

HOUSING AND SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 18 November 2025 at the Board Room, Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Fry (Chair), Carlin (Vice-Chair), Bramwell, Connolly, Garner, C. Loftus, A. McInerney, L. Nolan, Ratcliffe and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

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

Also in attendance: 4 observers in the public gallery

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

SAF19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised the Board that he had recently represented Halton on the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioners Office Complaints Sub-Committee, which considered three complaints, all of which were dismissed.

SAF20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

SAF21 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

SAF22 DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, regarding the work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Board and the work programme for the period 2025/26.

The Board, which was a multi-agency partnership,

underwent a review which had included its membership, to ensure appropriate senior level representation from stakeholders. It also published an interim strategy, mobilised its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and set out a work programme which was supported by a sub-group structure. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis.

The interim Domestic Abuse Strategy, which was attached to the report as an appendix, set out four strategic priorities:

- act before someone is harmed;
- increase safety for those at risk;
- identify and stop harmful behaviours; and
- support people to live the life they want after harm occurs.

The Board responded to these priorities by establishing four sub-groups titled Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue. The groups work collectively to operationalise the priorities through high level oversight, partnership co-ordination and outcome driven planning. The structure would also ensure the work of the Board feeds into the Safeguarding Boards, Scrutiny Boards and any other statutory groups.

Accommodation arrangements for domestic abuse had fed into the emerging Housing Strategy for the Borough, to ensure that statutory requirements were met and to improve housing offers for emergency, supported and dispersed accommodation for victims and their families going forward.

Also attached to the report was a draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This provided a strategic overview of domestic abuse in Halton, the statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which would inform future service commissioning, Housing Strategy and multi-agency co-ordination. There had been some key findings from the draft assessment and these were outlined in section 3.9 of the report. The JSNA also included 13 strategic recommendations, which the Partnership Board needed to consider.

Members of the Board were advised that work was underway to raise awareness of older persons domestic abuse and a partnership event was planned for 21 November 2025 to discuss prevention and best practice management for those who supported individuals at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse in later life.

The following additional information was provided in response to Members questions/comments:

- although Halton's perpetrator rate was higher than the national average, it was suggested that the national figure was exceptionally low and therefore more work was required to identify the reason for this. Further work was also required to identify how Halton compared to its neighbouring authorities. It was agreed that Members would be provided with a further update in due course;
- concerns were also raised regarding the statistics of Halton's repeat victimisation rate and the Board requested further clarification on this;
- Members were reassured that Halton was compliant with the Domestic Abuse Act. However, with regards to accommodation, Halton needed to strengthen their dispersed step down offer and how it supported victims who required family type accommodation in residential areas, hence the importance of input to the Housing Strategy. In terms of emergency accommodation, the Executive Board had approved a significant capital investment in a programme of work earlier in the year and this was now in motion;
- there was a mutual agreement between local authorities to share referrals and provide supported accommodation in out of areas to help protect victims; and
- Domestic Abuse victims were prioritised in terms of housing allocations.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the development of the statutory Domestic Abuse Partnership Board governance arrangements;
- 2) endorse the work programme; and
- 3) note the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Domestic Abuse.

Director of
Community &
Greenspaces

SAF23 TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health, which provided an update on the work of the

Trading Standards Service over the past 12 months and the contribution this work had made to the Council's public protection and community safety objectives.

It was noted that the Trading Standards team provided a wide range of statutory services to protect consumers and legitimate businesses from unfair, misleading or unsafe trading practices. Amongst others, these services included 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 and animal feeding stuffs. The team also provided an enhanced consumer advice service to help consumers enforce their own civil consumer rights.

The report focussed on the following services which contributed to protecting public health and safeguarding children and adults:

- scams awareness;
- doorstep crime;
- tobacco and vapes;
- age restricted sales;
- consumer advice and the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline;
- product safety; and
- iCAN consumer alert network and Facebook.

The report also provided case studies for each of the services, which the Board noted.

Following discussions and arising questions from Members, some additional information was noted:

- the secure "159" helpline provides direct access to a bank's fraud department, enabling anyone to report suspicious calls or seek help if they believe they may be the victim of a scam;
- there was no accreditation scheme for compliant shop owners, particularly those selling tobacco or vaping products. Such premises were required to hold licenses, which were subject to review as part of regulatory oversight; and
- concerns were raised about scams/fake products which were promoted via Facebook. Trading Standards advise consumers not to make any purchases via Facebook as consumer protection laws

may be limited. In particular, third-party sites linked from Facebook were not covered by Facebook's Purchase Protection.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report;
- 2) agree to follow the Halton Trading Standards page on Facebook to increase awareness.

SAF24 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2025/26

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2025/26 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Community Safety and Protection;
- Risk and Emergency Planning;
- Drug and Alcohol Action;
- Domestic Violence; and
- Housing.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 2 performance management report be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 7.26 p.m.