

Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

2 April 2019

Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Strategy 2019-21

Report of: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Executive Member for Community Services, ian.dalgarno@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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This report relates to a decision that is Key

Purpose of this report

1. This report informs the Executive of the priorities and knowledge gap agreed by Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnership using the partnership Strategic Assessment.
2. Central Bedfordshire Council is a statutory partner of the Community Safety Partnership. The Executive is invited to confirm Central Bedfordshire Council's support to deliver Central Bedfordshire's Community Safety Strategy 2019-21.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. **confirm the Council's support for:**
 - a) **the priorities and 'Knowledge Gap' identified for Central Bedfordshire for 2019-2021**
 - **Priority One – Ending Exploitation**
 - **Priority Two – Tackling Domestic & Sexual Abuse**
 - **Knowledge Gap – Prevalence & Impact of Substance Misuse**
 - b) **the delivery of Central Bedfordshire's Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2019-21.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

3. The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Committee supports the two Community Safety Partnership Priorities and one 'Knowledge Gap' as identified in the Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2019-2021.

Community Safety Strategy 2019-2021

4. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP), is a statutory partnership made up of five responsible authorities; Bedfordshire Police, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services, National Probation Services and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. The CSP has a statutory responsibility for reducing crime and disorder, tackling substance misuse and reducing re-offending in Central Bedfordshire.
5. The Community Safety Strategy sets out the crime and disorder issues in Central Bedfordshire and identifies those priorities which the partnership needs to focus on.
6. The strategy is a two-year strategy so that all three local authority areas can align their Strategic Assessment processes in 2021 using a Pan Bedfordshire approach and then developing individual strategies for each local authority area.

Methodology

7. The strategy is supported by a five-step process which is used to decide the priorities.

Step one is horizon scanning, used to identify and determine future developments, legislation, trends, external drivers, risk and opportunities which may have an impact on Community Safety, both locally and nationally.

Step two is completion of a risk matrix. The use of this matrix is recommended nationally and is also used by Bedfordshire Police and the two other local authorities in Bedfordshire. The matrix provides an evidence-based method to identify the greatest demand or highest risk issues facing Central Bedfordshire. It considers harm to individuals, the community, and the environment as well as the economic and financial implications. Likelihood and volume are also considered alongside confidence in our knowledge, capability and resource capacity. The risk matrix is scored by the Community Safety Analyst working with key individuals across the partnership.

Step three is the use of residents' feedback. In late May 2018 the CSP revised the Community Safety Tracker survey and shared it with residents through a variety of communication methods. At the point of analysis over 700 responses had been received.

Step four is a Partnership Focus Group. At this meeting the results of the risk matrix and the survey are shared, and a multi-agency discussion takes place and the priorities are collectively agreed.

Step five is the production of the Strategic Assessment. This is an analytical document, which looks at multiple sources of data and information, across the partnership, to provide the evidence base which supports the suggested priorities.

Achievement Against our Priorities 2016 – 2019

8. The 2016-2019 Community Safety Strategy priorities were:

- Priority One – Protecting the Vulnerable
- Priority Two – Dealing with Domestic Abuse
- Priority Three – Protecting the Environment

9. Key achievements include:

- Modern Day Slavery (MDS) training delivered to over 1000 frontline staff, increased practitioners understanding of MDS, how to spot the signs, how to report and support available. There has since been an increase in information sharing and referrals for support.
- Improved Adult Safeguarding links and working together on a number of suspected MDS cases leading to an improvement in data sharing and an increase in intelligence submissions to Bedfordshire Police.
- Operation MAKESAFE is a national scheme developed to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in the business community, such as hotels, taxi companies and licensed premises. Regular visits to businesses are being made and it has been extended to fast food outlets in our area, with Council Public Protection officers delivering CSE awareness input to retailers during routine visits. This has resulted in targeted visits to Central Bedfordshire businesses based on increased police intelligence.
- In Spring 2018 a Serious Youth Violence Panel was established to coordinate intelligence led and evidence based multi-agency interventions for individuals who are involved in, or at risk of involvement in or directly affected by serious violence and gang related activity. Its overarching purpose is to safeguard communities, prevent association/involvement in gang behaviour, disrupt criminal behaviour and provide support and exit strategies where appropriate. A number of Central Bedfordshire young people have been referred to the panel and received relevant interventions.
- The Central Bedfordshire Prevent Group was established in May 2017. This multi-agency group developed and oversees the Prevent Protocol and an action plan for Central Bedfordshire ensuring responsible authorities for Prevent fulfill their statutory duties on this agenda.
- A new voluntary domestic abuse perpetrator programme has been commissioned. In addition to perpetrator casework, the service provides an outreach worker who will support professionals with their case queries and assist in upskilling officers who work with perpetrators.

- A successful bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provided specialist accommodation-based support and service for domestic abuse victims. Support will be to those clients currently living in refuge and are ready to move on and those who do not currently have access to refuge provision.
- In January 2018, a local charity Stepping Stones launched the 'Stepping Out Project' for women affected by domestic abuse, aged 16+ with or without children. Dedicated workers have provided face to face case support, group work and local drop in sessions.
- Operation METEOR, Bedfordshire Police's initiative to target off-road nuisance motorcycles continued to target hotspot areas in Central Bedfordshire.
- The Council and Bedfordshire Police worked together to obtain an injunction against persistent street drinkers in Leighton Buzzard who are now prohibited from having open containers of alcohol without a lawful reason and from urinating/vomiting in the street. The injunction will be fully evaluated in 2019.
- In response to the increase in reports of alcohol related ASB a Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) was set up in Biggleswade. The CAP model brings together local retailers, licensees, Trading Standards, police, health services, education providers and other local stakeholders. To date the CAP has seen a reduced number of attempted sales of alcohol by under 18s, an improved relationship with licensees and statutory authorities and a 9% decrease in alcohol related crime & disorder. This CAP will continue in 2019 and other areas will be considered.
- Best Bar None, a UK wide programme designed to improve standards within licensed premises through partnership working between trade, the police, local authorities and other partners was launched in Central Bedfordshire in 2014. The scheme continues and has grown over the last three years, expanding from Dunstable to Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade. The scheme will be expanding in to other areas in 2019.

Issues for Consideration 2016-2019

10. Sexual abuse - identified as an emerging issue in the previous Strategic Assessment due to a decrease in the number of recorded offences, which was not in line with local or national trends. In 2018 a Sexual Abuse Profile was completed to improve knowledge and understanding of the nature and scale of sexual abuse in Central Bedfordshire and share this knowledge with partners to increase awareness and reporting of offences.
11. Cyber-crime - continues to be an issue of significant concern and an area which we still have little knowledge. Due to the sheer scale of all forms of cyber-crime, and because much goes undetected and unreported, there is no reliable data available to reveal the true extent of the crime. The Partnership will continue to work with Bedfordshire Police to improve our understanding of this issue.

12. Unauthorised encampments - in 2017 there was a large number of encampments in the south of Central Bedfordshire and a considerable amount of work took place in identified vulnerable locations to reduce the ability for encampments to set up. This has led to a reduction in the number of unauthorised encampments. This year the Council has been successful in obtaining an injunction which prevents 11 named people and five families from setting up encampments within specified areas and protects 15 parcels of land for the next two years.

Resident Views

13. The revised Safer Central Community Safety survey was launched in late May 2018. The majority of resident responses advised that drug taking/dealing was an issue to them, along with lack of police presence and fly-tipping, the results also told us that:
- 90% of residents are concerned about crime in their areas
 - 54% think Central Bedfordshire is a safe place to live
 - 83% think fly-tipping is an issue
 - 45% think people drinking and being rowdy in a public place is an issue
 - 80% think dog fouling is an issue
 - 59% think violent crime is an issue
 - 86% think vehicle crime is an issue
 - 92% think burglary is an issue
14. The majority of the issues highlighted above are core business of the CSP and multi-agency work will continue on these issues in 2019-2021.

Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Priorities 2019-2021

15. Priority One – Ending Exploitation

- Both national and local awareness of the prevalence of exploitation has increased over the last three years. The number and variety of cases being identified has increased as a result of improved awareness. Due to the hidden nature of exploitation, the increase is more likely to reflect greater awareness than an increase in actual instances.
- Exploitation is a cross-cutting issue, it encompasses county lines, knife crime, cuckooing, modern day slavery, trafficking, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence and domestic extremism.
- County Lines relates to the supply of drugs, from an urban hub into rural towns or country locations. This will be facilitated by a 'group' who have developed networks across geographical boundaries to access and exploit existing drug markets. Currently there are two known County Lines in existence in Central Bedfordshire.
- The exploitation of young and vulnerable people is a common feature in County Lines, whether for the storage or supply of drugs, the movement of cash or to secure the dwellings from which the drugs are then sold.

- Cuckooing involves forcing or coercing vulnerable people to allow their homes to be used for storing and/or selling drugs. Common vulnerabilities include those who misuse drugs or alcohol, elderly, those with mental health issues, disabilities or physical health problems. Victims often do not see themselves as vulnerable and may be receiving payments or substances in return for the use of their property. Nationally cuckooing was a feature of 77% of County Line offences. Cuckooing offences have been identified in Central Bedfordshire. Bedfordshire Police alongside the Councils Community Safety Team have used available powers and legislation to safeguard victims and to deal with the criminal behaviour.
- Knife related incidents are strongly linked to County Lines, Organised Crime Groups, Serious Youth Violence and Child Sexual Exploitation. Both nationally and locally there has been a significant increase in the numbers of knife related incidents.

16. Priority One – What we will do

- The Partnership will work closely together to ensure that frontline staff are trained on the early identification of potential victims. Earlier identification means earlier access to support and earlier intervention in terms of enforcement.
- The Partnership will raise awareness with professionals and the community on how to spot signs of exploitation, how to report concerns and what support services are available, to ensure that those affected by exploitation are identified and offered support at the earliest opportunity.
- The Partnership will work to increase the sharing of information across its partners to improve the understanding of issues in Central Bedfordshire and to provide the knowledge and evidence base for a robust multi-agency response.
- The Partnership will deliver an extensive communication plan, using a variety of communication tools and methods to raise awareness of all forms of exploitation, how to report issues and support services available. Central Bedfordshire residents will be integral in this plan, with significant work needed to increase the awareness of the work of the CSP and support services available.

17. Priority Two – Tackling Domestic and Sexual Abuse

- Domestic abuse was an identified priority for the CSP in the 2016-2019 Community Safety Strategy and it continues to be an issue of concern, our previous strategic assessment also identified sexual abuse as an emerging issue and the Sexual Abuse Profile has highlighted the strong links between domestic and sexual abuse.
- Both offences are known to be highly under-reported, both nationally and locally, and it is essential that the CSP works together to raise awareness of both issues and enables those affected by domestic and sexual abuse to be able to come forward and ensure that suitable support services are available.

- One in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and each week in England and Wales two women will be killed by a current or former partner. In 2016/17 nationally, 13 men died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner. On average a UK police force will receive 100 calls per day reporting domestic abuse.
- Over the last three years there has been a 33% increase in the number of domestic abuse crimes recorded in Central Bedfordshire, and in the last 12 months there has been a 10% increase in repeat victims of domestic abuse. Central Bedfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2017 found that almost half of those young people interviewed had experienced shouting and arguing at home between adults.
- In England and Wales, approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped and nearly half a million adults are sexually assaulted each year. One in five women aged 16-59 have experience some form of sexual violence since the age of 16.

18. **Priority Two – What we will do**

- The Partnership will work closely with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and key partners to reduce the incidents of abuse.
- The Partnership, working closely with others, will look to identify opportunities to raise awareness of both domestic and sexual abuse and the support services available, with a particular focus on marginalised groups.
- Work on the Sexual Abuse Profile will continue, focusing on increasing the sharing of partner data and information which will be used to evidence the true prevalence and impact of sexual abuse in Central Bedfordshire.
- Work closely with Town and Parish Council and local community groups and using community engagement events the Partnership will look to increase awareness with residents of Central Bedfordshire and to promote support services available for those affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

Outcomes

19. Planned outcomes between 2019-2021 include:

- Earlier identification of those who are vulnerable
- Earlier intervention with those who may/are being exploited
- Earlier access to support services
- Strengthened partnership relationships and enhanced partnership working
- Targeting resources and support services to areas who need additional support
- Earlier identification and intervention should reduce the demand on public services
- Improved public confidence
- Increased public feeling of safety

- Strengthened partnership relationships and enhanced partnership working
- Increased awareness of the work of the Partnership with partners and residents

20. **Knowledge Gap – Prevalence & Impact of Substance Misuse**

- Substance misuse is linked to a variety of community safety issues from the illegal use and supply of drugs, the committing of crime to fund drug or alcohol dependency through to behaviour seen on our streets by those under the influence.
- The impact of substance misuse on community safety issues can be complex, given that it affects both victims and offenders, and some people may be both. Due to the complex nature of this subject it is not clear what direct impact substance misuse is having and, for this reason the partnership should focus its attention on increasing its knowledge and understanding.
- The misuse of drugs and alcohol is linked to several community safety issues including anti-social behaviour, child sexual exploitation, modern day slavery, street drinking, homelessness and violent crime.
- It is estimated the social and economic cost of drug supply nationally is £10.7 billion per year and alcohol at between £21-£52 billion.
- The Safer Central Survey evidenced that drugs and drug dealing are a significant concern to the residents of Central Bedfordshire, and they believe that not enough is being done to tackle drug use and the associated anti-social behaviour.
- What don't we know;
 - The trend in drug use locally and the implication of usage
 - Roles and responsibilities of partners in tackling the issue
 - Which messages to use to encourage low risk drinking or to support the reduction of alcohol harm
 - The nature and extent of problematic drug and alcohol use among those accessing mental health services

21. **What we will do;**

- Work closely with Bedfordshire Police to tackle drug related issues in Central Bedfordshire
- Continue the Community Alcohol Partnership and Best Bar None and explore opportunities to extend into other areas of Central Bedfordshire
- Establish an effective partnership approach to enable early identification of problematic drug and alcohol misuse and a shared understanding on local service pathways
- Improved communications with the community on substance misuse, it's impact and harm caused
- Work closely with Public Health to deliver the community safety recommendations within their Drug and Alcohol Health Needs Assessment 2018.

Council Priorities

22. Protecting the vulnerable, improving wellbeing – The recommended priorities for the CSP for the next two years focus on the early identification and intervention with some of the most vulnerable residents in Central Bedfordshire.
23. Creating stronger communities – the CSP aims to work much closer with our residents in the next two years, using various tools and methods to ensure we listen and respond to our residents. The CSP will work with our residents to create stronger, safer and more resilient communities across Central Bedfordshire.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

24. 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 Act also places a statutory duty on the Council, along with other responsible authorities (Police, Clinical Commissioning Group, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Probation) to produce an annual Strategic Assessment which identifies crime and disorder priorities for the area.

Financial and Risk Implications

25. The majority of work is undertaken using existing resources within each partner's organisations. The PCC is responsible for the Grant Fund, previously known as the Community Safety Fund, across Bedfordshire and the Partnership can bid for funding to provide additional support to existing resources where suitable.
26. Financially the CSP saves on resources; by pulling together a number of agencies to work on priority areas that affect them all. If resources are required for projects, crime prevention initiatives or engagement events, the Partnership agrees, prior to commencing, the resources that can be committed.

Equalities Implications

27. 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.
28. Statistics and data have been used and analysed to identify the high-risk issues 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.
29. The impact of working on the proposed priorities will not discriminate against individuals or groups. In fact the work will support minority groups and individuals who may not have felt supported or previously engaged.

Conclusion

30. The CSP has agreed the priorities and knowledge gap for Central Bedfordshire from 2019-2021. The Council is a statutory partner of the CSP and has a duty to do all that it reasonably can to reduce crime and disorder in its area. Supporting the priorities agreed by the CSP and supporting the delivery of the Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Strategy ensures the Council is a proactive partner in reducing crime and disorder, responding to residents' concerns and fulfilling its statutory duty.

Appendices

None

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