

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11th February 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Northwest Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU)

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the presentation from NWROCU introducing the unit and outlining the priorities and themes of their work. They will also discuss their partnership working approach with Local Authorities and other partners. The report provides a brief overview of that role and responsibilities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

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

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NW ROCU) provides specialist capabilities to tackle serious and organised crime that crosses borders in the region.

Established in 2009, the unit is a collaboration between the six North West Police Forces in Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales.

- 3.2 It's made up of officers and staff from across the region who offer specialist skills and additional resources.

The mission of the unit is simple – to identify, disrupt and dismantle organised crime groups causing the most harm to the North West. This

is done by working with partners to gather intelligence, cracking the most serious and organised crime networks and then seizing the assets of the criminals involved.

- 3.3 The North West ROCU is led by Temporary Police Assistant Chief Constable Chris Green.

Within the ROCU, there are a number of specialist units including;

3.4 **Protective Persons Unit**

The Protected Persons Unit, (NWPPU), protect and care for people who are considered to be at real and immediate risk of serious harm.

They operate discreetly with full co-operation from the people who they are looking after. The unit makes it possible for victims and witnesses of crime to give evidence against offenders, in the knowledge that they are safe from harm.

The unit is supported by the Central Services, who are part of the National Crime Agency, providing strategic support, practical help and advice to officers supporting 'protected persons',

3.5 **Regional Organised Crime Threat Assessment Unit (ROCTA)**

The Regional Organised Crime Threat Assessment Unit (ROCTA) work with their counterparts in the North West Forces to identify and review organised crime groups, vulnerabilities and 'high priority individuals' in the North West Region.

'Organised crime' is serious crime which is planned, coordinated and carried out by people working together on a continual basis. Their motivation is often, but not always financial gain. Organised criminals working together for a particular criminal activity or activities are called an organised crime group.

'High priority individuals' also commit serious and organised crime, but they carry it out independently, not as part of a group.

The ROCTA gather intelligence from a number of organisations including police forces, the NCA and HM Revenue & Customs. They use this information, together with an assessment tool called 'MoRiLE', to assess, score, and prioritise organised crime groups and high priority individuals, based on the threat, harm, and risk they pose to our region.

This information provides the NWROCU and the six forces with a more accurate threat picture. The Forces are able to use this information to influence how they best use their resources to target those individuals causing the most harm to our communities.

3.6 **Regional Intelligence Unit**

The Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) is part of a national infrastructure, set up to provide a meaningful intelligence map of organised crime groups (OCG's) across the UK.

They gather intelligence from the North West police forces and link into government agencies such as the National Crime Agency and HM Revenue and Customs, to provide an informed map of cross-border criminal activity.

The team consists of highly specialised officers and staff including analysts and researchers. They use a number of analytical and operational products, assessment tools and problem profiles, to better identify and understand threat, risk and harm across the North West Region. They use this information to identify gaps and opportunities to disrupt criminal networks wherever possible.

3.7 **Sensitive Intelligence network**

The Sensitive Intelligence Network is a secure environment which is able to receive, assess, analyse, enhance and disseminate covertly obtained intelligence. It does this by providing a 'firewall' which protects covert sources and methods, but allows investigators to get the full benefit of the intelligence.

The Sensitive Intelligence Network has an overview of covert and sensitive intelligence and operational activity within all six North West police forces. This means that the team are better informed to advise and support forces, so that they are able to make the most efficient use of their resources.

3.8 **Regional Asset Recovery Team (RART)**

The North West RART use financial skills, techniques and legislation to disrupt organised crime by identifying, restraining and seizing assets from criminals.

Within the RART there are officers from Crown Prosecution Service and the Police.

They work together to provide a bespoke, expert service that identifies, investigates and prosecutes criminals and removes their assets using criminal and civil powers. The team are able to provide expertise in financial investigation, money laundering and fraud prosecutions, the enforcement of confiscation orders and revisits, seizure of cash and valuable goods, civil recovery and the management of all restraint orders within the region.

The specialist areas within the team are:

RART

Their financial investigators and trained detectives work with a number of different agencies to investigate the finances of organised crime groups. They support ongoing criminal investigations being run by other departments within the region, and work to identify assets and gather evidence of finances linked to serious and complex offences in order to disrupt and dismantle these criminal groups. Their work results in confiscation orders being made against high-profile regional criminals, to remove any assets they've accrued.

Since 2004, they've secured orders with an available amount worth over £85 million and cash seizures worth £2.8 million.

Regional Fraud Team

Their function is to tackle organised crime groups by investigating fraud, corruption and money laundering offences by maximising partnership working opportunities and the ability to provide links between local, regional and national teams.

Asset Confiscation Enforcement Team (ACE)

The ACE team assist the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Her Majesty's Court & Tribunal Service (HMCTS) with the enforcement of confiscation orders on behalf of the North West police forces and other agencies. They also undertake revisit investigations in respect of confiscation orders where individuals have not fully repaid their debt to society, and have benefits or assets outstanding. They seek to work with various agencies including HMCTS & CPS to recover funds from criminals.

Since October 2014, the North West ACE Team have recovered £7,646,146.36 from criminals across the region.

3.9 Cyber Crime Team

The Regional Cyber Crime Unit tackle cyber-crimes, which includes all cyber-dependent or 'pure cybercrimes' as they are known, costing the UK economy billions of pounds each year.

At the NW ROCU, there is a dedicated cybercrime team who work proactively and reactively on significant cybercrime investigations. The team work with other national and international partners to identify and prosecute cyber criminals who are active or impacting upon the North West.

The majority of cybercrimes can be prevented by taking basic security measures – so teams also work hard to protect communities by engaging with businesses and communities, offering free training and

advice to prevent them from being victimised. Similarly, the team works hard to identify and deter people at risk of becoming involved in cybercrime, so that their efforts can be channelled into positive opportunities that exist in the cyber security industry.

3.9 The team have three distinct functions; Protect, Prevent and Pursue.

Protect Team

The Cyber Protect Officers work with organisations and members of the public across the North West, advising them on how to protect themselves from the threat of Cybercrime by using government advice and guidance.

As experts in their field, they see so many people fall victim to Cyber-attacks and believe the only way to combat these threats is through education and working together to ensure the North West is one of the safest places to work and socialise online.

Prevent Team

The role of the Cyber Prevent Officers is to prevent individuals from engaging in cybercrime and/or from re-offending.

The officers work closely with schools across the North West, highlighting opportunities available within the IT and Cyber Security sector and encouraging youngsters to put their skills to use in industry. The team also seek to intervene and divert young people away from committing cybercrime at an early stage to prevent progression into more serious offending.

Pursue Team

The role of the Cyber Pursue Officers is to identify and target people who are actively engaged in cyber criminality either emanating from or impacting upon the North West.

The team use all lawful means with the support of other partners to share intelligence, target, disrupt and prosecute cybercrime offenders. The team are experienced investigators from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom have a keen interest in cyber and technology. Recent prosecutions and hefty prison sentences brought about by the team demonstrates that cybercrime offenders don't go unnoticed and that they aren't as anonymous as they'd like to believe.

3.10 Regional Prison Intelligence Unit

The Prison Intelligence Unit identify, disrupt and dismantle organised crime groups that cause significant harm across the region from inside prisons.

They do this through the gathering and sharing of intelligence to disrupt criminals who continue to commit crime from within prisons.

The team consists of officers and staff who cover 16 prisons across the North West.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 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.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **None**

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 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.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

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

6.4 A Safer Halton

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

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

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

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