

Report on the work of the Test Valley Community Safety Group

Report of the Community Engagement Manager (on behalf of the Test Valley Partnership)

Recommended:

- 1. That the report be acknowledged and partnership approach be endorsed.**
- 2. That Officers bring a report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in autumn 2022 to give an annual update on the work of the Community Safety Management Group.**

SUMMARY:

- A report on the work of the Test Valley Community Safety Group over the past twelve months and the priorities for the year ahead.

1. Introduction:

- 1.1** This report follows previous reports the last of which was in November 2020, in regard to specific elements of work undertaken by the Community Safety Management Group (CSMG).
- 1.2** This report summarises the priorities of the CSMG and gives examples of some of the projects and operations it has initiated and operated, its successes and challenges over the past twelve months.

2. Background:

- 2.1** The CSMG is a sub-group of the Test Valley Partnership and comprises of the statutory Community Safety Partners (TVBC; Police; Fire & Rescue Service; Clinical Commissioning Group; Probation), plus other relevant local Community Safety Partners such as Registered Social Landlords, Neighbourhood Watch, Street Pastors, Youth Crime Prevention (YCP), Town Centre and BID managers, amongst others.
- 2.2** It enables organisations working locally in this sector to respond to the needs of communities in a co-ordinated and organised way by sharing skills, resources and data. The group addresses community safety specific issues on a tactical and localised level. This allows for responsible authorities and other local agencies and partners to work in partnership to develop and implement strategies to tackle crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour priorities locally.

- 2.3 Officers from TVBC also attend monthly confidential Police Tactical Command Briefing Meetings to help ensure that effective two-way communication and co-ordination is maintained on key issues between the CSMG and Police. CSMG priorities are a standing item on this agenda.
- 2.4 The group has noted that this period has been impacted heavily by the Covid-19 pandemic and extended periods of lockdown. As a result it is difficult to provide accurate interpretation of year-on-year data, and so the data provided is for information purposes, rather than for longer term trend analysis.

3. Objectives and Priorities:

- 3.1 The CSMG has collectively assessed and proposed the partnership priorities to the Test Valley Partnership annually, and were agreed in October 2021.

The CSP Priority Areas for 2021/22 are:

- Community Crime Prevention and Public Safety. To increase public reassurance and confidence to report issues to public bodies.
- Anti-Social Behaviour, through Positive engagement and early intervention with young people, to identify and address potential causal issues of behaviours.
- Supporting Vulnerable People in Need, including issues of Domestic Abuse, Scams, and Hate Crime.
- Drug related harm, including knife crime and Modern Slavery linked to 'County lines'.
- Fire Safety; including the promotion of Safe and Well visits and advice.
- Maintain rural community confidence, through encouraging co-operative partnership amongst landowners and partners.
- To encourage co-operative partnership amongst agencies and community/voluntary sector groups working towards enhanced and positive communities.

- 3.2 In addition, monthly sub-group casework meetings (Community Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) are also held in the North & South of the district with all relevant partners to discuss and plan for cases on an individual basis.

4. Context

- 4.1 The diverse nature of the Community Safety Management Group, incorporating statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations linked to community safety allows for a wide range of information, skills, capacity and intelligence to be brought to the group and incorporated into discussions and projects. It also allows for important messages around crime prevention and public safety to be disseminated to these groups and their wider community networks.

4.2 The Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns had an important impact on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour over the course of the year 2020/21. As a result of the pandemic, and the lockdowns imposed for large parts of the year, the Police were provided with additional guidance and powers to help enforce these.

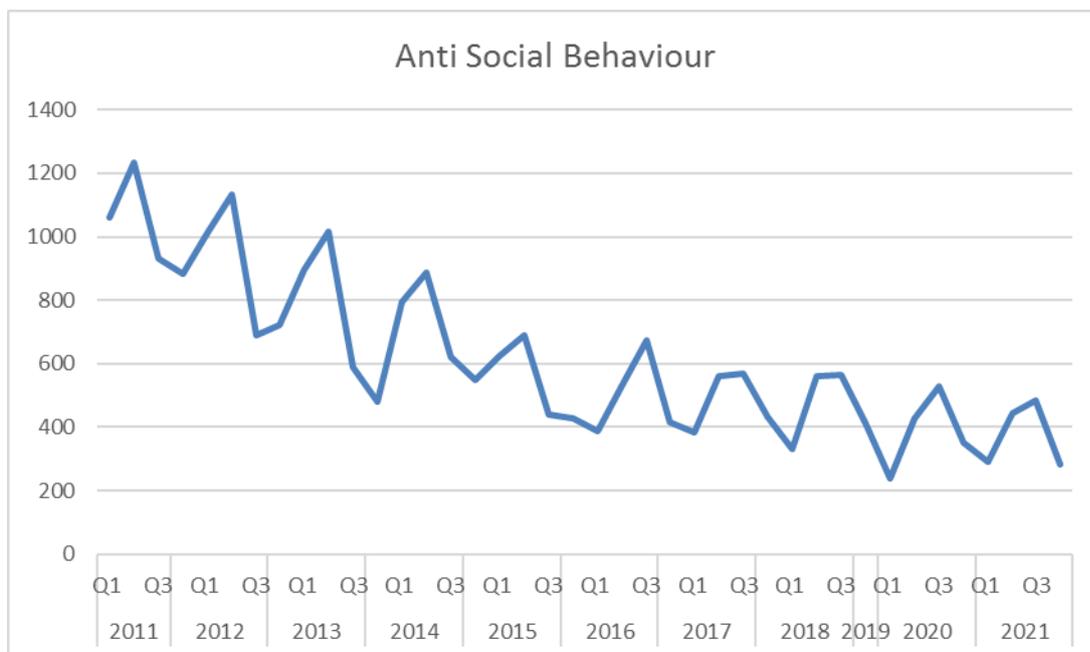
4.3 In 2020/21, Total Crime in Test Valley fell by 11.9%. Reports fell in each quarter of the year, with the largest fall (22.7%) registered between April-June, coinciding with the first lockdown period.

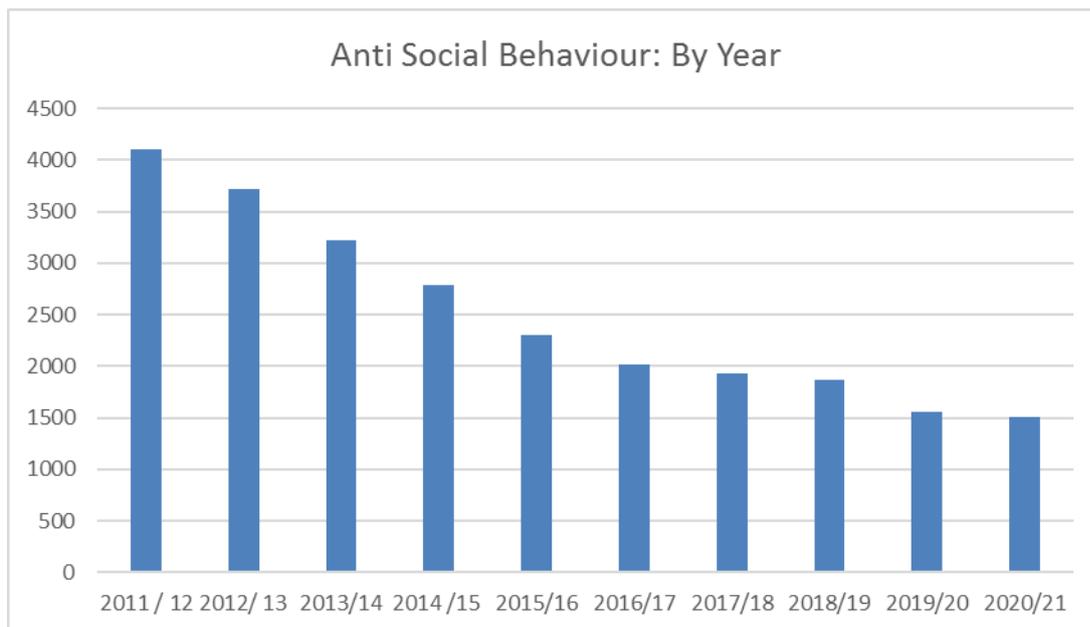
5. Anti-Social Behaviour:

5.1 Analysis of the available data shows that reports of incidents of ASB made to Police have continued to fall by a further 39 incidents (-2.53%) in 2020/21. From its peak in 2011 at 1,234 in Quarter 2 of that year, reports fell to 282 in Quarter 4 of 2020/21.

5.2 ASB reports fell in the third and fourth quarters of the year, but increases of 20.66% (+50) and 4.22% (+18) were noted in the periods April – June and July – September respectively. This former of these includes a significant number of reports related to behaviours linked the lockdown terms of that time, with 68% of reports between April – June, and 73% from July – September were classed as ‘Community ASB’ .

5.3 When considered by Ward, the highest levels of reports of ASB were noted in St Marys; Alamein; Winton and Abbey wards.





5.4 Countywide, Test Valley District recorded the second lowest levels of ASB over the year with only Hart district reporting fewer. When considered on a population basis, Test Valley District has the third lowest levels of ASB reports in the county

5.5 A survey conducted by YouGov for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner, reported that the levels of residents in Test Valley who responded positively to the question 'I feel safe in my Community' was 90% in March 2021. The average for Hampshire was recorded as 79.2% and nationally at 72.4%.

5.6 Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service completed a total of 36 safeguarding visits to residents, up from 25 in the previous year. Of these the majority were related to concerns over self-neglect. A total of 289 fire incidents were recorded in Test Valley District in 2020/21 (up from 212 in 2019/20), of which 164 were classed as accidental, 36 were deliberate on others property, and 7 listed as being against an individual's own property.

6. Partnership Projects:

6.1 The CSMG co-ordinates a range of operations and projects to help address the priorities and key issues identified. A sample of the recent partnership operations and projects planned and monitored via the CSMG are outlined below:

- 6.2 'Op Mazi': Op Mazi' is a multi-agency programme, incorporating Police, TVBC and local specialist treatment and support service sector partners to address negative street attached behaviours in Andover town centre. Partner services include Two Saints, NHS Inclusion Substance Misuse Service, MIND, Salvation Army, the Bridge Drop-in and BID Rangers amongst others. The approach includes an increased police presence and regular partnership patrols in the areas most affected, plus direct specialist engagement with those concerned to identify any vulnerabilities and issues, with subsequent referrals to partners for action on drink and drug related issues, housing and/or benefits as applicable.
- 6.3 2020/21 was impacted heavily by the pandemic as those who had previously been noted as being 'street –attached' were placed in accommodation resulting from the 'everyone in' directive from MHCLG, and very few complaints were received from the public. Just under 20 partnership patrols were completed from July through to October. This trend has continued over the summer of 2021. A small a number of individuals were noted and engaged with whilst out drinking but they were noted to have moved to more discrete areas where they were less visible. Various reports of begging in the town centre were received but these revolved around one of two repeat offenders.
- 6.4 Police and TVBC officers conducted their 6 week Op Mazi patrols through August and September. No papers were issued for the drinking (down from 85 in 2019/20) although evidence was collated for a Criminal Behaviour Order for one of those individuals who was repeatedly begging.
- 6.5 'ICE': As a result of the Covid pandemic and resultant lockdown periods, the In Case of Emergency (ICE) programme was suspended during 2020/21. In the interim, the project has been reviewed and it is planned that this will resume at Easter 2022 subject to guidelines and any restrictions at that time.
- 6.6 Big Band Buffet: Due to the Covid-19 Restrictions in place, and the vulnerabilities of the demographic involved with the Big Band Buffet, the event planned for Jan 2021 was postponed. Again it is hope this event can be resumed in summer 2022, subject to the restrictions at that time.

7. Domestic Abuse:

- 7.1 Nationally the pandemic lockdown period saw a significant increase in reports of Domestic Abuse over this period. In Test Valley, a total of 1,220 reports were made to Police. These reports rose from 90 / 84 in April / May 2020, to 125 and 119 in May and July respectively. As lockdown was eased, these fell to 96 in September, before rising again to 102 in November. December and January (89/92) saw fewer before a further rise, again timed with enhanced lockdown terms to 105 / 104 in February and March.

- 7.2 Rates of Domestic Abuse in Test Valley for the period were lower than the Hampshire County Council area averages for both men and women. This shows Test Valley to have the 7th lowest rate of reports for females and 6th lowest rates for male per population in the county area.
- 7.3 Countywide, Domestic Abuse incidents and recorded crimes continued an upward trend, mostly in Violence without Injury crime types. COVID-19 lockdown measures exacerbated domestic related violence and harm, the longer-term effects of which are yet unknown.
- 7.4 In partnership with the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership, the Test Valley Partnership - through the CSMG - has drafted a Domestic Abuse Communications Strategy, which includes social media and other promotions campaigns for White Ribbon Day (Nov 2021) and Christmas 2021, and to pilot a range of events to raise awareness of and dispel the myths linked to domestic abuse.
- 7.5 Alongside this plans are underway to pilot a domestic abuse project to raise awareness and train volunteers from the hair dressing and beautician sectors to become Domestic Abuse Ambassadors to recognise the warning signs of domestic abuse and safely refer clients to relevant organisations that can help them, utilising Stop Domestic Abuse certified training.

8. Drug Related Harm and Knife Crime:

- 8.1 In 2020/21 Hampshire was identified as one of 18 areas to receive funding for a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) from the Home Office, and this funding has continued into 2021/22. This aims to reduce violence, with a focus on youth knife crime. The VRU is in the process of updating its 'problem profile'. The last profile noted that Basingstoke, Rushmoor, and Test Valley reported a higher number of knife related violent crimes. Within Test Valley, Andover had two areas within the top ten beats with higher counts of 'narrow definition most serious violence', where an offender or aggrieved under 25 and a knife was involved between 2016 and 2019. These were Alamein and St Marys.
- 8.2 The CSMG is working closely with the VRU on various work streams to develop coordinated action plans and to access funding to help address this. In addition to this, two particular initiatives are underway to help meet this objective:
- 8.3 Legacy Project: The CSMG has worked with 'The Yellow Brick Road' and 'UpSkillU' groups, to fund and implement 'The Legacy Project'. This is an early intervention programme tackling the risk of criminal exploitation of young people, including serious violence, gang life, county lines and modern slavery, by positive engagement with mentors with similar life experiences.

- 8.4 During 2020/2021 the Legacy Project, managed by Yellow Brick Road received 30 nominations, and held two webinars with approximately 250 attendees and which included personal testimonies from young people and mentors on their lived experiences. Since September 2020 all nominations been matched to a mentor. Funding has been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Test Valley Borough Council and the Test Valley Community Safety Management Group to allow the project to continue for 2021/22 and to expand to cover the whole of the Test Valley from April 2021, and a new worker has been employed for Southern area.
- 8.5 Since April 2021 the expanded remit has received a further 32 nominations to October 2021, and the latest webinar attracted 28 professionals. A wide range of subjects have been covered including trauma, self-worth and self-identification. All those involved also have exit plans, which have included art and music based projects linked to their personal issues. The majority of referrals have been female, and reported increased confidence and increased awareness of longer term consequence of dangerous relationships, and social media pressures.
- 8.6 In addition, the linked 'Exodus project' has been established, aimed at those involved in Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and covering themes such as Knife Crime, County Lines, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), identity and relationships, allows for an intensive 12 week project of support and education. To date this has a 100% attendance, including high risk females not engaging elsewhere.
- 8.7 Detached Youth Outreach An outreach scheme has also commenced in Andover with weekly evening sessions to further support and engage at risk young people, managed by Yellow Brick Road. The detached youth work had 200 contacts the financial year. The workers have focused on areas including the skatepark and King George Road making good links with young people and their families. This positive and trusting relationship has led to more young people engaging with The Legacy Project. They are also working with partners such as the Andover Leisure Centre, and the bus of hope about potentially locating there to help residents feel heard, plus are liaising with specialist officers about those who may be vulnerable to exploitation.
- 8.8 Drug Related Harm Partnership: The Drug Related Harm Partnership has continued to operate successfully to help with the sharing of information and intelligence between agencies and police. The group meets bi-monthly to gather intelligence and co-ordinate responses to local drug related activity in a holistic manner.
- 9. Other Aspects:**
- 9.1 Maintaining Rural Community Confidence: Rural crime increased by a 1.5% over the year, but fell in the first, third and fourth quarters of the year compared to the same period previously, after increasing over the summer. This reflects the easing of the lockdown over this latter period, and remains a policing priority.

- 9.2 Community-MARACs [Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences] are partnership case conferences which allow action planning using a Harm Centred Approach. All referrals received which are assessed as 'High Risk' will be heard at a case conference within 7 days. In 2020/21 the Community-MARACs had 33 cases referred and reviewed, a reduction of four from the previous year.
- 9.3 PREVENT: The CSMG is linked into the countywide Prevent Board which leads on counter-terrorism, and allows for effective information sharing between the strategic leads and the wider community on the requirements and duties. Agreement has recently been reached for security vetted officers to receive access to restricted information from the South East Counter Terrorism Local Partnership reports, from which a Situational Risk Assessment has been developed and completed for the Test Valley District.
- 9.4 'Channel' is the government programme which supports individuals identified as being at higher risk. During 2021/22 no referrals were made the County 'Channel Panel' for any Test Valley residents. Since April 2021, two referrals were made of which one was accepted. An action plan was put in place to help address the concerns raised and the individual has since successfully been closed to the panel.
- 9.5 Community Trigger: 'Community Trigger' (CT) is a statutory device which gives victims and communities the right to request a formal review of their case where they feel that anti-social behaviour issues remains unresolved, and circumstances of ASB meet a set threshold.
- 9.6 No Community Triggers were received during 2020/21. However, since April 2022 two requests have been received, one of which was made directly by Community Safety Offers at TVBC, and were agreed. In each case a partnership meeting was held and an action plan approved which has also been agreed by the residents. These plans are currently being implemented by partners.
- 9.7 Domestic Homicide Review: No new Domestic Homicide Review referrals have been received during 2021/22, or subsequently. We await clearance from the Home Office to publish details of the previous review known as 'Nicole', although the partnership action plan which was derived from its recommendations has now been implemented.
- 9.8 Andover Town BID Rangers: The Council has contributed to a pilot project led by Andover BID to bring Town Rangers to Andover town centre. The specific element of their work which TVBCs contribution is concerned with is their potential impact on anti-social behaviour in the town centre and to engage with those displaying negative street-attached behaviours in particular. The Rangers are also authorised to use powers under the PSPO. An evaluation of the impact and success of these specific aspects of the project is currently underway.

- 9.9 Anti-Loan Shark Award. In 2021, TVBC became the first local authority to be recognised with the 'Partner Status' award from the English Illegal Money Lending team in recognition for their initiatives tackling loan sharks in the borough and making communities safer.
- 9.10 The new accreditation award recognises and rewards partners that work alongside IMLT to raise awareness of loan sharks, and their impact on local communities, and to create safer spaces for people to live and work. Test Valley Borough Council have undertaken a range of training and projects to help address loan shark activity, including specific training for its frontline staff in identifying the signs of loan sharks and how to help those who may be victims, or at risk.
- 10 **Conclusion:**
- 10.1 The impact of Covid-19 has made the past year one with unique challenges and issues. It has put new and increased pressures on many partner agencies and has made it impossible to assess longer-term trends across this period. However, close partnership working has continued to ensure co-operation and co-ordination between services to cover issues and prevent duplication or confusion during this time.
- 10.2 Overall Test Valley reported crime fell in each quarter of the year, with the largest fall coinciding with the first lockdown period. However, notable increases were recorded in some crimes, such as Domestic Abuse, locally and nationally during lockdown periods in particular, and have been prioritised. The same restrictions also saw decreases in levels of violence, thefts, residential burglaries and vehicle offences as people were locked down at home. Other crime types such as drug related crimes may have become more visible due to the restrictions but it is not clear that these have been more prevalent than before, and work continues.
- 10.3 Covid restrictions have also resulted in new offences, such as the breaking of lockdown measures which saw increased reports of public order offences and levels of Anti-social behaviour during the lockdown periods, although overall levels of ASB continued to reduce in the district annually.
- 10.4 Similarly these restrictions have prohibited much of the preventive and early intervention work from being undertaken with projects such as ICE and Big Band Buffet being suspended, and partners being unable to undertake home visits. However, where possible new ways of working have been introduced to help offset these and continue partnership working. The time has also been utilised to review these partnership projects and plan for their resumption in 2022, alongside new scheme to address newly identified concerns, including innovative Domestic Abuse plans.

Appendix

- 2020/21 Strategic Assessment Report.

11. **Equality Issues** - None.

12. **Other Issues**

- a. Environmental Health Issues - None
- b. Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate - None
- c. Property Issues - None
- d. Wards/Communities Affected - All

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

None

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:

1

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File Ref:

Report to:

Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

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