

Public Document Pack



Safer Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 10 September 2024 at 6.30 p.m.
Town Hall, Runcorn

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Chris Carlin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Sandra Baker	Labour
Councillor Laura Bevan	Labour
Councillor Irene Bramwell	Labour
Councillor Louise Goodall	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Aimee Skinner	Labour
Councillor Pamela Wallace	Labour

Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or e-mail kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 19 November 2024

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

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
2. MINUTES	1 - 4
3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
<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>	
4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	5 - 7
5. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ISSUES	
(A) TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE UPDATE	8 - 17
(B) COMMUNITY, SAFETY & PROTECTION DIVISION UPDATE	18 - 22

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 June 2024 at the The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Carlin (Vice-Chair), Baker, Bevan, Bramwell, Goodall, V. Hill, A. Lowe, Ratcliffe, Skinner and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, R. Freeman and N. Goodwin.

Also in attendance: E. Dudell and J. Davidson

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

SAF1 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chair announcements.

SAF2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

SAF3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

SAF4 SAFER PPB ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2023 – MAY 2024

The Annual Report of the Safer Policy and Performance Board was received which outlined the contributions made to the ongoing work of the Board.

Members commented they had not received further updates or matters progressed by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). It was suggested that it might be helpful for the newly appointed PCC to attend a future

Action

meeting.

Discussions ensued regarding parking issues around the Borough and it was noted that Halton was the only Cheshire Authority that did not have responsibility for traffic/parking enforcements. Officers reassured the Board that a piece of work was being undertaken to look at parking enforcement, however, in order to change the powers, this would have to be authorised by the Department of Transport. A robust model would therefore need to be in place before taking this forward. Members would be updated on progress in due course.

A Member of the Board requested how they could access information on problematic hotspots in the Borough for fly tipping and officers agreed to provide a breakdown by Ward.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF5 SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Probation delivered a joint presentation to Members of the Board which provided an update on the work undertaken in the approach to Serious Violence Duty.

Serious Violence Duty became a statutory requirement as of 31st January 2023. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, had been amended to include the priority for Community Safety Partnerships and placed a duty on a range of organisations to work together to have a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence. The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Office had co-ordinated this work across Cheshire and developed a strategic needs assessment and strategy. Additional funding to support this area of work was also managed through the PCC Office who had commissioned services in responding to this area of work.

The presentation highlighted:

- the Duty requirements;
- the Pan Cheshire approach;
- Cheshire's profile;
- long-term priorities and immediate actions;
- how impact and changes would be measured; and
- a summary of the current activity.

Also included in the presentation was a summary of

Director -
Community &
Green Space

the Serious Violence Delivery Plan 2024/25 and it was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken to understand the issues across Cheshire. Several working groups had been established to identify and analyse the strategic needs assessment and priorities; a five year strategy and a "plan on a page" for 2024-25 had also been developed.

The following additional information was noted, in response to Member's questions and discussions:

- Queensberry was an alternative educational provision which offered support to young people and their families through direct one-to-one intervention and group workshops. They aim to educate and raise awareness of the issues that affect communities and support those at the highest risk of involvement in serious violence or exploitation;
- All schools in Halton had been contacted by Queensberry;
- Queensberry receive referrals from professionals e.g. teachers, social workers etc.;
- Members gave examples of issues within their respective wards and were reassured that Halton was linked in with the various agencies and offers that were available within the programme;
- Members suggested that it might be helpful to present a report on the Queensberry provision to the Children, Young People and Families PPB and/or Council; and
- Members would be provided with a progress update in 12 months-time.

RESOLVED: That Members receive the presentation.

SAF6 ENFORCEMENT TEAM OVERVIEW, INCLUDING ANNUAL ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CASE REVIEW UPDATE.

The Board received a report which provided an update on the work carried out by the Enforcement Team which included:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (including two case studies);
- Environmental Crime and Waste Enforcement; and
- CCTV and The Control Report.

In addition to the report, Members of the Board were informed that:

- three CCTV units had been installed in the West

Director -
Community &
Green Space

Bank Ward which had already resulted in two fixed penalty notices; and

- a piece of work would be undertaken on signage for public areas regarding dog controls.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

Director -
Community &
Green Space

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

REPORT TO: Safer Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 10 September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Public Question Time
WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE 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 RECOMMENDATION: 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**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None identified.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None identified.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

None identified.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

None identified.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Safer Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	10 th September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of Public Health
PORTFOLIO:	Community Safety
SUBJECT:	Trading Standards Service update
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the work of the Trading Standards service and the contribution this work makes to the borough's public protection and community safety objectives.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) That the report be noted**
- 2) Endorse the multifaceted approach to both prosecute and disrupt illegal activity by seizing illegal and illicit products to remove them from the market.**
- 3) Partners sign up to and share the iCan alert system.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Trading Standards team provides a wide range of statutory services to protect consumers and legitimate businesses from unfair, misleading, or unsafe trading practices. These services include, (but are not limited to) weights and measures, product safety, age restricted sales, explosives, scams awareness, fair trading, doorstep crime, e-crime, fraud, counterfeit, and illicit goods - including tobacco and vapes.
- 3.2 The team also provide an enhanced consumer advice service to help consumers in Halton to enforce their own civil consumer rights.
- 3.3 The work of the team is intelligence led and focused on risk, ensuring that resources are targeted at those products and business that pose the greatest risk to consumers and legitimate business.
- 3.4 **Scams Awareness**
Anyone can become the victim of a scam. However, postal, telephone and doorstep scams are often targeted specifically at disadvantaged consumers or those in periods of vulnerability such as those who are isolated or suffering a bereavement. The National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team estimates that the detriment to UK consumers as a result of these scams is between £5 and £10 Billion a year. The Home

Office estimate that 1 in 17 adults were victims of fraud in 2023.

- 3.5 The perpetrators of fraud and scams are criminals. They use sophisticated techniques to target, manipulate and often coerce and control victims.
- 3.6 Many scams originate abroad and so in many cases it is not possible to identify a perpetrator. Where a UK based perpetrator can be identified the team will investigate any criminal activity and liaise with the appropriate agencies which may include the NTS Scams Team and the Police, when considering the appropriate enforcement action.
- 3.7 The focus of the service is to raise awareness of scams and provide residents with advice and guidance to prevent and protect them from becoming victims of scams. Where a resident is already the victim of a scam the team will work closely with the individual to provide support, advice and guidance to prevent them becoming a repeat victim.
- 3.8 Fraud is the most experienced crime in the UK. Victims can face devastating financial, emotional, and psychological harm. Statistics show that once someone is a victim of a scam they are twice as likely to be targeted again. Scam victims are more likely to need care in their own home or need to move into a care home, often as an additional cost to the local authority.
- 3.9 The team have developed referral routes with the police, Age UK, and the council's complex care teams. Awareness sessions have been provided to adult social care staff on how to identify individuals who may be vulnerable to scams and referral routes to Trading Standards. Further sessions are being delivered to the elderly and vulnerable throughout the Borough to increase awareness and prevent them becoming the victim of a scam.
- 3.10 **Scams Case Study**
An elderly resident lost £4000 to a friendship scam. These scams are essentially a form of grooming whereby the perpetrator befriends the victim online, usually via social media. Once they have gained the trust and confidence of the victim they start to request large sums of money. In this case regular support visits were made to prevent the resident becoming a repeat victim. Referrals were made to adult safeguarding and Age UK. The resident has recovered well from the incident and is continuing to live independently in the community.
- 3.11 **Doorstep Crime**
Doorstep crime involves residents, who are often elderly and vulnerable, being pressured into agreeing to work on their property. This can arise from a cold call at their door, or by the victim making contact with a trader that appears to be legitimate. The work is often unnecessary, and what may start off as a small job ends in the victim being pressured into further work, which is carried out to a poor standard, of little or no value, or not

done at all. The traders will often demand payment in cash and the price charged is often significantly higher than the true cost or value of the work undertaken. In many cases the price will rise, and the trader will make further demands for payment by exerting pressure or becoming aggressive. In some cases, the trader will offer to take the victim to the bank to coerce them into making a payment.

- 3.12 The team respond to many cases of doorstep crime each year. The numbers fluctuate and vary over the seasons. For example, in the summer there is often a spate of gardening and driveway complaints, or in the winter following poor weather there may be an increase in roofing complaints. Where a live incident is reported and there are suspected rogue traders at a consumer's property then a rapid response visit is carried out, alongside the Police. This is to safeguard the victim, prevent any money being handed over, and where necessary arrest any suspects for further investigation
- 3.13 The team investigate all complaints, and where an alleged crime has been committed and an offender can be identified, they will consider criminal action for any potential fraud or consumer protection offences. Where fraud or theft is suspected the police may investigate. The majority of doorstep crime offenders operate across borders and local authority boundaries and are part of much wider organised criminality as part of an Organised Criminal Group (OCG). The team liaise with neighbouring Trading Standards teams, the Police and partner agencies to ensure that intelligence is gathered and shared, and any enforcement action is coordinated.
- 3.14 Banks that are signed up to the Banking Protocol are trained to alert the Police and/or Trading Standards if they spot unusual transactions, for example a consumer making large cash withdrawals for home improvement work. If the Protocol is invoked, then the consumer will be prevented from withdrawing the money and Police and / or Trading Standards will intervene.
- 3.15 **Doorstep crime case studies**
A 90-year-old Widnes man with dementia was targeted by traders who demanded £9500 for work to his driveway. The victim was not aware what work had been agreed to and the trader did not provide the paperwork required by law. The police were contacted by the man's relatives after he went to withdraw £2000 in cash to pay the traders. Trading Standards officers intervened to prevent the victim losing more money and to negotiate a refund of money already paid. He was provided with a CCTV doorbell to further safeguard him, as part of an NTS funded scheme to help prevent repeat victimisation.
- 3.16 In another case an elderly victim was advised he needed a new roof and paid £9,900 to the trader. He was left with water pouring through the ceilings of his home. Following an expert report the work was found to have no value, and the roof had to be completely re-done at a further cost

to the victim. Following a criminal investigation, it was identified that the individual was involved in fraudulent activity across the North West and had previous convictions for similar offences. The prosecution has been joined with two other Trading Standards prosecutions in Stockport and Lancashire. The individual has pleaded guilty to all offences and will be sentenced in October at Preston Crown Court. He is expected to receive a significant custodial sentence and will be subject to a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) upon release which will prevent him from further trading.

3.17 The team are assisting the victim in attempting to obtain a refund for the £9,900 from their bank through the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). This follows a claim to the bank under the Contingent Reimbursement Model Code (the CRM Code) for Automated Push Payment (APP) scams. Under the Code, banks have to take a number of steps to protect customers and reimburse those who aren't to blame for the scam. APP scams occur when someone is tricked into sending money to a fraudster posing as a genuine payee.

3.18 **Illegal Money Lending**

In England, all local authorities have delegated powers to Birmingham City Council who operate the national Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT). Loan sharks can be reported through the IMLT's Stop Lone Sharks Website. [Home - Stop Loan Sharks](#) the site also provides advice and guidance to support and encourage victims to come forward and report loan sharks.

The Trading Standards team receive regular updates on the work of the IMLT and support this by signposting people to the stop loan sharks website and sources of advice and support such as CAB and Credit Union.

3.19 **Tobacco and Vapes**

The team have a range of powers to deal with the risks posed by illicit tobacco and vapes.

3.20 The trade in illicit tobacco includes products that may be counterfeit or illegally imported and sold illegally without the payment of VAT or excise duty. These products are sold at a fraction, often just a third of the price, of legitimate products. By evading taxation these products undermine the principal public health control on tobacco consumption. Through a combination of taxation and other legislation, such as the ban on smoking indoors, the rate of people smoking has reduced from 26% in 2000 to 13% in 2023. Illicit tobacco risks reversing the significant public health progress that has been made.

3.21 Over half of all smokers of illicit tobacco come from the most deprived socioeconomic groups. (source Gov.uk). The health risks associated with tobacco consumption are well documented. The sale of illicit tobacco therefore compounds the health inequalities experienced by these

groups.

- 3.22 According to data published by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), a public health charity established by the Royal College of Physicians, it is estimated that smoking costs the economy of Halton £111.7m each year. These costs are made up of:
- £70.3m due to productivity loss.
 - £36.4m Social Care costs, which includes the cost of informal care met by family and friends,
 - £4.4m for Healthcare, including hospital admissions and treatment by primary care services.
- 3.23 Vapes were developed by the tobacco industry in response to the indoor smoking ban which was introduced in the UK in 2007. Since their launch, vape products have been viewed as far less harmful to health than cigarettes and so have been promoted by public health practitioners as an aid to help people quit smoking.
- 3.24 However, there is now growing concern about the use of vape products by children and adults who have never previously smoked, thereby exposing them to the risk of becoming addicted to nicotine.
- 3.25 Legitimate vape products must be approved by the Medicines Health Care Regulatory Authority (MHRA), to ensure they meet standards relating to health and safety. The quantity and strength of nicotine within the products is also restricted. Illicit products are not MHRA approved and contain illegal quantities of Nicotine.
- 3.26 Test purchasing exercises undertaken by the team have found that shops involved in selling illicit tobacco and vapes have also sold tobacco and vape products to children.
- 3.27 Since 2019 the team have seized nearly 120,000 illegal cigarettes with a value of around £101,490.
- 3.28 So far in 2024 the team have seized around 5000 illegal vapes which have been removed from sale, with an estimated value of £35,000. Further proactive action is planned to target premises in the Borough and remove illegal vapes from sale.
- 3.29 The team have adopted a multi-faceted approach to tackle illicit tobacco and vapes. Using intelligence to target premises and disrupt criminal activity by seizing illegal and illicit products to remove them from the market. Prosecutions are taken against businesses and individuals where necessary.
- 3.30 The most recent approach is with the use of Closure Orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to close premises that are persistently found to sell illegal products, and also sell the illegal

products to children. This can be used as a standalone means to stop criminal activity or can be used in conjunction with other means such as a criminal prosecution.

- 3.31 The team works closely with partner agencies to investigate, prosecute and disrupt the criminals. Utilising funding available from the NTS Operation CeCe (tobacco) and Operation Joseph (vapes), to fund the use of tobacco search dogs and third-party test purchases.
- 3.32 With the recent introduction of track and trace legislation there are also additional sanctions for HMRC to fine businesses up to £10,000 for each seizure of illicit tobacco and to remove their ability to sell tobacco. Trading Standards are able to refer cases to HMRC to administer the sanction and provide the valuable intelligence regarding those involved in the illegal manufacture, importation or distribution of tobacco in the UK.
- 3.33 **Illegal Tobacco and Vapes case study.**
A retail premises trading as News Rack, in Albert Road, Widnes, was the subject of a lengthy Trading Standards investigation spanning three and a half years, which involved more than twenty complaints from the public. Traders operating at the premises were visited nine times during the period, resulting in three seizures of illegal tobacco and non-compliant vapes, worth thousands of pounds.
- 3.34 Despite the numerous visits, the seizures, and four warnings issued to the occupants of the premises, the traders continued to sell counterfeit tobacco and illicit vapes. There were two failed test purchases in which they sold to children under 18. It was clear for a number of reasons that a prosecution alone would not have had the desired effect of stopping the criminal activities associated with the premises.
- 3.35 During the most recent visit in April 2024, Trading Standards Officers seized over £10,000 of counterfeit tobacco and illegal vapes. During this visit the officers, assisted by 'Billy' a Wagtail tobacco seizure dog, uncovered two concealed units hidden behind a mirror and a staircase used to store illegal tobacco.
- 3.36 As a result of the continued use of the premises to cause nuisance, and to facilitate criminal activity, Trading Standards successfully obtained a Closure Order at the premises for the maximum permitted - 3 months. The application was made under The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and means the premises will now remain closed until 14th August 2024. It is planned to apply to the court and further extend the Order for an additional three months. Criminal action may still also be taken against individuals linked to any offences.
- 3.37 The news of the closure has been widely reported and has received praise from legitimate business owners and has prompted further intelligence being received about other premises who are involved in criminality. This sends a strong message that criminality of this nature will

not be tolerated in Halton.

- 3.38 A number of other premises have been warned about their conduct, and are being considered for a Closure Order, and another problem premise will be subject to an application to court for a closure order in the coming weeks (time of writing August 2024).
- 3.39 Licence reviews may also be utilised where premises are licensed under the Licensing Act 2006.
- 3.40 **Age Restricted Sales**
The Trading Standards team enforces a range of legislation that places age restrictions on certain products such as alcohol, tobacco, vapes, knives and fireworks. They work with premises selling age restricted products to advise and educate and promote age verification schemes such as Challenge 25 to help prevent sales being made to children who are under the legal age.
- 3.41 The team also undertake test purchase operations using child volunteers to test a retailer's system and see if they sell to age restricted products to children. This is targeted at premises where intelligence has been received regarding sales to those underage.
- 3.42 In the past 12 months 4 prosecutions have been successfully concluded at court resulting in 5 convictions and fines handed out for the sale to children under the legal age. Where further criminality has been identified at those premises, this will also be used as evidence towards other enforcement options, including considering a closure order at the premises, such as in the Newsrack case study above
- 3.43 **Consumer advice and the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline**
The main route for referrals into the Trading Standards team are via the national The Citizens Advice Consumer Service Helpline (CitA). CitA will provide initial basic advice to the consumer. Cases where there may be a criminal element requiring further investigation are referred on to the team. In addition, Halton is one of a very small number of local authorities that have retained a consumer advice function. If the consumer helpline has not been able to resolve an issue through the provision of basic advice, or that advice cannot be followed as the consumer has additional support needs, the case will be referred to the consumer advice team in Trading Standards for enhanced consumer advice. This aims to help consumers enforce their own civil consumer rights with support and guidance to secure a refund or redress for faulty or sub-standard goods or services. In some cases, this involves helping consumers prepare cases for the small claims court and liaising with a trader on behalf of the consumer to negotiate.
- 3.44 The civil and criminal team work together to try and obtain redress for the consumer, and also take any enforcement action where needed to prevent further consumer detriment.

3.45 In the last 12 months the civil advice service has helped Halton consumers achieve over £78,000 of civil redress, in cases where this would not have otherwise been possible without the intervention of the team.

3.46 **Product safety**

The team are responsible for enforcing various pieces of product safety legislation designed to ensure that all products intended for, or likely to be used by consumers, under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions are safe and do not pose a danger. Products subject to this legislation include, but are not limited to, electrical goods, cosmetic products, and toys.

3.47 **Product safety case study**

Most recently intelligence was received regarding the sale of mothballs which contained the chemical naphthalene which is highly flammable and toxic and presents a danger to humans, animals and the environment. Naphthalene has been banned for use in pesticides since 2008. It is understood some consumers in the Borough had been using these products in their garden as a cat repellent. The team seized a number of items and removed them from sale at the premises identified. Further proactive visits were then made to stores across the Borough to identify any further products being sold and ensure they were not on sale. Advice and guidance were provided to the traders involved.

3.48 **iCan Consumer Alert Network**

The team operate iCan a popular email alert service to warn consumers, business and community groups of scams and product safety information. There are currently 720 external recipients such as community groups, charities, agencies (such as the police) and members of the general public. iCan messages are also distributed to all HBC council staff and elected members.

3.49 The iCan system has been in maintenance in recent months, but it is now fully functioning. The number of iCan messages sent out will steadily increase in the coming weeks and months.

3.50 A recent alert was issued to warn residents about scam calls relating to Halton Help for Households scheme.

3.51 Individuals or organisations that wish to join iCan should email trading.standards@halton.gov.uk

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Trading Standards functions are statutory services. The Trading Standards team is an integral part of the Public Health department enabling the core Trading Standards functions to contribute to the borough's public health and community safety objectives.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The Trading Standards Team's work to tackle illicit tobacco and vapes contributes to the borough's public health objectives in reducing the prevalence of smoking and the harm caused by illicit and illegal products.

The team's work to investigate cases of doorstep crime, raise awareness of scams and support victims helps to maintain the wellbeing and independence of vulnerable adults.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The trading standards service supports the economy and legitimate business by ensuring a fair-trading environment by tackling rogue traders and businesses who seek to profit from illegal activity.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The work of the team to enforce legislation regarding age restricted products such as tobacco, alcohol and knives helps to protect children from the harms caused by these products. The work around product safety and unsafe items such as toys also protects children from harm.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The consumer advice function assists consumers to enforce their own civil consumer rights and obtain financial redress where appropriate.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None identified.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The team's work to investigate cases of doorstep crime, raise awareness of scams and support victims helps to protect the community and contributes to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no significant risks arising from his report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Safer Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	10 th September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director - Environment & Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Community Safety
SUBJECT:	Community, Safety & Protection Division Update
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the board on progress in the Community Safety & Protection division as it continues to develop since becoming established in February 2023.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The board has received various update reports on the divisions services that have continued to evolve since its formation, most recently enforcement and anti-social behaviour in June 2024, the Domestic Abuse service in February 2024, and Emergency Planning in September 2023.

3.2 Domestic Abuse Services

The Domestic Abuse service has continued to evolve since transferring into the Council in January 2023. The team is now on Council terms and conditions and has expanded; the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate staffing resource has increased as recommended in Halton's Safe Lives report. The staffing now also includes a Case Officer working with those that harm to support behaviour change and the service secured funding for a 12 month post/project an Advocate Educator who is working with health professionals in Halton's General Practice surgeries to raise awareness of domestic abuse, build confidence in raising this with patients to enable early interventions and sign post appropriately.

- 3.3 The service received 345 referrals during quarter one for victims of domestic abuse, comparator data is not available as the service transferred into the Council in January 2023. The average case is open to the service for 38 days and 109 cases left the service in a planned way having received an intervention.

- 3.4 The service began taking referrals for those that harm programme in

April, there have been 19 referrals to date, the current case load is 15 with 4 pending. The programme is 32 weeks; hence, the service has not reached a point of service leavers in a planned way; future updates will set out the direction of travel.

- 3.5 The service supports Halton's statutory partnership, the Domestic Abuse Partnership board. The board is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Safe Lives Report 2023, which provided areas of focus the Board are mobilising work programme to progress: -
- System wide approach
 - Training and workforce development
 - Authentic voice and communication toolkit
 - Children and young people
 - Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC's)
- 3.6 The Service Manager provided Member seminars relating to domestic abuse in July, two sessions were scheduled the first in the morning and second early evening; 13 members attended the sessions and overall, the seminar was positively received.
- 3.7 **Enforcement & CCTV**
Some areas of responsibility have altered with the CCTV function now aligned with Enforcement as of 1st July 2024; the Enforcement Manager post has been expanded to incorporate this. The post is currently vacant due to internal promotion of the postholder and will be out to advert imminently. In the interim, the Principal Environment Enforcement Officer is assisting to ensure service delivery levels are not negatively impacted.
- 3.8 The team cover environmental enforcement, since the last update to the board in June 2024 the service has issued nine fixed penalty notices and has eight files pending for prosecution.
- 3.9 The service secured additional funding for Neighbourhood Patrol Officers for 12 months. Two officers commenced in post mid-August and will be visible patrolling; the service delivery and impacts will be monitored and reviewed to consider sustainability.
- 3.10 This service incorporates Anti-Social Behaviour; the board received a report on this work recently in June. Partnership approaches are continuing to develop to tackle hotspots in the borough including the deployment of the increased mobile CCTV provision. The programme the Police & Crime Commissioners Office are delivering in diversionary activities for Serious Violence is becoming embedded in Halton which again, the board received a presentation on this in June 2024.
- 3.11 **Emergency Planning**
The Board received a report on emergency planning arrangements

in September 2023, a member seminar was also recently delivered on 30th July 2024 in the Council Chamber which provided a thorough overview of the service and the planning to ensure preparedness for major incidents or standby.

- 3.12 The work programme involves exercise planning for Control of Major Accident Hazards sites. Annual exercise with Runcorn COMAH Operators was successfully delivered in the last quarter with the exercise report published in July 2024 following a multi-agency debrief. An exercise for a Widnes operator is scheduled for the autumn and will take the format of a major live exercise. Planning meetings commenced in June and are scheduled monthly until the exercise is delivered which will also include the debrief and report publishing phases.
- 3.13 The team have been working on the Council's on call arrangements, strengthening the framework and training to build resilience and robustness in responses, should major incidents or standby's be declared. This work includes supporting vulnerable people and mobilising premises to support any decants required.
- 3.14 The teams work also involves event safety leading the borough's safety advisory groups for events in Halton.
- 3.15 Emergency Planning arrangements for Cheshire are governed by Cheshire Resilience Forum. The Emergency Planning Team actively work with the forum to ensure risks are understood and appropriate measure are in place and reviewed regularly.
- 3.16 **Asylum Seekers & Refugees**
The division has a relatively newly created post to oversee arrangements for refugees and work with government agencies and third sector partners on matters related to asylum. The programme involves working locally, regionally, and sub-regionally.
- 3.17 A multi-agency forum has been developed and is thriving with membership from a wide cross section of agencies active in this area of work; Halton is fortunate to have such willing and passionate partners and third sector agencies supporting delivery of the programmes and integration for residents.
- 3.18 **Safer Halton Partnership**
The board received a report on Safer Halton Partnership, Halton's statutory community safety partnership in February 2024 setting out governance along with a draft strategy consulting on nine draft priorities which are:
- Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women & Girls
 - Serious and Organised Crime
 - Integrated Offender Management

- Counter Terrorism/Prevent
- Hate Crime
- Substance Misuse
- Serious Violence
- Road Safety

3.19 The partnership is currently developing its delivery plan to respond to the priorities set out above. A workshop was delivered in August and the September board will receive a draft for endorsing.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None to report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications to the report. The introduction of Neighbourhood Patrol Officers will be reviewed as they are fixed term posts externally funded; income generation and sustainability will be key considerations.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Community Safety & Protection functions directly impact on generating a cleaner and safer Halton. How residents feel about where they live impacts on their behaviours and resilience contributing to strong, vibrant communities.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

A safe Halton supports the business sector and economic growth. The CCTV function provides surveillance across the borough, this provides re-assurance and support to businesses, retailers, and service providers.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The function includes the Boroughs community safety partnership, a multi-agency approach to services to support a safer Halton including anti-social behaviour; this work focusses on seeking proactive measure along with partner agencies to provide diversionary activities, deter criminal behaviours and risks of exploitation.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The divisions services for domestic abuse and refugees provides support to marginalised cohorts of Halton's communities. Emergency Planning response arrangements include supporting the Boroughs vulnerable residents in a major incident situation.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The division seeks opportunities in its working practice and procurement measures to support delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The divisions functions aim to address community concerns whilst delivering services for vulnerable residents and working to improve behaviours to improve resident's experiences of where they live.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 None to report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The services are universal. There is focussed with marginalised communities to support access to services and respond to cultural and faith needs.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None to report.

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

None under the meaning of the act.