

## ANNUAL REPORT

### SAFER HALTON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2022 – MAY 2023

#### **Councillor Norman Plumpton-Walsh**

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

The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board is focussed on meeting the needs of our communities to help keep them safe and it seeks to explore and anticipate emerging issues, working closely with Partners.

I and the other Elected Members are satisfied that we have considered, responded to, and reported on the main issues affecting Halton but also looked at any potential new areas that may not have previously been scrutinised.

I thank my colleagues who sit on the Board for their contributions to the work of the PPB and to those officers and guests who presented to the Board. We have been extremely fortunate to have excellent support and reporting from our officers.

Finally, I want to make clear that Halton is a relatively safe place to live, visit and work due to the combined efforts of the Council and its many partners and that commitment will be just as robust in the year ahead.

**Councillor Norman Plumpton-Walsh**  
Chairman, Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

#### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During the municipal year 2022-2023 the Board comprised of 11 elected members:

Cllr Norman Plumpton-Walsh (Chair)

Cllr Valerie Hill (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Sandra Baker

Cllr Victoria Begg

Cllr Laura Bevan

Cllr Irene Bramwell

Cllr Chris Carlin

Cllr Kath Loftus

Cllr Angela McInerney

Cllr Margaret Ratcliffe

Cllr Andrea Wall

The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety, Channel and Prevent activities, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Adults, Environmental Health, issues related to Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and the Safer Halton Partnership. The Board is also represented on the Safer Halton Partnership and Cheshire Police & Crime Panel.

## **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met three times during the year, with the September 2022 meeting being cancelled.

The Board's work programme during 2022-2023 covered the scrutiny of relevant Executive Board decisions relevant to the Boards business, scrutinising the performance of the Safer Halton Partnership and relevant partners under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, together with monitoring performance against these service plans. Covers the following:

## **OVERVIEW & SAFER HALTON PARTNERSHIP**

The Board received an update report on the Community Safety & Protection division's implementation in February 2023 setting out progress to date and advising on some of the Division's hi-lights. This report provides an overview from across the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 however, with a caveat of it has been a period of significant change both in terms of functions and personnel.

The division has brought together a range of service areas to join community safety services. As a whole it provides support and services to residents when they most need it; from being at risk of harm, having experienced trauma, or are vulnerable. The division also strives to tackle negative behaviour, shift outcomes and generate safer neighbourhoods and communities.

The division operates in a multi-agency environment working intensely with internal and external stakeholders such as social care, police, and integrated offender management, youth justice partners, housing providers, third sector partners, commissioned services, government agencies and funding bodies. At the centre of this work is the Safer Halton Partnership, a statutory partnership to fulfil obligations of a community safety partnership with each local authority area must have. The partnership is getting back on track in a post-Covid environment and has identified key pieces of work to reflect on delivery and refresh and renew the strategy moving forward. Strategic needs assessments are being sourced to inform strategy development, delivery/action plan and outcomes framework which will articulate the Boroughs needs and position Halton to optimise on future work programmes and funding opportunities.

## **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & WITNESS SUPPORT**

During the course of the year, the service has continued to work with partners in raising awareness of the anti-social behaviour pathway and received referrals to deliver support to clients. The level of support is tailored to need and ranges from light touch to intense and involves supporting action against perpetrators supporting the best victim journey/experience by:-

1. Providing victims and witnesses up to date information
2. Helping victims and witnesses to express the effect of the crime on them
3. Offer practical and emotional support tailored to their needs

This work involves supporting the development of victim impact statements and evidential statements often required in progressing community protection notices, injunctions, evictions and premises closures.

The service also responds to Community Trigger, now referred to as anti-social behaviour case review which provides a mechanism for residents to request a multi-agency case review of anti-social behaviour experienced.

The service has led or supported on multi-agency approaches and responses to anti-social behaviour in the Borough including vacant and derelict buildings and hot spot areas. Key areas of focus have been:-

- Runcorn Buses and Busway
- Trident Retail Park
- Castleview House
- Trinity House
- Clear, Hold, Build in Murdishaw
- West Bank

Measures have included co-ordination and deployment of CCTV provision, co-ordinating multi-agency meetings on approaches to derelict/void building and arson.

The service has a role in Community Behaviour Orders and Injunction consultation meetings, facilitating and advising on the process with partners, Charing meetings and supporting case conferences. A review and refresh has further developed guidance which will be a continued piece of work.

The lead officer Chair's the Police Accountability Meetings and has provided a critical friend role to the development of Cheshire Constabulary's Race Action Plan.

## **ASYLUM & REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

This has been a developing area of work for the Council in recent years with support to resettlement programmes and a presence of asylum seekers in the Borough.

There is a multi-agency partnership which brings together key players across all sectors whom provide services or support to those that are entitled to access services with the third sector being pivotal to those that have no recourse to public funds.

Establishing a function to deliver on this area of work is new to the Division and a dedicated post has been introduced and is currently out to recruitment.

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE**

The board received a comprehensive update on the service in February 2023 advising the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates service had transferred into the Council from being an externally commissioned service. The team consists of five members of staff whom are now employed directly as local authority employees.

The main purpose of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) is to address the safety of victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children.

Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans. They are pro-active in implementing the plans, which address immediate safety, including practical steps to protect themselves and their children, as well as longer-term solutions. These plans will include actions from the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) as well as sanctions and remedies available through the criminal and civil courts, housing options and services available through other organisations.

Halton is the second highest in England for domestic abuse incidents per capita. The demand on the service is extremely high and exceeds current capacity. The service will be re-structured to increase provision which will be sourced through external funding means.

The other elements of the Domestic Abuse service is the accommodation offer and counselling support. The Council works with SHAP to provide the accommodation offer and Listening Ear for the therapeutic services for children and families impacted by Domestic Abuse.

A Halton Domestic Abuse conference took place on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, led and facilitated by Safer Lives and attended by over 90 delegates. The morning session provided a range of informative presentations setting out the context of domestic abuse in Halton and objectives and delivery from varying perspectives, older people and children's services, accommodation, Police and Police and Crime Commissioner. The afternoon session provided workshops to develop Halton's multi-agency delivery plan for the Domestic Abuse Strategy. A follow up session will be organised in the autumn.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Policy, Planning & Transport, in July 2022 which provided a briefing on the statutory obligations fulfilled by the Emergency Planning team. Members received a presentation which detailed the following legislation:-

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (COMAH) 2015

## Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) Regulations 1996

Members noted that Halton had a number of Emergency Plans in place with the aim to ensure resilience, these Plans are regularly updated and tested. The Board was advised on examples of local risks, details of the exercises that take place at COMAH sites in the borough, information on Emergency Centres and the work the Emergency Planning team carry out with partner agencies both within Cheshire as part of Cheshire Resilience Forum and Cross-Border.

As part of the duties of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the authority has a duty to ensure the resilience of the Council's response to an emergency situation. Part one of the act is designed to deal with preparations by local responders for localised emergencies, such as risk of serious damage to human welfare or the environment. Part two is designed for use in very serious emergencies, which affect a larger geographical area.

The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each. Category one organisations are at the core of the response to the majority of emergencies (e.g. Emergency Services, Local Authorities, and NHS England).

As a category one responder the Council is subject to a full set of civil protection statutory duties and is required to:-

- assess the 'risk of emergencies' occurring and use this to inform
- contingency planning;
- put in place Emergency Plans;
- put in place Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements;
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public regarding civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to 'warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency';
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency;
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations regarding Business Continuity Management.
- lead and support recovery from any incidents

The Authority has produced a number of Emergency Plans, with the aim to minimise the impact of major incidents within the Borough. These plans are produced to reassure the community and limit the consequences. These plans are updated and validated regularly, as part of the Emergency Planning continuous work programme.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Enforcement is another area within the newly formed division that will further evolve. An Enforcement Manager has been appointed and will join Halton in July 2023. The role will be key to leading transformation of the service and consider corporate needs for Enforcement to design the service. A significant element of this work will be to scope a model for tackling parking enforcement to position the Council to apply for the transfer of powers to the local authority. The aim is to strengthen the team in both resources

and powers in order to deal with a wider range of issues. Increased resources will also allow the team to become more pro-active as opposed to re-active which has previously been hindered due to the depletion of Officer numbers since the austerity measures have been imposed. A more equipped and pro-active team will not only allow for greater enforcement results but will also help the Council towards achieving safe and secure neighbourhoods with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

The Waste Enforcement transferred over from Environment Services as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 in line with the inception of the new division, during 2022/23, the waste enforcement team have been involved with investigating 240 incidents including waste related offences ranging from:-

- a single refuse sack in an entry to fly-tipping of large amounts of building waste, green waste etc
- dog fouling complaints
- dogs in dog exclusion zones
- littering complaints
- storage and management of commercial waste generated from business premises
- incorrect/nuisance storage of waste receptacle
- waste being stored on private land

and other forms of environmental crime. As a result of these investigations and speaking with suspects, witnesses, carrying out interviews under caution in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), Officers have been able to take 197 actions which has included the use of fixed penalty notices, issuing of statutory notices and issuing of advisory and warning letters.

Officers have also spent time engaging with residents and private landlords when waste, particularly bulky items have been disposed of in the rear entries behind resident's properties. Thanks to the work of the enforcement officers, residents have been made to take responsibility for their own waste and dispose of it correctly. This has included items such as settees, armchairs, washing machines, fridge freezers, fencing, gates, bricks, paving stones and general domestic refuse, and although this may not have resulted in formal enforcement action being taken (usually due to insufficient evidence to secure a prosecution) it has relieved the pressure on the Councils limited resources, negating the need for the items to be collected and disposed of by the Waste Management operatives at what would have been a significant cost to the Council.

In addition to the day to day enforcement activities, the team were also involved in a number of partnership working initiatives. This has included clean-ups and resident engagement working with our colleagues in various Housing Associations in both Widnes and Runcorn and a joint campaign in the West Bank area of Widnes were our Enforcement Officers, along with Officers from the Widnes LPU (Local Policing Unit) knocked on every property in West Bank to discuss concerns around waste management issues and anti-social behaviour. All properties were also given a letter addressing some of the issues and providing details regarding waste collections and contact numbers to report any issues. Officers have since continued to monitor West Bank and deal with any day to day issues that may arise.

Again, working with the Widnes LPU, Officers also carried out patrols in Victoria Park over a number of weekends to address concerns relating to dogs off leads, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour, and to deal with the local 'stand in the park' group in relation to the unauthorised display of banners/advertisements on the councils property, in this case the parks band stand, an offence in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (control of advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Officers have since continued to carry out patrols in the park throughout the working week. Officers were also asked to provide a presence, again along with the Police, throughout the morning of the remembrance Sunday parade/service to ensure that all of the PSPO conditions were adhered to and to address any anti-social behaviour issues, at a time of particularly high foot fall.

Officers have attended Runcorn Hill in a joint initiative with Runcorn LPU, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and VIBE UK Youth Charity, who work with young people to build learning and resilience to make informed positive life choices and working with young people aged 13-17 years from across Runcorn and Widnes that have been in trouble with the police, at risk of committing a crime, or they are/have been involved in anti-social behaviour. This initiative was spearheaded by reports of anti-social behaviour including the lighting of fires and small scale vandalism to the bowling green and surrounding facilities.

As part of the teams multi-agency work Officers have also attended various estate walkabouts (usually fortnightly) in Widnes and Runcorn throughout the year with the local housing providers, elected members and local policing units, again speaking with and engaging with residents, forging good relationships with residents and partner agencies and addressing any incidents and/or concerns of anti-social behaviour, waste issues and any other forms of environmental crime such as dog fouling.

Alcohol Licensing also sits with Enforcement, this role works in close liaison with the Council's Licensing Team and Police Licensing Officer to support Licensees in fulfilling their responsibilities and dealing with non-compliance. This also involves working with the Pub Watch scheme to tackle concerns and trends and multi-department and agency working as required to work towards a safe practice of alcohol sales and a safe night time economy environment.

## **OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Office works closely with the community safety partnerships across the county and levers funding to support targeted work. Halton benefits from additional funding from the PCC to support the boroughs work on domestic violence and the PCC makes funds available to be bid for by community organisations to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and enable safer communities.

The PCC has a Police and Crime Plan to 2024, <https://www.cheshirepcc.gov.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/what-the-commissioner-does/police-and-crime-plan/police-and-crime-plan-2022-refresh---website.pdf>

There are six key priorities:-

1. Prevent and tackle crime
2. Make Cheshire's roads safer
3. Deliver justice for victims of crime
4. Protect vulnerable and at risk people
5. Improve public confidence in policing
6. Modernise Cheshire's police service

There is a broader work programme including the Criminal Justice Board, other focussed areas of work for example waste crime, violence against women and girls, safer streets, child exploitation, cybercrime. The PCC Office will lead on securing resources to support priorities across Cheshire.

A current key area of focus is Serious Violence Duty. As part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, the Serious Violence Duty was introduced in April 2022. With this duty, key public bodies in every police force area are now required to produce and implement a strategy to work together to deal with serious violence. It affects police forces, local authorities, criminal justice agencies and health organisations. The PCC is leading a co-ordinated approach to this work across Cheshire and governance arrangements have been agreed with a strategic and operational group now established. The work to date has supported understanding and preparation through multi-agency workshops. Developing a strategic needs analysis and service mapping is currently progressing to inform the strategy moving forward; further updates will be provided in due course.

The PCC is scheduled to attend the Board in September 2023.