

**REPORT TO:** Safer Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Community Safety

**SUBJECT:** Cheshire Police Therapy Dog Trial

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider the presentation from PC Tetlow in relation to this new initiative to trial a Police therapy dog in the Northern division of Cheshire. Cheshire Police would be the first North West Force to pioneer this resource with the aim to improve victim engagement, staff wellbeing and youth intervention and diversion.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) **the report be noted; and**
- 2) **the Board consider the information presented and raise any questions of interest or points of clarification following the presentation.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Background**

Essex police is the only force in the UK to have a volunteer therapy dog called Baloo. Baloo is an ex general purpose dog who was injured in a road traffic accident and is now handled by an Essex dog officer.

It has been a huge success one example is when Baloo attended the scene of HGV that was intercepted on its route from Bulgaria into Essex and 39 people were discovered deceased inside the trailer. Due to the presence of Baloo at the scene and at the following TISM, officers were able to vocalise their feeling and thoughts in order to process the traumatic events.

Devon Police also hire in Pets as Therapy Dogs for use in the Control Room to assist the Wellbeing of the police and staff within the force, and a therapy dog is being successfully used by Cheshire Children's

Mental Health Service when supporting children suffering with mental health issues.

- 3.2 The proposal is that the therapy dogs work alongside the Safer Schools Young Persons Partnership officers. Their work involves working closely with schools, Beat Management and Partnerships to anticipate problems involving young people and their families. They regularly attend schools dedicated to additional educational needs, working with those individuals that suffer from learning difficulties and disabilities.
- 3.3 The therapy dog would also be used in a variety of schemes and settings such as some examples below

Primary & High Schools visits

Playground patrol – “Paws for a Chat”

RJ Sessions / Out of Court Disposals, One 2 Ones, Video Interviews, MG11's and MG11 VPSS's

Schools for additional learning needs

Other duties would / could include, HQ open days, Pride, Cheshire Show, local events such as PPX, VPX, Kops and Kids, Control Room, other departments

Signpost and highlight issues

- 3.4 Young People enjoy apps such as Instagram. Using the positive effects of this to create accounts. We can then use days such as “Mental Health Awareness Week” & “E-Safety day” to push messages to the reader and signpost them for help and further advice.

#### 4.0 Benefits

No other force has achieved this initiative with a regular officer (Essex is a volunteer dog/handler) and thus I would like to formulate a training programme with a professional dog training company to achieve best practice when using police therapy dogs.

The benefits could be huge and we could use the dog in some or all of the following:-

1. One to ones/community resolutions/out of court disposals/RJ's
2. Playground patrols
3. HQ open days
4. Social media campaign to signpost/highlight issues.

It is also proven that the process of patting and stroking a dog, reduces the blood pressure, Promotes relaxation and Changes your physiological state into a more relaxed mode.

Dogs in a workplace/school can lessen the overall stress of an environment especially when working with younger people.

## 5.0 Funding

The dog itself will be funded by Cheshire Crime beat who are a charity that sponsor initiatives to support the community. The cost of the training depending on the training plan will be supported from possible funding streams such as application to PCC etc. The training itself would take place in the evening and would be after the working day so that the officer would fulfil the current role and this would not detract from current duties.

The cost of the food, insurance and vet bills will be aligned to the current Cheshire Dog Unit for continuity similar to the stand alone Drugs Dog patrol which is handled by the Licensing officer. There has also been an offer made by a local business who wish to cover this cost to help the community and increase partnership working with retail premises.

## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The policy implications of the scheme relate primarily to the Safer Halton priority. However this is a cross cutting work area which has wider implications on other areas of council business.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the health, safety and well-being of young people.

### **8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None

### **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

### **8.4 A Safer Halton**

The Community Safety Service as a universal service impacts on the Health, safety and well-being of the residents of Halton.

## **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

## **9.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

None

## **10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None

## **11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

11.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.