

Central Bedfordshire Council

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee 14th January 2016

Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment, Identified Priorities for 2016 - 2019

Report of Cllr Brian Spurr Executive Member for Community Services

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This report relates to a Key Decision

Purpose of this report

1. This report informs Members of the three priorities and emerging issue that have been identified through the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment. The priorities have been recommended by the Community Safety Partnership Executive and are subject to Member consultation.
2. The Committee are invited to consider and discuss the proposed priorities, and recommend they are adopted by the Council Executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Recommend that the Executive adopt the three Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment Priorities identified for Central Bedfordshire for 2016 - 2019.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. Each year, the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the CSP's annual priorities. The committee is asked to continue to support the work of the CSP, and recommend the new priorities for 2016 – 2019.

Performance Review, Central Bedfordshire, October 2014 – September 2015

3. There were 13,165 crimes which is an increase of 1,024 (8%) when compared to the same period the previous year.
4. There were 3,082 serious acquisitive crime¹ offences, which is an increase of 163 (5%) when compared to the same period the previous year.
5. There has been a decrease of 149 domestic burglaries (15%) when compared to the same period the previous year.
6. There were 3,397 domestic abuse (DA) incidents reported, which is an average of 283 incidents per month. This is an increase of 17% from the previous 12 months.

Hidden Harms

7. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is continuing the approach to look at priorities on the 'hidden harms' that affect our residents and our communities.
8. The term "hidden harm" describes the experiences of people affected by substance misuse, abuse, modern day slavery and exploitation. People will often suffer in silence; their circumstances are often not known to services. They often do not know where to turn for help and the impact of their experience can have a deep and long-lasting consequence on their lives. These impacts can include physical harm, impaired patterns of parental care, higher risk of emotional and physical neglect or abuse, poverty and material deprivation, inappropriate substitute caring roles, and exposure to drug and alcohol using culture.
9. The CSP is committed to supporting not only an increase in understanding and awareness of the hidden harms our communities face, but encouraging those who are suffering to have the confidence to come forward and seek help from the Partnership and our services.
10. The CSP has built up a strong base to support crime reduction, and offers crime prevention and reassurance in the community through awareness raising events, survey's, email alerts, magazine articles and attending vulnerable locations with partners. This will continue.

¹ Serious acquisitive crime consist of robbery, domestic burglary, theft of motor vehicle and theft from motor vehicle

11. The CSP will continue to monitor burglary offences and offending series at the monthly CSP Tasking meeting. Community Safety officers are standing members of Bedfordshire Police's monthly Force Tasking Meeting where crime series are discussed and actions agreed.
12. Current risks within Central Bedfordshire do not come from traditional crimes, but from hidden harms as described above. By working together we will ensure a better support structure and positive environment is in place for our communities.

Protecting the Vulnerable

13. There are four parts to this priority:
 - Modern Day Slavery (MDS)
 - Trafficking of Human Beings (THB)
 - Prevent
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
14. **MDS and THB** is a complex crime which takes a number of different forms, including sexual, labour, criminal and other exploitation (including domestic servitude). It is a global problem that transcends age, gender, ethnicity and culture. MDS includes victims that have been brought from overseas as well as vulnerable people from within the UK. These victims are forced to illegally work against their will in many different sectors.
15. In the period between December 2009 – November 2014 there were 35 crimes of MDS in Bedfordshire. The majority of offences were in Central Bedfordshire and were labour exploitation related. It is recognised nationally that MDS is under reported so the numbers are likely to be far higher.
16. Toddington Motorway Services is a recognised hotspot for THB and migration. This location has been identified due to it being one of the first places where lorry drivers take a break having left Dover or the Euro Tunnel. In 2015 Bedfordshire Police reported that the number of immigration arrests from this location increased by 85%.
17. **Prevent** is part of the Government's strategy aimed at preventing people from being radicalised, becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
18. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act received Royal Assent in early 2015. The act places the Prevent Programme on a statutory footing and also places a duty on 'Responsible Authorities'. The local authority is now one of those Responsible Authorities.
19. In Bedfordshire there is a longstanding extremist scene in Luton, which has more recently presented in Bedford Borough. The highest risk of

an attack is the risk of an unpredictable lone offender attacking people in the county.

20. There has been a shift of focus to Syria. A number of Bedfordshire residents are currently fighting, and some have died, in the Syrian conflict.
21. **CSE** is not new; however, through media coverage and through local incidents a wider public awareness has been created. The NPSCC indicate that 5% of children in the UK suffer contact sexual abuse at some point during their childhood.
22. In January 2015 the National Working Group were commissioned by the Chief Executive Officers and the three Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB's) of Bedfordshire to identify any weaknesses that needed to be addressed in order to help agencies prevent and/or manage CSE in Bedfordshire
23. Part of this review looked at Central Bedfordshire's current response to CSE. The review advised that "authority staff demonstrated a broad understanding of the nature of CSE, and it's presence in the county. There were examples of good practice with robust arrangements at an operational level".
24. The review provided six strategic recommendations. These have been taken forward and are currently being worked on by the Bedfordshire CSE Strategic Group, Chief Executive Officer's Group and the LSCB's in a joint partnership approach.
25. The offences that make up the four parts of this priority are by their nature hidden from view. Partnership working plays an essential role in identifying and reducing the risk of harm to vulnerable children, young people and adults. Any person from any background can be a victim of these hidden harms.
26. Intelligence gaps are a key issue across Central Bedfordshire, with very little intelligence being submitted on these hidden harms from partner agencies. As front line training is rolled out and officers understand their duty, and what to look out for in the community, it is expected that this intelligence feed into Bedfordshire Police should improve.

Dealing with Domestic Abuse

27. Domestic Abuse (DA) causes significant harm to not only the victims but also the wider family, it also accounts for just over 10% of all crime recorded in Central Bedfordshire. In 51% of all DA incidents a child was present, and 34% of DA incidents reported were at a repeat location.

28. In Central Bedfordshire high risk victims are supported by the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This is a monthly multi-agency group which meets to review cases and create a safety plan for the victim and any children. Of the 313 MARAC cases heard in the past 12 months only 10 cases were for victims or perpetrators from a black or minority ethnic (BME) group. This is disproportionate to the demography of Central Bedfordshire, and highlights possible under reporting from this community.
29. Within Central Bedfordshire the highest BME group is the Gypsy and Traveller community. A survey carried out with this group in early 2014 advised that 83% confirmed DA was an issue in their community. As a result of these findings the CSP lead on a Task and Finish Group whose aim is to improve engagement with that community, leading to awareness of services in respect of DA.
30. DA is not limited to adults; there is an increasing awareness of DA within teenage relationships. In Central Bedfordshire only 5% of victims who reported a DA incident between October 2014 – September 2015 were aged under 18yrs. The majority of victims were aged 18 – 24 yrs. These numbers are much lower than expected.
31. Victims assessed as high risk receive extensive support opportunities from a range of partners. This is essential to those who are high risk, but 65% of DA victims in Central Bedfordshire are assessed medium risk and therefore not heard at the MARAC. These victims do not receive bespoke support services.
32. Working with victims who are assessed as medium risk is essential to prevent an escalation of the violence, stop the cycle of abuse and to offer support and advice as the victim requires.

Protecting our Communities

33. There are two parts to this priority:
 - Nuisance Motorcycles
 - Street Drinkers
34. **Nuisance motorcycles** have been a significant issue in Central Bedfordshire for some years, with the number of reported incidents increasing steadily over the past three. Up until last year the issue was seasonal, with increases at Easter, but there has been a shift in this trend with nuisance behaviour becoming more prevalent much earlier in the year.

35. The majority of reports of nuisance motorcycles come from the south of Central Bedfordshire, with 35% of all incidents being in Houghton Regis and a further 28% in Dunstable.
36. Although there are a high number of reports of nuisance motorcycles on open land associated with off road biking, there are also a large number of reports from residential areas. Reports in residential areas are mainly of youths aged 13-17yrs riding bikes without helmets and sometimes with more than one person on the bike. Complaints are made for noise nuisance, vehicles being ridden on public pathways, and vehicles almost colliding with residents and young children.
37. Between April – October 2015 there were 30 reports of moped / motorcycle fires, the majority of these taking place in the south of Central Bedfordshire. In the period between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 169 offences of stolen motorcycles or mopeds, 86% of these were in the south of Central Bedfordshire.
38. **Street Drinking** is a complex issue which has a negative impact on the quality of lives of local residents and businesses. It is classed as ASB predominately due to outcomes from street drinking, such as littering, noise nuisance, abusive and disorderly behaviour. It also has a detrimental impact on the health of those who take part in street drinking.
39. Street drinking is a concern for local residents in Central Bedfordshire with 15% of those surveyed advised the main concern in their area was “people being drunk or rowdy in public places”.
40. In the period between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 367 ASB incidents reported to Bedfordshire Police that related to street drinking in Central Bedfordshire. Alcohol related ASB is not accurately recorded and it is felt that this number may not a true reflection of the issue, and that accurate recording would raise this number.
41. There are three evident hotspots for street drinking in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade. In these three hotspots there are a core group of street drinkers who are a mix of males and females aged 30 – 50 yrs. The majority of those who are known have housing provision so the issue in Central Bedfordshire is not necessarily linked to homelessness. Many of the individuals are entrenched drinkers with complex needs; from alcohol dependency, mental health, historic and current abuse, low incomes and unemployment.
42. Addressing street drinking related ASB and reducing harm to street drinkers themselves are two very different objectives. A number of different interventions are needed to deal with this issue, some of which will be enforcement dealing with the ASB elements and others will be engaging and supporting the street drinkers and dealing with their individual needs.

Emerging Issue – Sexual Abuse

43. The term sexual abuse covers a wide range of abuse acts directed towards an individual's sexuality, including sexual assault, rape, sexual coercion, sexual bullying and female genital mutilation.
44. Sexual abuse can be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding. Sexual abuse affects people of all genders, culture and age groups and is a criminal offence.
45. In the period between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 271 sexual offences in Central Bedfordshire reported to Bedfordshire Police. This is an increase of 54% when compared with the previous 12 months. 34% of reported offences were cases of historic abuse.
46. In the period between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 100 offences of rape recorded in Central Bedfordshire, an increase of 32% when compared to the previous 12 months.
47. In Central Bedfordshire 89% of all sexual offences recorded involved a female victim and of the 271 reported 19% of them had a victim who was aged under 18 years.
48. It is known nationally that sexual abuse offences are significantly under-reported with 90% of rapes going unreported and it is therefore, believed locally that the vast majority of offences are not reported to the police.
49. In view of the continuing increase in reporting of sexual offences and the known under reporting, the CSP need to consider what their response is to sexual abuse in Central Bedfordshire.

Reason/s for decision

50. For local authorities there is a statutory requirement for a "crime and disorder committee" with the power to review and scrutinise decisions taken by Responsible Authorities in relation to their crime and disorder functions.
51. In Central Bedfordshire this scrutiny is undertaken by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which has undertaken to carry out a review at least once a year of the CSP priorities.

Council Priorities

52. The agreement of the three CSP priorities, and the subsequent work in reducing offences, incidents and offending, will make a significant contribution to the quality of life experienced by local residents and communities.
53. Joint work on the priorities by all of the community safety statutory partners will also contribute to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Plan ("Your Priorities 2012 – 2016") priority of 'Enhancing your local community'. Delivery of these priorities will contribute to the reduction of crime, anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and increase public confidence.
54. Joint work on the priorities by all of the community safety statutory partners will also contribute to the delivery of the Council's Five Year Plan (2015 – 2020) priorities of 'Protecting the vulnerable promoting wellbeing' and Creating stronger communities

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

55. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council has a statutory duty to do all that it reasonably can to reduce crime and disorder in its' area. The Crime and Disorder Act also places a statutory duty on the Council, along with the other Responsible Authorities (Police, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Bedfordshire and Rescue Service, Probation²), to produce an annual Strategic Assessment which identifies crime and disorder priorities for our area.
56. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sets out the requirement for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the CSP to have due regard for each others priorities and plans. The timing of the Partnership Strategic Assessment and CSP Plan have ensured the PCC is informed of our priorities and the Office of the PCC has the opportunity to refresh the Police & Crime Plan.
57. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 by putting the existing Prevent programme on a statutory footing means that the local authority must have a panel to support vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism and by prioritising this issue the local authority is having due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism which is now a statutory duty.

² The Community Rehabilitation Company and the National Probation Service

Financial Implications

58. The majority of work is undertaken using existing resources within each partners' organisation. The PCC is responsible for the Community Safety Fund across Bedfordshire and the Partnership will bid for funding to provide additional support to existing resources where suitable.
59. Financially the CSP saves on resources; by pulling together to work on priority areas that affect them all, using an intelligence led approach. If resources are required for projects, crime prevention initiatives or engagement events, the Partnership agrees, prior to commencing, the resource that can be committed; from communication support, front line engagement, printing or joint funding from internal budgets.
60. From time to time the Home Office open funding opportunities which the Partnership can bid for, such as Prevent work, Domestic Abuse or general crime and disorder. Where possible the Partnership take these opportunities to enhance current or look at new ways of working.

Risk Management

61. There are risks and challenges to working in partnership with the statutory partners of the CSP, should the Council not agree with the identified priorities.
62. The strategic risk register includes a strategic risk relating to the fragility of our partners, which includes Police, Clinical Commissioning Group and Probation. The strategic risk focuses on the fragility of our partners, as a result of the significant changes and pressures they face, including budgetary pressures, transfers of responsibilities, geographical factors, confusing accountabilities and increasing complexities. These factors increase the risk that services to our public could be compromised.
63. There is a risk to the Council should it not agree with the partnership data and analysis that has been provided. If new priorities were to be agreed without supporting data and evidence, the process would not stand up to scrutiny, and would not be based on intelligence. This would make it difficult to gain support from partners to work with us on any new issue.
64. There is a risk to the Council should they not agree the priorities, that they would be failing to discharge statutory responsibilities and failing to deliver the Council's priorities.
65. There are potential community implications if work on the high risk identified priorities is not undertaken. The three priorities have scored

highest in the risk matrix, been highlighted through public consultation, and are known to affect Public Confidence and Fear of Crime.

66. The adoption of the agreed annual priorities by the Executive will ensure that the Council's statutory duties are met and helps mitigate the risk of failing to deliver the Council's priorities.

Public Health

67. The work of the CSP contributes to making Central Bedfordshire a safer place to work and live. Work on the three priorities will help support victims and lower the number of abuse incidents they have, support their wellbeing, and in turn support the local and national economy.

Community Safety

68. Reducing harm to those who are suffering and given them the increased confidence to report crimes that are hidden in our community will enable the right level of care and support to be provided to our vulnerable victims.
69. The detrimental impact that abuse causes has continued to be a key concern for local residents. In agreeing this as a priority to be worked on by the partnership, it should help improve the quality of life for our communities; help reduce crime, the fear of crime and the consequences of abuse itself.
70. Fear of crime is raised by local residents as a concern, and working on crimes that impact the most, in terms of victims and community impact, will support our co-ordinated approach to decrease fear in the community. Abuse incidents, together with becoming a repeat victim, have a significantly negative impact on our residents.

Sustainability

71. The prevention and enforcement work that will be undertaken on the three priorities over the next three years, can make a significant contribution to the quality of the physical environment, tackle those responsible for crime, disorder and prevent some offences in Central Bedfordshire.

Procurement

72. The CSP follows the Procurement Procedure Rules for Central Bedfordshire Council when procuring services and goods. The governance for commissioning of funds is set out within the Terms of Reference for the CSP

Equalities Implications

73. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. By working on the three priorities and emerging issue, there will not be unlawful discrimination or contradictions under the European Convention of Human Rights.
74. Statistics and data have been used and analysed to identify the high risk issue to the CSP and our communities. All members of our communities have been taken into account, and there have been no groups omitted from the process.
75. The impact of working on the proposed priorities will not discriminate against individuals or groups. In fact the work around Domestic Abuse and anti-social behaviour will support minority groups and individuals who may not have felt supported, or engaged.
76. An Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted areas of concern due to low level reporting of Domestic Abuse by vulnerable groups. By recommending the three priorities the CSP we will also be addressing high risk areas identified in the Equality Impact Assessment.

Conclusion and next Steps

77. It is essential that Central Bedfordshire CSP has an agreed set of priorities, and identified an emerging issue which have been informed by the Partnership Strategic Assessment.
78. The three priorities proposed are based on a robust assessment of the key community safety issues in Central Bedfordshire.
79. By working on the three priorities, and conducting research on our emerging issue, the CSP will contribute significantly to the achievements of the Council's plan for delivering its key priorities over the next three years.
80. The proposed CSP priorities will be taken forward to the Council Executive for recommendation and agreement.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

81. The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

None