

REPORT TO: Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 18th September 2007
AUTHOR: Strategic Director – Health and Community
SUBJECT: Key developments for Community Safety within Halton
WARDS: All

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise members of the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board of several emerging developments within the field of community safety which will have impact upon the partnership over coming months.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Board Members are asked to note the report, agree the conclusions and provide active support to members of the Community Safety Team needing to address issues as they develop.

3. BACKGROUND / ISSUES

The following issues have been identified that the Partners should be aware of and give cognisance to in business planning during coming months.

3.1 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Reform Programme.

Notification has been received from the Home Office over a reform programme that will affect the operations of Safer Halton Partnership. Whilst full details are expected in September / October 2007, the following aspects have been released currently:

- Fire and Rescue authorities will be included in Section 115 data sharing provisions and ALL relevant authorities will have a DUTY to share depersonalised information. Each relevant authority will be expected to have a designated officer with specific responsibility for information sharing.
- CDRPs are required to meet minimum standards that are subject to inspection. The standards set out six hallmarks of effective practice: empowered and effective leadership, intelligence-led business processes, effective and responsive delivery structures, community engagement, visible and constructive accountability and appropriate skills and knowledge.
- Guidance is to be published on meeting minimum standards and the new framework for Assessment of Police and Community Safety (APACS). A soon to be established Police and Partnership Support Unit (PPSU) is to be created to manage and support the introduction this development.
- The established three yearly Crime and Disorder audit and subsequent strategy process is to be scrapped and replaced with an ANNUAL Strategic Assessments and related delivery plans that inform LAA's.

- There will be no additional resources allocated to CDRPs to undertake the reform programme. Strategic Assessments are expected to be based on more up to date information and cover a shorter time period, the intention is that they will be more relevant to effective delivery, shorter and quicker to produce.

3.2 Cutting Crime – the new national crime reduction strategy

The Government has released a new crime reduction strategy that identifies a number of areas for focus over the period 2008-11:

- Stronger focus on serious violence – looking to address the drivers of violence, intervening early to prevent it, preventing escalation and robust in response, especially in being proactive in providing services to victims. A new safer communities PSA proposal will include specific measures.
- Continued pressure on anti-social behaviour – expectation that all areas of the country will be brought up to the standard of the best. Drive for the greater use of diverse tools and opportunities to address ASB and especially the use of effective supportive interventions.
- Renewed focus on young people – the new Department for Children, Schools and families will focus on lifting more children out of poverty, re-engaging disaffected young people and raising standards. There is to be the development of a youth crime strategy which will include the strengthening of links between the police, schools and youth provision and especially building on Safer Schools Partnerships.
- New national approach to designing out crime. – the Government intends to work closely with the corporate sector to design crime out of new products and services, including the built environment.
- Continuing to reduce offending – intention to strengthen capability of agencies and simplify criminal justice processes. Continued focus on the most prolific offenders through the National Offender Management Service, Drug Intervention Programmes and the like and strengthen PPO schemes.
- Greater sense of national partnership – Government is to bring together key partners at a National Crime Reduction Board to drive delivery and provide shared ownership of crime reduction. They intend to continue to build strong relationships especially between the police and local authorities.
- Freeing up local partners and building public confidence – there are to be fewer targets mandated from the centre and greater flexibility to respond to local issues. Performance assessment is to be simplified alongside changes as identified in 3.1 (above) with a promise to cut red tape! There is however going to be greater requirements to provide local information and accountability to communities, especially via the further roll out of the Neighbourhood Policing programme and partnerships are to be judged on how well they engage with communities.

A full copy of the new crime reduction strategy is available on the web via the following link:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/crime-strategy-07/crime-strategy-7?view=Binary

3.3 Developments within Halton Community Safety Team.

The following areas of service delivery have been identified within Community Safety Team activity as in need of further focus and scheduled for introduction:

- Performance Management Framework – whilst reporting against specific nationally set targets has been in place for a considerable period, softer targets that demonstrate the value added to the communities of Halton by collective partnership activity has not. It is intended to introduce a framework that is as simple as possible, yet provide visibility and appropriate accountability across all partners forming the SHP.
- Communication and marketing – it is recognised that shortfalls exist and opportunities not exploited to effectively market services and successes afforded by community safety activity across the borough. Getting this key issue right will substantially contribute to perceptions of safety and feelings of well being within communities.
- Community Watch – the realisation of community ambitions through self help by the development of Watch schemes across the borough is recognised and the re-introduction of Community Watch is planned for September.
- Greater partnership engagement within problem solving – a Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board paper resulting from work undertaken by an anti-social behaviour topic team, has identified benefits that can be gained through adopting more effective multi-agency working amongst partners. Options and opportunities are being explored and progressed at Chief Officer level currently. A review of community safety structures across the borough is planned for autumn 2007.

3.4 Safer Halton Week

An initiative aimed at enhancing the profile of The Safer Halton Partnership and reassuring communities that Halton is a safe place to live, work and visit is planned for the week Monday 24th to Sunday 30th September 2007. All partner agencies have been invited to participate and the following illustrative activity is being identified:

- Action events within all Local Authority Forum areas
- Emergency service specific activity
- Marketing and communication events specifically within Halton Lea shopping centre, Widnes town centre and Victoria Park.
- Young People initiatives
- Trading Standards activity
- Consultation events in Runcorn and Widnes.
- Substance misuse implication and information awareness activity.
- Awareness opportunities for Elected Members.

There will be a focus during the week on supporting young people, the elderly, single parents and road users with themes of promoting positive behaviour, being proactive in addressing community issues and raising awareness of home and personal safety.

A subsequent evaluation will be taken to the next Safer Halton Partnership meeting for information and discussion.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Safer Halton Partnership has achieved much within the past few years and the Community Safety Team in particular has served that goal well. Crime and Disorder has fallen within the Borough to some of the lowest levels experienced within a generation. However many within our communities do not know or believe this fact, especially if amongst the most vulnerable or have been a victim in recent times. Levels of crime and disorder are still unfortunately unacceptably high and all within the partnership must strive for even greater reductions. This is an expectation of not only national government but the communities served by everyone forming part of Safer Halton.
- 4.2 This paper has sought to highlight significant and dynamic changes that will affect the operation of *The Safer Halton Partnership* over the coming 12 months. These changes are real and will impact upon service delivery through strategic, tactical and operational issues coming to the fore and having to be addressed.
- 4.3 Community Safety continues to be the identified number one priority for all communities across the Borough. Capability, capacity and budgets of those charged with meeting this agenda will be extremely stretched in order to realise expectations both locally identified and nationally set.
- 4.4 Effective leadership and active commitment from all partners will be critical to success and especially so in meeting community expectations. The identified above issues must therefore be given appropriate emphasis within planning processes and especially regarding decisions on scarce resource allocation, if the partnership is to meet its challenging ambitions.