

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 17 September 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Emma Sutton-Thompson, Principal Policy Officer

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Draft Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy and Action Plan

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the Board with the draft Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy and Action Plan as part of a wider consultation process.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That: the Board agree and comment on the draft Strategy and Action Plan before it's submission to Executive Board and Strategic Partnership Board for approval.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 It is a statutory responsibility to produce a Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, and this was adopted in Halton during 2011. This Strategy and Action Plan has now been reviewed and updated, following the launch of the Government's plan to tackle Hate Crime "Challenge It, Report It, Stop It: The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime" March 2012. This document follows the "Hidden in Plain Sight Inquiry into Disability-Related Harassment" and the later "Out in the Open Tackling Disability related harassment – A manifesto for change", both published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

3.2 "Challenge It, Report It, Stop It: The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime" sets out the aims of the Government to tackle Hate Crime in all its forms. The document provides an overview of all the activity either already underway or proposed by various Whitehall departments. The Plan calls on all Government departments to support councils, the police and other local agencies to meet three key objectives:

- Challenging the behaviours and attitudes that foster hatred and encouraging early intervention to reduce the risk of incidents escalating;

- Encourage more victims to come forward and report hate crime; and
- Improve the response to hate crime by better identifying and managing cases

The Plan also calls on councils and other local partners to work jointly with the criminal justice system to bring offenders to justice, by, for example, making available information on hate crime and local support services.

3.3 Cheshire Constabulary has responded to the Government's Plan to tackle hate crime by updating their Hate Crime Action Plan. We have worked in conjunction with Cheshire Constabulary and aligned our Action Plan with theirs. The attached Action Plan is based on the Criminal Justice Board's plan.

3.4 The revised Strategy and Action Plan continues to promote effective and co-ordinated action against hate crime. We continue to work with the Safer Halton Partners, including the Police, voluntary sector support groups and the council to gain a better understanding of reported incidents within Halton. We are also looking at how we can better support victims by developing confidence in the criminal justice system to bring perpetrators to justice, more alliance of services and reporting mechanisms and more importantly preventing hate crime from occurring in the first place.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct policy implications from the review of the Hate Crime and Harassment Strategy and Action Plan.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Hate Crime impacts negatively on the lives of young people leaving victims afraid and destroying their self-confidence. Hate incidents and crimes can occur in schools, on the internet and in their neighbourhoods, often giving victims no escape from the abuse and having a long-lasting impact on victim's lives. Preventing hate crime and educating young people will have a positive impact on their lives.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Hate crime negatively impacts on the lives of victims destroying their confidence. This makes it difficult for victims to gain employment

and access training. Hate crime can occur in the work environment, with victims leaving employment to escape their abusers. Tackling hate crime will have a positive impact on this priority.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Hate crime has a significant impact on the victim's physical and mental health, so bringing offenders to justice and supporting victims of hate crime will positively impact on victim's health.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Hate crime is a criminal offence taken seriously by the police and is a priority for the Safer Halton Partnership. Partners are working together to bring offenders to justice, support victims and encourage reporting and most importantly prevent incidents from occurring in the first place.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Hate crime has a negative impact on communities, making residents fearful and can be accompanied by criminal damage, hate graffiti and anti-social behaviour, sometimes creating no-go areas or areas where people avoid in the evenings or after dark. By tackling and preventing hate crime we will also have a positive impact on environment and regeneration.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 By not working with partners to tackle hate crime and incidents we would risk perpetrators not being brought to justice, incidents going unreported and victim's suffering abuse which would be likely to escalate.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Hate crime is based on prejudice and targets victims based on their identity, therefore tackling hate crime has a positive impact on equality and diversity.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.