PowerPoints to cover the main areas of concern. E Safety, ASB etc.. We have sent out monthly newsletters with current information on. We have also sent out a "We are with you" contact sheet, to support parents as lockdown restriction are lifted.

The team have ordered and received some CCE leaflets to distribute to the schools. (I have supplied you with one). These will be up in all schools for the attention of staff and Safeguarding leads.

All schools are on the same page with regards to social distancing and signs etc. – they are awaiting further instruction from DOE and Government guidance. I visit the schools as normal and offer my support when needed.

5.0 Domestic Abuse

Our main concerns are DA/DV as we don't have the usual 3rd party opportunities via schools etc. We are pushing the Open Door multi agency comms, Arriva buses, all retailers, pharmacies and Apex taxis are displaying the posters. Suzi Williams and Jane Tetlow (schools officers) have also done joint visits with staff from Bridge school on those not attending school. Visited

on pretext of checking welfare, delivering Easter eggs, but also to reinforce message we are still here and to protect and prevent any harm to those most vulnerable.

Our local DA service has reported a slight increase in DA self-reporting /none-Police referrals this week but this is still lower than usual.

- We are hoping to get Op Enhance back on-line in the next week or so.
- Refuge is full, we have three victims who are in a position to move out and we are supporting them to facilitate these moves, this will free up some space for any new referrals coming through.
- Grange way Court should be online shortly, offering an additional 4 units.
- Cheshire Police held a real time on-line DA Q & A session last week, they were supported by each locality to provide a DA specialist to support this.

5.1 Raising awareness – Domestic Abuse

There are many volunteers working within the community that have not had the opportunity to attend any HBC domestic abuse awareness training as part of their induction. We recognise the important work that volunteers are doing in many roles supporting the most vulnerable people within our community; as such they may be the only person an individual may see beyond those they are locked down with. Recognising this as an opportunity to have more reach, HBC developed a quick guide to domestic abuse, with details as to how to reach out for help if any of our volunteers are concerned about someone they are supporting. Adult Safeguarding have reported a slight increase in there referrals relating to domestic abuse, this underlines the important and observant work of carers and volunteers in our community.

5.2 HBC Press Releases

Numerous press releases have been circulated gaining local media attention and radio support, this press release was used by Wire FM as a sound bite.

[COVID-19 and potential impact on those experiencing domestic abuse](#)

[We know that this is a difficult and worrying time for everyone – but particularly so for adults and children living with domestic abuse, and the professionals working hard to support them. For those people experiencing domestic abuse, we want you to know that you are not alone. Our local services are available and can offer you help even if you are unable to leave your home due to COVID-19.](#)

If you, or a child or any one in your family are in immediate danger you should call 999.

The Halton Domestic Abuse Service is working together with Halton Borough Council and Cheshire Police to ensure that we maintain essential services, and have contacts for anyone who is affected by domestic abuse or is concerned about domestic abuse and needs to talk to someone during the weeks to come.

What happens behind closed doors doesn't need to stay there...

To access free support tips and advice please use this link :
<https://www.openthedoorcheshire.org.uk/>

If you need to speak to someone for help relating to domestic abuse, please contact your local support service 0300 11 11 247 to speak to the Halton Domestic Abuse Service.

5.3 Weekly Open the door Webchat

Each week across Cheshire, a live webchat session is held where members of the public can log in and ask questions about domestic abuse to local professionals, this gives members of our community the chance to reach out on a different platform, this is completely new and direct response to Covid-19.

The response has been really positive, questions have been submitted from a range of people including victims past and those still suffering from ex-partners concerned family and friends as well as professionals working in front lines services.

5.4 Local Domestic Abuse Service:

Refuge:

As the Refuge is modelled into self-contained units, we have been able to continue to provide safe accommodation in all 12 of the units available. The Refuge is in full operation, is 'business as usual', and is supporting families to stay safe during this especially testing time. Additional Covid-19 accommodation spaces have been identified however, so far we have not needed to mobilise this to support victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Complex cases:

Those individuals being supported as part of the Complex Case Accommodation Project continue to be supported either within the Refuge or via community support contact and support being regularly undertaken.

Community Support:

The Independent Domestic Violence Advisors are working from home due to Covid 19 and the difficulties meeting victims face-to-face at the moment, they are offering regular telephone/text or email support and safety planning with those victims it is safe to be in contact with. Should an IDVA be unable to contact a victim or if they have safety concerns, Cheshire Police have agreed to visit victims within the community.

5.5 MARAC

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, it is at this meeting those victims identified as high risk are discussed in greater detail combing what information is known about the victim, the perpetrator, children and other vulnerable adults who share or frequent the address. The Halton MARAC has always been very well attended since its inception around 2005, it has always been a face-to-face meeting. Due to the current restrictions, this meeting has continued to be supported however, virtual meeting have been undertaken with key partner agency representatives calling in and sharing information in order to recognise the risks for that family and develop a personalised action plan to minimise harm. Reports back from colleagues supporting the MARAC meeting, are very positive that the virtual meetings are well supported, the objectives of the meeting are being fulfilled and more expediently than the usual meeting.

5.6 COVID-19 Technological Support

Changing Lives our domestic abuse provider has been supported in achieving additional funding. This new funding will be used to provide local children and families who are socially excluded, at no time has it been more important for children and young people to have access to the internet so they can complete their homework, connect to family and friends and take on-line fitness classes that their peers are accessing. In addition, the equipment will be able to be used by victims who need to access Universal Credit, connect to the outside world and support their mental health too.

5.7 MHCLG Covid-19 Emergency Support Funding for DA Services

A bid was submitted to the MHCLG, as a consortium bid between Changing Lives Halton / Cheshire Without Abuse East / Warrington Women's Aid. This bid is to specifically add resilience to accommodation based services (e.g. Refuge), this bid has been awarded and Halton will receive £77,200 (East = £83,200 and Warrington £77,200).

This funding will enable critical support to be provided , across three of the Cheshire authorities and will respond to an escalation in the level of risk in referrals. Each area is unique and has developed locally appropriate solutions but the reduction in Housing benefit income, fundraised income and earned income has come alongside staff shortages, a need to increase hours and develop alternative solutions. This grant will allow our consortia to meet the changing need

5.8 After COVID-19

Research on Savelives website, An Exploratory Investigation: Post-disaster Predictors of Intimate Partner Violence suggests that following COVID-19, we may have a sharp increase in the number of victims and families needing support due to domestic abuse. Both the adult and children service providers in Halton have been supported to submit additional funding bids to the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner to increase available resources to provide direct support victims of domestic abuse in both Runcorn and Widnes; the PCC was successful in achieving additional funds from the Ministry of Justice, Halton await the decision of the commissioner.

6.0 Alcohol/Licensing Night time Economy

Obviously an unparalleled situation hit us all with the Covid 19 Pandemic and not many more so than the licensed premises throughout the borough. The main difficulty and challenge was to meet the demands for information and deal with the range of emotions of all our operators, who have gone from the fear of having to close their businesses, pouring thousands of pounds of stock down the drain, how they can survive economically, how and will they ever be able to operate again to the fear of the virus itself with several suffering, friend and family losses. The main difficulty we have had is that we had no answers for them, with little to no information coming from government, as all seek to deal with the unprecedented situation

We have made ourselves available on a 24/7 basis with our whatsapp group which has grown in number throughout the lockdown, in the main simply being there to listen and offer advice and encouragement. I have to thank Sgt Graham Robinson, Licensing Officer Lesley Halliday of Cheshire Police, who too have made themselves available throughout to support in whatever way they can.

You will have seen in the press that there are dozens of premises across the country who have been caught illegally opening, operating, selling alcohol, hiding customers and even though we are one of the hardest hit areas of the UK I am pleased and proud to report that none of our venues have gone down this road, choosing to stay in contact with the licensing department in working through the Pandemic.

The task now, which has already started is to advise venues on how they may be able to re-open in the coming weeks ensuring safety of staff, customers and of course the NHS. Meetings with operators are already in place to visit venues to offer support and guidance. Unfortunately we believe there are already some possible casualties who believe that with the current 2m social distancing in place their venues are simply too small to survive and we are monitoring the government advice on a daily basis.

Pub Watch chairs and the licensing department have kept in close communication throughout and have filtered what little information we have been able to glean to operators via Social media and the Pub Watch website.

On a positive note the atmosphere seems to have changed for many in recent days to one of optimism. Our task now is to ensure that any opening takes place within the guidance laid down.

You will be aware that the licensing department has taken responsibility for the stryker cameras and during the entire period of lockdown they have and will continue to be monitored on a daily basis, with anomalies of social distancing and gatherings being reported to the Police. We have to say although there have been one or two issues, in the main our resident have followed the rules in place. We have continued to deal with the request for CCTV footage from other bodies and the legal profession regards incidents and RTCs in the borough and again we have had 24/7 contact with our own Control Room.

Again and as usual the daily Halton VR data base is scrutinised for any licensing issues and breaches and although few and far between all have been dealt with expediently with the full support of all our licensed premises.

It has to be said that this has been the most difficult situation I have dealt with in over 35 years in licensing. Listening to the emotions and situations our operators are going through has been difficult to say the least and I would like to thank my manager Mike Andrews and the Community Safety Team for all their support.

7.0 ASB Victim and Witness Support Service

To ensure the continuity of the service in these unprecedented times I penned a 'press release' (see below).



Covid 19 Press
Release Final April 2

The suspension of 'face to face' contact has resulted in contact maintained with service users via telephone, email and text. Where the victim or witness is, 'vulnerable' 'Face Time' contact is also available. Needs assessments and support planning has been conducted over the telephone.

In addition to the, aforementioned press release I have contacted the local policing units at Runcorn and Widnes (Beat Managers, ASB Officers and Inspectors), registered social landlords (ASB Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officers) and community based organisations on regular basis publicising the service.

I feel this regular contact and the additional stress placed on the community during the period of confinement has seen a marked increase in the number of cases on my caseload; the figure now stands at **40**. This equates to an increase of 16 since the 7th May 2020.

7 cases have requested me to broker a solution (utilising my skills as a mediator) for a series of neighbour disputes with excessive noise being a contributing factor to the errant behaviour. The other **9** are at the other end of the nuisance and anti-social behaviour spectrum with **threats of violence, harassment and malicious communications** key components of the behaviour experienced by the victims.

During the period of restrictions on activity, I responded to the needs of victims who have contacted Halton Direct Link. The advice provided ranges from providing the victim with a clear understanding of the difference between reporting nuisance behaviour via 101 and 999. Where there is a threat of harm or damage to property 999 is appropriate with the realistic expectation of police officers being dispatched to the location. For other incidents/nuisance, behaviour without the risk of harm a victim would dial 101. With the agreement of the victim/ aggrieved party, I advocate on their behalf with the police and their ensuring they receive updates on progress made to address the behaviour. Where I appropriate, I referred them to other sources of specialist support for example, Housing Solutions.

As I stated, I have been in regular contact with the appropriate staff at the local policing units and with social landlords to ensure victims are supported and relevant advice, intelligence is passed on appropriately. In keeping with this service delivery standard, I am trying to encourage the use of **Community Protection Notices**, which are designed to address the types of behaviours that have become prevalent since the restrictions were imposed. (Community Protection Notices are for behaviour **that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the community, is persistent and is unreasonable including on private land for people aged 16 and above** as per the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)

A breach of a Community Protection Notice is a criminal offence and can be the platform for other orders such Criminal Behaviour Order to be pursued. In addition, I have provided the contact details of landlords whose tenants are the perpetrators of nuisance and anti-social behaviour and sent out letters to these landlords inviting them to discuss the alleged behaviour and what can be done to address the behaviour.

Despite the suspension of the **Multi-Agency Meeting**, I have requested and received updates on the cases discussed at the last meeting in February 2020

and encouraged agencies to make referrals with the option of convening a 'Skype' meeting to address the behaviour.

With the agreement of my line manager Mike Andrews, I have convened two **Multi-Agency Consultation Meetings** to discuss the viability of pursuing (Civil Injunctions and Community Behaviour Orders for example) when the behaviour of an individual compromises their safety and wellbeing and the health and safety of the wider community.

Summary

The absence of face-to-face contact and the reliance on other forms of communication has not impaired the ability of the ASB Victim and Witness Support Service to provide the three distinct levels of support to victims and witnesses of nuisance behaviour, whilst ensuring service delivery/quality standards have been maintained. This period of adjustment has resulted in me becoming adept in the use of Skype as a meeting/conferencing tool. I will endeavour to utilise Skype more readily in my office-based practice in the future.

8.0 The challenges for Counter Terrorism and Channel Policing during lockdown:

Chief Supt Nik Adams, Vice-chair of the CT Advisory Network and National Co-ordinator for Prevent recently spoke to The Independent newspaper about the challenges for CT Policing during lockdown. He explained that CT Policing has been working tirelessly to prepare for and manage the impact of COVID-19.

Across the country, Prevent colleagues have developed new ways of working focussed on three priorities:

- We have changed the way we work to cope with reduced access to multi-agency support and face to face mentoring. Channel panels, the multi-agency panels that support those who are at greatest risk of radicalisation, are now being held virtually to ensure that we continue to work together to understand and meet the needs of the client.
- We have developed a national communications campaign to mitigate the reduction in referrals from partners, (particularly schools, where teachers are often the first to notice behavioural changes). We are sharing information with families about radicalisation risks and the work of Prevent to build the trust, confidence and knowledge needed to help people to share their concerns. More than ever, families are most likely

to spot concerns and we need to be ready to help. Advice is available to families through The Let's Talk About It website.

- We are focussed on managing all cases effectively, paying particular attention to those where isolation could increase vulnerability. We are adapting our approach as we identify new risks.

Our lives changed suddenly in March, and that had a profound impact on many areas of safeguarding. We will stay safe by looking out for each other and knowing how to reach out for support. We are still here and we stand ready to help.

8.1 Digital safety during Covid-19:

The impact of COVID-19 means that most of us will be at home for an extended period and are likely to be spending large amounts of time online. Extremists are using the outbreak to promote hateful views, conspiracy theories blaming a particular group for the virus and to spread misinformation regarding these groups.

A better understanding of digital safety will help professionals, carers and parents safeguard vulnerable individuals from a range of harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise and exploit vulnerable people. The Government has encouraged Internet Service Providers to allow parents to easily filter content to put you in control of what your child can see online. The UK Safer Internet Centre provides guidance on how to do this and Internet Matters also provide step by step guides on how to setup parental controls.

Behaviour and vulnerabilities may be changing due to the unusual circumstances we are now living in. The signs that something may not be right are many and varied and could be an indication that harmful influencers are seeking to exploit vulnerable individuals. You may know that person and you may feel able and want to speak with them, ask them about what they are viewing, who they are speaking to and how they are feeling.

If you suspect someone is being exploited online: There are a number of resources available to help you understand and protect your vulnerable individuals from different harms online. A selection of which are included here:

[Let's Talk About It](#): Working together to prevent terrorism, online safety advice

[Educate Against Hate](#): DFE resources about hate and extremism for teachers and parents

[Educate Against Hate Parents' Hub](#): Advice for guardians to keep young people safe from extremism

[Think you know](#): Activities for all age groups to build resilience and awareness online

[Online safety](#): NSPCC - details the key issues faced by young people online.

9.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The policy implications of the review relate primarily to the Safer Halton priority. However this is a cross cutting work area which has wider implications on other areas of council business.

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

11.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the health, safety and well-being of young people.

11.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

11.3 A Healthy Halton

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

11.4 A Safer Halton

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

11.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

12.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

13.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

14.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

14.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.