

**ANNUAL REPORT  
SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2015**



Cllr. Dave  
Thompson  
Chairman

“The safety of Halton’s residents and the continuing efforts to provide environments in which they can thrive remains a key priority for the Council as a whole. The Safer Policy and Performance Board continues to recognise and meet the challenges of the diverse needs of our communities, not least in their geographic structure, in a proactive and forward-thinking way.

As Chair of this Board for the past year I feel we have achieved a wide remit of activity and considered some new areas of community safety activity not previously recognised by the Board. This includes recognising the role played in a Safer Halton by organisations like the RSPCA and RNLI. My Board colleagues and contributing officers have brought up stimulating issues and topics for consideration and I would like to thank them for their contributions and scrutiny.

My appreciation is offered to Chris Patino, Mike Andrews, Emma Sutton-Thompson, Nicola Hallmark, Natalie Chase-Caffyn, Janet Guy, Elspeth Anwar, Simon Bell, John Williams, Jimmy Unsworth, Paul Wright and Lynn Derbyshire for their responsive and thorough involvement in the coverage of issues discussed.”

Councillor Dave Thompson  
Chairman, Safer Policy and Performance Board

**MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2014/15 the Board comprised 11 elected members: Councillors Thompson, Edge, Gerard, Gilligan, Hill, M. Lloyd-Jones, Nolan, Ratcliffe, Sinnott and Zygadlo. My particular thanks go to Cllr Lea who is Vice Chair.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Adults, Environmental Health and Safer Halton Partnership. The Board is also represented on the Cheshire Police & Crime Panel.

Topic Groups for 14/15:

- Domestic Abuse
- Novel/New Psychoactive Substances (Legal Highs)

	<p><b>REVIEW OF THE YEAR</b></p>
	<p>The full Board met 5 times during the year.</p> <p>The main initiatives of the Board's work for 2014/15 are as follows:</p>
	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny</b></p>
	<p>A working group was formulated with the specific remit of scrutinising the extent of <b>domestic abuse</b> as an issue in Halton. The group examined the multi-agency approach to tackling domestic abuse and explored additional opportunities to raise awareness of the issue. The group endorsed the Halton Domestic Violence Forum (HDAF) Strategy and in addition they worked with Community Safety to adopt White Ribbon Status and roll out a series of profile-raising promotions.</p> <p>In order to reinvigorate focus for the Board the incumbent Chair met with Officers to take a pre-emptive look at agenda items. It was agreed that future meetings should involve input from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Police and Crime Commissioner (Annually);</li> <li>• The Ambulance Service (Annually);</li> <li>• Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (Annually);</li> <li>• The RSPCA; and</li> <li>• The RNLI.</li> </ul> <p>Consultation with Officers fed into the Business Planning process and set the following themes as areas for concentration for 15/16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Domestic abuse</li> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour – new tools and power</li> <li>• Consumer Protection</li> </ul> <p>As well as core activity for Council services the themes will shape the focus of Board enquiries.</p>
	<p><b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b></p>
	<p>Throughout the year the Board has received presentations related to initiatives which impact on both the immediate and longer-term needs of the community in relation to safety.</p> <p>The change in Council remit to include Public Health has provided</p>

some significant focus on crucial agendas which affect both the health and the safety of Halton residents.

Over the course of the municipal year the Board has received updates and feed-in on the issue of alcohol harm across the Borough. The Board were advised that **Alcohol Harm Reduction** is a priority of the Halton Health and Wellbeing Board and that alcohol issues impacted substantially on other areas considered under the Safer remit, including influence on domestic violence, anti-social behaviour and crime. The Board heard reports on activity aimed at alleviating alcohol harm, including a 'social norms' programme with young people, the development of a 'dry bar' project, and proposals to conduct a 'community conversation' to identify the influences on residents' relationship with alcohol.

It was reported that Halton had been awarded the status of **Local Alcohol Action Area (LAAA)**. This was a national campaign which had asked for pilot areas to self-nominate and receive support in addressing the harm from alcohol across three areas – health, the night time economy and crime and anti-social behaviour. The Board were updated throughout the year on progress against the project plan.

The **Halton Alcohol Strategy** was considered by the Board. This set out actions aimed at rebalancing the relationship that Halton has with alcohol. It was reported that alcohol problems cut across the entire population of Halton and affected local residents of all ages. For this reason, the strategy is to take a 'life course' approach to the reduction of alcohol harm. The Board were advised that the Strategy builds upon the effective work already undertaken by the Authority and its partners. The Strategy was noted and endorsed.

The multi-agency **Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy** was presented to the Board. Suicide prevention is an important aspect of community safety. Locally, the Silver Jubilee Bridge is renowned as a suicide hot-spot. The Board heard that responding to suicide threats and attempts places a considerable burden on the time and resources of partners locally, including the police. The Strategy is contextualised with background information which sets out the policy framework in which it has been developed, considers the factors that influence why a person takes their own life, reviews the evidence on suicide prevention, outlines what is known about suicide in Halton and sets out actions to reduce the risk of suicide occurrences. The plans will be monitored by the Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership and outcomes are to be reported back to relevant bodies including the Safer Halton Partnership as well as the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Commissioned services for substance misuse (drugs and/or

alcohol) came under review and an update was brought to the Members on the plans to remodel provision. It was reported that the **Halton Specialist Community Substance Misuse Service**, delivered by Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI), is to be altered to establish services across two new venues. The review of the Widnes service site was forced by a lease expiry. A new location has been sourced and is envisaged as giving greater scope for service-user led activity. A new Runcorn site secures parity for the provision of services across the Borough. Outreach activity will continue to be developed alongside venue-based services.

The Board received a presentation on the emergence of **Novel/New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**, known as 'legal highs', and related issues. Members were informed of the national context and the scale and impact of the issue. Enlightening details were given around the design and sale of the substances and the evasion techniques employed to escape prosecution. The Board agreed that the matter presented the potential for substantial public interest and impacted on the safety of the community.

Updates were presented to the Board on the subject of **Anti-Social Behaviour**. In particular, the emergence of issues related to a small peer group in the Ditton area of Widnes raised concerns and actions involving multi-agency operations and interventions were reflected upon. The Board were informed of wider activity aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour including the establishment of injunctions; successful evictions of problematic residents; parental responsibility instructions being issued along with physical removals of young people to places of safety; victim support interventions; and collaborations with other agencies such as the Alcohol Harm Reduction Team. Reductions in anti-social behaviour were attributed to the tactics employed and agencies involved were commended for their tenacity.

Under the **Crime and Policing Act 2014** new tools and powers came into statute covering Anti-Social Behaviour and an organisation's ability to act on it. The Board were informed of the developments and notified that one of the purposes of the Act was to ensure that responses to anti-social behaviour are victim-focussed. The Board were advised that reforms (under Part 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) gave a civil power to apply an injunction to deal with anti-social individuals. The injunction could offer fast and effective protection for victims and communities and sets clear standards of behaviour for perpetrators, stopping the person's behaviour from escalating. In addition, it was reported that a number of agencies could apply for the injunction to ensure that the body best placed to lead on a specific case could do so.

Community Safety is a primary concern for the Safer Board and

updates were also heard on scheme and resources aimed at alleviating community tensions and promoting safe and prosperous neighbourhoods. These included: **The Navigation Scheme**, which focussed on re-offending; the **Inspiring Families** programme, working with vulnerable families to consider issues of worklessness, school attendance and domestic violence; **ArcAngel** branding and the **Pub Watch** scheme to support safe practices of licenced premises.

One specific period of concern around public safety was highlighted in a report to the Board. The so-called '**Mischief Night**', the night before Halloween, but including the period right up to bonfire night was considered. The Board heard plans to tackle anti-social behaviour through co-ordinator partnership approaches covering the historical duration of incidence. A follow-up report drew attention to the success of the campaign and praised the efforts of those agencies involved. A reduction in the incidence of anti-social behaviour was evidenced and the proactive preventative approach in respect of bonfires saw positive outcomes.

Representatives from the RNLi and Cheshire Fire and Rescue delivered informative presentations to the Board on their respective work areas.

With a community that spans either side of the Mersey estuary it was felt that the **RNLi** could provide valuable insight into waterside safety issues. A presentation was heard around the RNLis remit to cover the Borough's water boundaries and rescues made therein. It was reported that Halton is covered by the New Brighton station and that an average of 60 incidents a year were dealt with from this base. Within the previous year nine incidents had been in Halton, seven of which had involved issues with the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The Board supported the work being undertaken by the RNLi and agreed that the profile of the charity could be raise across the Borough, including fund raising work.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Safety Centre delivered a report to the Board on the development of their new Safety Education Centre in Warrington. The Centre's catchment audience includes those in the Borough of Halton. The Board were informed of the innovative design of the Centre, as a purpose-build facility, which will include realistic learning zones that simulate the environments in which injury or harm are most likely to occur. Visitors will be encouraged to experience a range of hazards in order to learn how to stay safe, well and be independent. The interactive education base would benefit the residents of Halton; in particular school visits would be arranged. The Centre has received grant capital funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government and intends to run as a charitable enterprise.

	<b>DOMESTIC ABUSE</b>
	<p>Within update presentations the Board were advised on new powers to issue <b>Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN)</b> and <b>Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO)</b>. These new enforcement laws give the police the power to remove the perpetrator from residence for a period of time. The Notice and Orders give greater scope for infrastructure support to be put in place for the victims during the intervening period.</p> <p>The Board were informed of a <b>public consultation (by the Home Office)</b> on proposals to strengthen the law on domestic abuse to offer better protection to victims. In particular it was noted that views were sought on whether there should be a specific offence in relation to domestic abuse and whether that should include wording on patterns of coercive and controlling behaviours. The Board were apprised of arguments for and against making a specific domestic abuse offence and concluded to feedback comments through Community Safety.</p>
	<b>SAFEGUARDING ADULTS</b>
	<p>Safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable adults across Halton remains a priority for Authority and its business. Details of the Council performance in relation to Safeguarding were reported back to the Board regularly. Performance measures were consistently met.</p> <p>The Board were updated on the impact of <b>Operational Emblem</b>, a joint initiative between Cheshire Police the 5 Boroughs Partnership, aimed at providing ‘Street Triage’ in situations requiring immediate response and interventions from Mental Health Services. The project has seen a significant reduction of detentions under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. Figures were presented to show substantial savings on arrests and detentions of those exhibiting the appearances of acute mental health disorders. The Board heard that the ‘Street Triage’ model involved police working alongside psychiatric nursing staff and learnt ‘through direct liaison subjects have not only been assessed far quicker but have been taken to the most appropriate site’ for intervention. The Board were informed that the scheme was to be extended and widened through support from the Police and Crime Commissioner and Halton and Warrington Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Board agreed to continue to support Operational Emblem and Members are justifiably proud that this initiative began in Halton. Cheshire Police are now committed to seeing it rolled out across the County</p>
	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH</b>

	<p>The Board were informed of activity involving <b>Environmental Health</b>, in particular joint interventions with <b>Licensing</b> where intelligence on licenced premises serving food was shared across the two services.</p>
<p><b>SAFER HALTON PARTNERSHIP</b></p>	
	<p>Feed-in from the <b>Safer Halton Partnership</b> continues to be received, with minutes and reports being brought to the attention of the Board. As Chair I have attended all meetings and also update the Partnership specifically on the Cheshire Police &amp; Crime Panel. This joined-up approach ensures a co-ordination of efforts and encourages collaborative working. For example, concerns about Novel/New Psychoactive Substances first emerged with the Partnership but have since been led by a Topic Group of the Safer PPB.</p> <p>The <b>Blue Lamp Reports</b> from Widnes and Runcorn provided valuable insight into community policing and we now share these with other Members to raise wider awareness.</p> <p>The Board received a progress update on targets contained in the <b>Sustainable Communities Strategy for Halton (SCS)</b>. The SCS was considered as an essential approach for the Council and its partners to set out an evidence-based framework through which actions and shared performance targets can be developed and communicated. The Strategy replaces the performance measures under the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which was removed by the Coalition Government in 2010.</p>
<p><b>CHESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL</b></p>	
	<p>The Chair &amp; Vice Chair of Safer PPB are the Council's nominated lead representatives on the <b>Cheshire Police &amp; Crime Panel</b>. The Panel forms a statutory scrutiny role of the undertakings and decisions made by the Police &amp; Crime Commissioner (PCC). There has been active scrutiny of the PCC over the last year and the Chair and Vice Chair have contributed to the review of the Cheshire Police &amp; Crime Plan 2015/16 and the statutory setting of the Police precept.</p>
	<p>Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board and its work, please contact Chris Patino (0151 5118556) or email at <a href="mailto:chris.patino@halton.gov.uk">chris.patino@halton.gov.uk</a></p>