

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 15th September 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: New Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy for Halton

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board that Halton’s Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy and Action Plan is in need of a refresh and to advise the Board of the plan which has been put in place to do this.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) The Board support the proposed refresh timetable and provide any comments on the old Strategy and Action Plan.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Councils have a vital role to play in building community cohesion, combating extremism and in encouraging the victims of hate crime to come forward and report the matter to the police.

3.2 Hate crimes reflect on us as a society. Hate crimes can cause lasting physical and emotional damage. They can evoke despair, anger, and anxiety in victims, and spread fear and mistrust in communities, thus weakening the glue that binds our society together. They strike at the heart of our democracy by undermining the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination. Hate crimes can affect any person, regardless of their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

3.2 In 2016 the Government published their four year plan to combat Hate Crime in the UK, this was followed in October 2018 with a progress report entitled Action Against Hate, where it was suggested that the noticeable increase in incidents across the Country could be traced back to the Referendum vote. It is timely to see a refresh of Halton’s Strategy, for whilst there has been no Government announcements about their own, it is anticipated that in light of

issues related to leaving the EU at the end of the calendar year, there is likely to be some increased activity around this issue.

3.3 The Hate Crime Strategy will sit alongside other areas of work such as the Prevent/Challenge agenda, a refreshed Single Equality Scheme and a more strategic approach to tackling Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking. All of the above are strands of work that help ensure the Council is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

3.4 The Strategy will encourage the challenging of 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;
- Improve the response to hate crime by better identifying and managing cases

The Action Plan will also encourage local partners and the Council 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.

3.5 Cheshire Constabulary has responded to the Government's Plan to tackle hate crime by updating their Hate Crime Action Plan. The council will work in conjunction with Cheshire Constabulary and aligned our Action Plan with theirs.

3.6 The refreshed Strategy and Action Plan will continue 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.

3.7 The draft refreshed Strategy will be shared with Partners and community organisations over the course of September and October, as part of a consultation process. The final plan will go to the Safer Halton Partnership meeting for approval in early November.

3.8 It is anticipated that the Strategy will remain very similar to what is already in place except for any new actions that will hopefully come out of the consultation phase and a review of the structures that are in place to support the activity. For example the attached old plan

mentions Police Authorities, which of course no longer exist. Nor do the majority of 3rd Party Reporting Centres following a review last year by Cheshire Police which clearly showed people weren't using them and other means of reporting needed to be identified.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct policy implications from the refresh 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

None Identified

Attachments: Hate Crime and Harassment Reduction Strategy 2012-2017