

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

9 March 2023

Community Safety Annual Scrutiny Report

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Carr-Jones, Housing and Community Safety

Local Councillor(s): None.

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

Under the Police & Justice Act 2006, local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that review and scrutinise partners' community safety work. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year.

In Dorset Council, the function of the Crime & Disorder Committee is fulfilled by the People & Health Scrutiny Committee (for scrutiny work) and the People & Health Overview Committee (for any proactive community safety work).

This annual scrutiny report provides information on partners' work in three main areas:

- Progress against the Community Safety Plan 2020-23
- Progress against the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24
- Work undertaken to respond to new legal requirements placed on the Council and partners under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Due to the wide range of work undertaken by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) it is only possible to provide a broad strategic overview in this report. Further work and detail can be brought back to the Committee should members have any particular areas or issues they would like to explore.

Any observations or recommendations from the Committee will be considered by the CSP and used to help develop its work.

Recommendation:

That members of the Committee consider and comment on the community safety annual report.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the Council complies with its legal duties relating to community safety.

1. Background

1.1 Local authorities are required to have Crime & Disorder Committees that scrutinise the Council's and its partners' delivery of their statutory community safety functions. The committees should formally review progress at least once a year.

1.2 The Council's and partners' work on community safety is co-ordinated through the Dorset CSP. The CSP is a statutory partnership under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. It brings together the following responsible authorities who must work together to understand and address community safety issues in their area:

- Dorset Council
- Dorset Police
- NHS Dorset
- Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority
- The Probation Service

1.3 This annual scrutiny report focuses on three main areas of activity:

- Progress against the Community Safety Plan 2020-23
- Progress against the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24
- Work undertaken to respond to new legal requirements placed on the Council and partners under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

2. **Progress Against the Community Safety Plan 2020-2023**

- 2.1 CSP's are required to produce three-year Community Safety Plans that are revised annually.
- 2.2 The plans are informed by needs assessments and local people's views about community safety issues.
- 2.3 The Dorset CSP agreed its 2020-23 Community Safety Plan in March 2020. It was formally adopted by Dorset Council in October 2020. The Plan is refreshed annually and includes the following priorities:
 - Domestic Abuse and Stalking
 - Sexual Offences
 - Violent Crime
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Rural Crime
 - Fraud
- 2.4 These are complimented by the following cross cutting issues:
 - Mental health
 - Substance misuse
 - Complex cases / multiple needs
 - Violence against women and girls
- 2.5 Much of the partnership activity that has been put in place over the lifetime of the current and former CSPs in Dorset has become business as usual. This includes:
 - A wide variety of services aimed at supporting victims of domestic abuse. Services are provided and commissioned by various partners covering a wide range of needs from emergency safe accommodation to information and advice. Partners have in place a joint Domestic Abuse Commissioning Charter to help align their commissioning activities for domestic abuse services and interventions.
 - Joint working arrangements relating to domestic abuse including the High Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) approach that brings partners together to discuss individual cases, share information and develop joined up responses.

- Programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing domestic abuse offending. These include the DRIVE programme and Up2U (DRIVE works with high-harm, high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent their abusive behaviour and protect victims. Up2U is a programme for people who use domestically abusive and unhealthy behaviours in their relationships). It is the Council's and partners' ambition to stop people becoming victims of domestic abuse. Working with perpetrators is key to achieving that aim.
- Regular communication and awareness raising campaigns relating to domestic abuse and sexual offences. These are timed to coincide with wider national campaigns such as the 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse.
- Training on a wide range of community safety issues across agencies including domestic abuse, Modern Slavery and Preventing Violent Extremism (training on Modern Slavery and Prevent is mandatory for all Dorset Council staff).
- The completion and implementation of recommendations from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). These are multi-agency reviews undertaken when a homicide or suicide is potentially related to domestic abuse. The reviews aim to improve partners' overall response and safeguard future victims.
- A range of tools and initiatives to help tackle cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) including issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Criminal Behaviour Orders and Public Space Protection Orders. Multi-agency Initiatives including Operation Luscombe aim to tackle street based ASB.
- A wide variety of multi-agency initiatives aimed at addressing violent crime and sexual offences in the night-time economy including education, enforcement and public confidence.
- A dedicated multi-agency Rural Partnership Co-ordinating Group that develops joint work and initiatives to tackle rural crime.
- Work to tackle Fraud through 'Friends Against Scams' that aims to provide information, advice and support about scams as well as allow people to report issues.

2.6 Additional partnership activity developed during the third year of the current plan includes:

- Information on stalking has been incorporated into safeguarding work, including events during national safeguarding week, to help raise awareness of issues.
- Specific modules on stalking have been developed to be delivered through the Dragonfly Project (The Dragonfly Project raises awareness of domestic abuse within communities).

- An assessment has been undertaken of current domestic abuse perpetrator programme offers in Dorset and work is underway with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to access funding opportunities and commission new services.
- The HRDA Operating Protocol has been refined based on partners' experience to date of running the joint initiative.
- Detailed analytical work has been completed on sexual violence issues and used to inform partners' activity.
- Dorset Police has developed a clear action plan to tackle all Violence Against Women and Girls related offences. The plan, which involves working with partners, includes four key strategic objectives covering communications and engagement, high risk and high harm locations, the development of problem profiles and prevention activity.
- The development of a DHR Learning and Improvement Framework that sets out partners' commitment to identifying and acting on learning from DHR work and securing shared opportunities for development and improvement.
- Further development of CCTV and services to address stalking following the successful bid to the Home Office under round four of the Safer Streets Fund.
- Joint working with Housing Associations to address concerns around anti-social behaviour.
- Development of a new three year Reducing Reoffending Strategy that sets out partners vision to cut crime, reduce harm and protect victims by reducing re-offending through joint working and rehabilitation.
- Further work to address ASB including the 'Turnaround' programme, which is aimed at children on the cusp of the youth justice system.
- Further initiatives relating to Violence Against Women and Girls including the Pineapple Project which aims to provide safe spaces to help safeguard young women in their communities.

2.7 Areas for further work include working with schools on their prevention work with young people, exploring the use of evidence led prosecutions in stalking cases, developing partners' understanding of why victims of sexual offences tend to drop out of the criminal justice process at the early stages and embedding domestic abuse champions within partner organisations.

2.8 The priorities and issues partners are aiming to tackle are challenging and complex meaning actions and activity must often take place over a longer time period than just one year.

2.9 Work to draft the new Community Safety Plan for 2023-2026 is underway. Priorities will reflect the current ones and will be informed by an evidence base including data, information and views from residents.

2.10 The new Plan will be agreed by the CSP in March and will need to be formally adopted by Dorset Council. The Plan will go to the People & Health Overview Committee as part of the adoption process.

3. Progress Against the Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 29 April 2021. The Act placed new duties on local authorities including to establish a Local Partnership Board (LPB) for domestic abuse and produce a needs assessment and strategy relating to support for victims and children in safe accommodation.

3.2 The Dorset CSP took on the functions of the LPB for the Dorset Council area and its terms of reference and membership were updated accordingly.

3.3 The Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy was published on 5th January 2021 following a period of public consultation. It includes a position statement, an introduction to the requirements in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, recommendations from the needs assessment, a broad outline of activity in response to the recommendations and details on governance arrangements.

3.4 Central Government has provided each local authority area new burdens funding to help meet their new statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Initially funding was only guaranteed for one year but recently the government has confirmed funding will be provided each year up to 2024/2025.

3.5 In consultation with partners, so far Dorset Council has used the funding it has received to:

- Help fund and bolster current safe accommodation based support
- Continue and enhance support for children in safe accommodation
- Provide more housing support for victims of domestic abuse
- Develop target hardening work so people can remain in their own homes safely (target hardening involves improving the security of a property to reduce the risk of crime and improve safety)
- Undertake research and analysis to understand needs, what works and good practice in relation to domestic abuse

3.6 Now that future funding has been confirmed, work is underway to develop a more comprehensive commissioning strategy for domestic abuse services and interventions. The strategy will be informed by the findings of the research and analysis work currently being undertaken.

4. **Serious Violence Duty**

4.1 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 placed a new duty on the Council and its partners relating to serious violence.

4.2 The duty, which came into effect on 31st January 2023, requires the Council and its partners to produce an evidence based analysis of serious violence and develop and implement a strategy in response.

4.3 The partners responsible for the new duty are the same as the responsible authorities for CSPs with the addition of Youth Offending Teams.

4.4 Statutory guidance makes it clear that the new duty does not require partners to create new multi-agency structures and that existing local structures should be used where possible. Tackling serious violence has also been made an explicit priority for CSPs and guidance states they can use their current annual needs assessments and Community Safety Plans to fulfil the new duty.

4.5 Given those things, locally, partners have agreed to lead their response to fulfilling the new duty through the Dorset CSP.

4.6 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have been awarded grant funding to cover the costs of responding to the new duty and work is taking place with the Dorset PCC to determine the allocation and use of that funding locally.

5. **Financial Implications**

5.1 The Dorset CSP does not receive any funding directly, however partners' plans and strategies clarify where they will focus their time and effort and their broad activity to meet priorities.

- 5.2 The Council is receiving new burdens funding annually from central Government for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 to help meet statutory duties in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 5.3 Funding has been made available to partners via PCCs for new duties relating to violent crime, as set out in the report.

6. **Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 None.

7. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 7.1 Tackling crime and the fear of crime has a significant impact on health and wellbeing.

8. **Other Implications**

- 8.1 Community safety – as set out in the report.

9. **Risk Assessment**

- 9.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for the current community safety plan. The assessment highlighted several positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic.
- 10.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was also completed as part of the development of Dorset's Domestic Abuse Strategy.

11. **Appendices**

- 11.1 None.

12. **Background Papers**

12.1 [Community Safety Plan 2020-2023 \(2022-2023 Refresh\) - Dorset Council](#)

12.2 [Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy - Dorset Council](#)

12.3 [Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)