

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 24 JULY 2019

ANNUAL WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SAFETY REPORT

Summary

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) is asked to:
 - consider the Annual Update on developments in relation to Community Safety in Worcestershire; and
 - consider the briefing on the new GET SAFE support and protection approach to child criminal exploitation.
2. Key partners involved in community safety have been invited to attend this meeting.

Background and Statutory Duties

2. Appendix 1 to this Report sets out an overview of the activities that the Council has been and is engaged in relating to its community safety function.
3. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as a Responsible Authority must comply with its duty under s.17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended), which requires each Authority to exercise its functions with due regard and to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and the misuse of drugs and alcohol and other substances and reduce reoffending.
4. This is a corporate responsibility for **all** WCC Directorates, although the strategic co-ordination of community safety partnership working and corporate leadership sits with the Director of Public Health (DoPH).
5. Section 30 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, gives the DoPH, responsibility for, amongst other matters, their Local Authority's role in co-operating with the police, the probation service and the prison service to assess the risks posed by violent or sexual offenders. They should also work with local criminal justice partners and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) to promote safer communities.
6. WCC fulfils its s.17 duty in several ways across its Directorates, through commissioning, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, strategic and policy development, operational activity (including social services responsibilities) and effective partnership engagement and leadership. There are many aspects of the Councils work that fall under s.17 but won't necessarily be badged as community safety and are business as usual and reported on and managed by the Directorates. Our community safety role is not a simple identifiable linear function, but a complex arrangement of cross cutting areas of work (internally and externally) with their own governance arrangements.

7. The North and South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) have statutory responsibilities to manage and co-ordinate community safety activity in their areas and the PCC has significant statutory and commissioning responsibilities which support his West Mercia Plan. The CSPs and the PCC are required to take full account of each other's plans and co-operate and WCC is heavily involved in supporting those arrangements at all levels. The Council is engaged in this work at officer and Cabinet Member level.

8. In two tier Local Government there is a requirement for a group to take strategic oversight of community safety matters, although it does not have the same operational duties that are required of CSP's. The Safer Communities Board, which fulfils that requirement, produces an annual [Community Safety Agreement 2018/19](#) and action plan and has oversight of several priority areas and receives reports from groups on domestic abuse, substance misuse, reducing offending and Prevent (violent extremism). This is led by Public Health and makes a significant contribution to meeting the community safety duty.

9. A common theme from these documents and evidence-based research, is that there must be a focus on trying to prevent individuals developing behaviours and lifestyles that can lead to criminality. This will be a focus through the whole life course, but with a strong preventative role in early years, when children and young people are vulnerable to negative influences. This is where the Council has a strong role to play through its Public Health approach and early help in children's services (and Children's First in future).

11. Appendix C and D in the attached Community Safety Agreement sets out the main governance arrangements for community safety in Worcestershire. Underpinning this structure there are other issue specific sub groups and increasingly the use of task and finish groups to manage one off issues or topics. There is ongoing consideration as to how the governance system operates, to enable both WCC and its partners fulfil their statutory duties at a time when resources are under severe pressure.

Current and future focus

12. Nationally and locally the nature of crime has been changing, although this is very dynamic and can be cyclical in nature and vary geographically. This is for instance reflected in the increase some violent crime, which often has a consequential impact upon more vulnerable victims. Specific and emerging challenges such as County Lines drug dealing, child criminal exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking and serious and organised crime are evident to varying degrees in Worcestershire and "Problem Profiles" produced by West Mercia Police provide helpful summaries of how and where some of this activity is taking place. There is a strong drive by the Government to tackle these issues and this is reflected in the recent Government guidance and consultations and a key PCC strategic review that are set out below. These all focus on the challenges and risks of violence and exploitation of vulnerable people, particularly children, highlighting where actions are required, particularly by Local Authorities. It also illustrates the high priority that the Government is placing on non-criminal justice agency interventions as being part of the solution and that it is not possible to simply arrest our way out of crime.

- [HM Govt Serious Violence Strategy \(Home Office April 2018\)](#)

- This highlights the Government's concerns about increasing violence, including knife crime and how a wider partnership approach is required to tackle this.
- [HM Govt Serious and Organised Crime Strategy \(November 2018\)](#) – National and local system-based approaches are required to tackle increasingly sophisticated criminal gang networks, who target business, communities and vulnerable people. All these issues fall within the Council's own responsibilities and business priorities and require its leadership and co-operation.
 - [Consultation on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence \(Home Office April 2019\)](#)- This sets out the Government's proposals to place more targeted duties on a range of agencies, including Local Authorities, to co-operate to reduce violence. We responded to the consultation and await an announcement in due course on the Government's preferred course of action.
 - **West Mercia PCC Serious Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Review** – A wide range of WCC and other stakeholders have been interviewed as part of the review and a report and recommendations will shortly be considered by key partnerships and an action plan agreed. This will include a number of proposals that will firstly require the agreement and full support of WCC and in particular children's services/Children First and Public Health.
 - [Public Health approaches in policing \(Public Health England/College of Policing June 2019\)](#) – This discussion document focuses on a "Public Health" approach to reducing crime and improving community safety. This is a common theme within the Government's guidance and recent consultations and calls for an improved understanding of what drives criminality (including structural determinants such as housing, education, income), how early prevention mitigates against criminal behaviours and enhancing the use and interpretation of wide streams of data and evidence to determine patterns of behaviour and what the risks and protective factors are. This will be a consideration for Public Health and the key partners about how such approaches may look in practice in Worcestershire and including the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on violence locally.
 - [Prevent duty toolkit for local authorities and partner agencies \(Home Office September 2018\)](#). This guidance has been adopted by the Worcestershire Prevent Group and will be used to benchmark our local approach to see where we can improve local practice.
 - [Integrated Communities Green Paper HM Government Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019\)](#) – This builds on the Government's Green paper on Integrated Communities and highlights the requirement for Local Authorities to do what it can to ensure community integration and provide leadership as required.
 - [Domestic Services – support to victims and their children in accommodation based domestic abuse services \(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government consultation- May 2019\)](#) – This consultation, which is open until August, sets out proposals to require upper tier Local Authorities (WCC) to take responsibility for the governance, planning, commissioning and reporting to Government on the provision of accommodation for victims of DA and their families. It requires full co-operation with key partners and specifically lower tier Local Authorities (District Councils) who have housing responsibilities. Public Health will on behalf of the Domestic Abuse Forum and the Strategic Housing Partnership, be providing a Worcestershire consultation response.

13. The Public Health approach to tackling criminality and violence will be considered and will initially involve the production of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on

violence. Moving forward this will require an understanding of and identification of many complex issues, considering evidence-based approaches of what works and the wider system “influencing” to improve health, wellbeing and safety generally. This will involve a more explicit recognition of the causes of criminality, which can be socio economic, cultural and environmental. These are key areas where the partnership and particularly Local Authorities have a direct responsibility. A better understanding of childhood adversity (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and how this increases the risks of people developing violent and addictive behaviours, such as drug taking, is critical in developing new trauma-based approaches for both young people and adults, to help move them away from criminality. Early success is evident in Worcestershire where this approach is being utilised.

14. There is well-established partnership working and co-operation on community safety across Worcestershire and successive Governments have recognised that many of the challenges faced in the criminal justice system can be prevented and mitigated by partners such as Local Authorities.

15. There is, however, a complex range of responsibilities and duties and partnership structures in place, which are increasingly requiring focus beyond the Worcestershire boundary, such as supporting the PCC’s remit which extends across West Mercia and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire sustainability and transformation partnership (STP) footprint that extends across to Herefordshire. There are significant pressures on organisational capacity and this is increasingly impacting on the ability to support joint working. New ways of co-operating and utilising peoples time need to be considered and a better use of technology to reduce the need for attendance at meetings, would for instance, be highly beneficial and encourage wider participation.

16. The Government plans highlighted above, contain a significant number of requirements for consideration by Councils and potential new duties to implement, probably without any additional resources. Co-operation with the PCC is very positive and there are joint approaches to tackling issues such as domestic abuse and child criminal exploitation (the GET SAFE workstream), through joint commissioning and planning. In delivering his Safer West Mercia Plan the PCC will require high levels of co-operation from partners and the Council, with his new strategies on drugs, rural crime, serious, organised crime and a significant number of recommendations from a serious violence and vulnerability strategic review.

17. Although Worcestershire presents a lower risk of radicalisation than other areas of the West Midlands, there has to be vigilance around potential violent extremism and there are concerns nationally about people who are potential perpetrators, but not “in plain sight”. The Council has a strong role to play in the Prevent agenda and also manages the Channel Panel where cases are referred for consideration around vulnerability and risk. Unaccompanied child asylum seekers from war zones are being placed in counties across the country and Worcestershire is no exception; in the last three years, three such young people have been referred into the Channel Panel as having given concerns around their behaviours and have been managed from a safeguarding and community safety perspective with all the key agencies in the Channel meeting. The Ofsted Assistant Regional Director, West Midlands has attended both the Channel Panel and Prevent Strategy Group (including the Counter Terrorism Local Profile briefing) and has commented favourably on the administration and partnership attendance at both meetings. The 2019 CTLP and the Home Office Prevent Toolkit have been incorporated into the 2019/20 Prevent Strategy Group Action Plan to

develop the partnership approach to and understanding of extremism and radicalisation.

18. The Public Health Team have also reported to the Partnership Executive Group (June 27th, 2019), detailing the national approach to cohesion and integration as a means to help reduce Hate Crime and radicalisation. This has begun a senior officer conversation about how well we understand any challenges to cohesion in our local communities and how we work to address any tensions.

Crime Data

19. There is a range of national and local published community safety and criminal justice data available. Locally this is best illustrated through the West Mercia Police. Performance summary for January – March 2019 (Appendix 2), which is reported to the West Mercia Police Crime Panel. This contains crime information and some analysis across the force area and broken down for the north and south Worcestershire CSP areas. CSP's also receive their own analytical geographic data.

20. The summary highlights what is always a complex picture and changes over time in recording methods and data can make longitudinal comparisons difficult. The Police analysts also produce other bespoke tools such as Problem Profiles on issues such as child sexual exploitation, knife crime and County Lines.

21. Nationally, there has been no significant increase in recorded crime (Office for National Statistics) between 2017/18 and 2018/19. In Worcestershire there has been an overall increase of 1.6% (41,748 – 42,420 offences) during that period. The rate of violence with injury across the West Mercia, between 2017/18 – 2018/19, is virtually static (10164 -10167). Between April 2018 and April 2019, North Worcestershire recorded the highest volume of knife offences in West Mercia (n = 150) and South Worcestershire observed the largest increase, +28% (n = 126). Hate Crime reporting in N and S Worcestershire has reduced, year on year, by 22% but this is against exceptional spikes in 2016 (at the time of the referendum) and in 2017.

22. Information is also collected and utilised by commissioned and internal Council services that contribute to supporting community safety activity, which would include domestic abuse, substance misuse, Prevent, GET SAFE and adult safeguarding. There is to be some further consideration by the Safer Communities Board as to how to develop a more bespoke data dashboard using both criminal justice and Local Authority to enable a better strategic oversight of trends.

GET SAFE Support and Protection Approach to Child Criminal Exploitation.

23. The Board will also receive a presentation from some of the partners involved with **Get Safe**, which is the Worcestershire name for the multi-agency support and protection for children and young people at risk of Criminal Exploitation. The Worcestershire partnership includes: West Mercia Police, Children's services, Health, Education, Youth Justice, Early help services and the voluntary sector all working together with other agencies and existing forums within Worcestershire having a joined-up approach in working together to tackle this.

Conclusion

24. WCC continues to meet its own duties relating to community safety as far as it reasonably can and makes a significant contribution across Worcestershire and West Mercia through its leadership role and its commissioned services.

25. There is a requirement to adapt to changing community safety and criminal activity and WCC, as a significant Responsible Authority, is committed to further understanding the problems and finding preventative and operational solutions to minimise risk and harm to our population.

26. The Directorate of Public Health and other Directorates will continue to ensure that systems assurance and rigour is embedded in the Council's responsibilities for community safety, but it is noted that there are increasing challenges in the system both for the Council and its partners`.

Purpose of the Meeting

27. The OSPB is asked to consider:

- (a) The Annual Community Safety report and the discussion on the new GET SAFE support and protection approach to child criminal exploitation;
- (b) Whether it wishes to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being, WCC officers or partner agencies; and
- (c) Whether there are any issues which should be the subject of future scrutiny work.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Worcestershire County Council Community Safety Overview

Appendix 2: [West Mercia Police Performance Summary for January - March 2019](#)

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here](#)