

REPORT TO: Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 19 January 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Scrutiny Review – Draft Final Report - Novel Psychoactive Substances

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To introduce the findings of the scrutiny group formed to review the current and emerging issues around the use of Novel Psychoactive Substances, also known as ‘legal highs’, across the Borough and on a wider, national, scale.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) The report is approved and the findings are noted, and;
- ii) The Board agree to monitor issues around the topic over the course of the municipal calendar.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Scrutiny Review (attached as Appendix 1) was commissioned by the Safer Policy and Performance Board as a result of concerns around the apparent and emergent increase in focus on Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS). The Chair of the Safer Board established a working group to examine and evaluate the issue in order to gain an indication of what action might be taken to prevent and mitigate the use of such substances.

3.2 A scrutiny review working group was established with four Members from the Board – reducing to three following the results of the May election. The lead officer for the group was the Operational Director for Community and Environment, and officers from a breadth of services fed into the process.

3.3 The Group gained an overview of current trends; examined options for enforcement of sanctions; considered the particular impacts on and culture of use amongst young people, and how to tackle this; and looked at activity, across the borough and on the national agenda, to approach the issue.

3.4 The scrutiny review was conducted through a series of meetings, where evidence was presented and analysed. The review took place between April 2015 and September 2015.

3.5 Review methodology involved:

- Monthly meetings
- Briefings and verbal reports
- Provision of data/statistic
- Site visit - CRI

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The subject of NPSs has been incorporated into the Statement of Licencing Policy (as set out in the report).

4.2 No other policy implications have been identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The review impacts on the welfare and wellbeing of young people across Halton, and identified an emergent sub-culture which needs to be monitored.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

N/A

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The Scrutiny Review supports the Council's priorities around health and the long-term approach to substances misuse and the related impacts of this on the community.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The Council's focus on safety is upheld by the formation of the Scrutiny Group and the risk factors associated with NPS usage have been examined as part of the review.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The approaches being taken to tackling the use of NPSs and related substances have been reviewed. While the Scrutiny Group is satisfied that wide-ranging activity and operations are taking place there is a need to remain responsive to changes in trends and to monitor incidents and shifts in patterns and cultures of the use of such substances.

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

To be confirmed.