

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Combating Drugs Partnership</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 May 2023
<b>WARD</b>	None specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalocco

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) is a Berkshire West partnership formed in response to the Governments new drug strategy 'From Harm to Hope'. The aim of the CDP is to set the direction and produce action plans required by local partners to deliver against the framework. This supports Wokingham's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities around reducing crime and substance use. The CDP is overseen by Wokingham's CSP and has been running since late 2023. This report outlines the progress and outcomes of the CDP and how this aligns with the local drug and alcohol strategy and priorities.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee notes the content of the report and the work achieved to date, reviews next steps and offers comment.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

At the meeting of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 23 January 2023 the committee considered a report that provided information on the newly formed Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) covering the local authority areas of Wokingham, Reading and West Berks. The lead officer was unable to attend the meeting however Councillor Ian Shenton, the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, attended and took questions. It was agreed that the report would be considered at a later date.

The report provides a summary of the formation of the CDP and it's progress to date in helping to deliver Wokingham's requirements as outlined in the new Harm to Hope strategy. Public Health initiated the new Substance Misuse Strategy as the current Strategy expires in 2024. In light of the direction given by Government it was agreed the Wokingham strategy would be paused whilst the required needs assessment and subsequent action plan were developed as this would lead the work required across Berkshire West. The action plan agreed by the CDP is now at the implementation stage and will need to be progressed with key partners including TVP, Probation, Health etc. At the CDP meeting in January 2023, it was agreed that CSPs were best placed to take the implementation of local delivery forward, due to well established frameworks for partnership delivery already in place. Local arrangements for the delivery and governance are to be finalised at the next meeting of the CSP in June.

## Background

At the meeting of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 23 January 2023 the committee considered a report that provided information on the newly formed Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) covering the local authority areas of Wokingham, Reading and West Berks. The lead officer was unable to attend the meeting however Councillor Ian Shenton, the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, attended and took questions. It was agreed that a response to the following questions would be provided at a future meeting, a written response is also set out in Appendix 1.

### Questions

1. How widespread was the drugs problem within the Wokingham Borough Council Area?
2. What actions were being considered to break the cycle of demand?
3. Could further comment be provided regarding the relatively high levels of 'drug driving'?
4. What was being done to combat the use of Nitrous Oxide, especially amongst school children?

## Analysis of Issues

### Combatting Drugs Partnership 2022

In 2021, a two-part independent review of drugs was undertaken by Dame Carol Black. Part One of the review identified the scale of the national drugs problems, with an illicit drugs market with an annual value of £10 billion, and 3 million users accessing a supply chain that is increasingly violent and exploitative. The societal cost of illicit drug use is £19.3 billion per year, 86% attributable to health and crime related costs. Part two reviewed the current situation with prevention, treatment, and recovery, which the report concluded were not fit for purpose, and the need for significant investment to resolve the many issues highlighted.

Harm to Hope, a 10 year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives was launched in December 2021, taking the recommendations from the Dame Carol Black review into a strategic plan supported by grant funding, and system wide responsibilities. The plan has three key areas of focus:

**1. Break the drugs supply chain Combatting “county lines” and organised crime groups**

**2. Deliver a world – class treatment and recovery system**

Investing in drug treatment and recovery, driving standards and consistency

**3. Achieve a shift in the demand for recreational drugs**

Deter adults from using recreational drugs, prevent young people from starting drugs

On 15th June 2022, the Drug strategy guidance for local delivery partners was published, outlining responsibilities over the next 6 months for local areas to establish the structures and work programmes needed in their areas to start to deliver on the 10 year plan. Areas are required to have a new statutory Combatting Drugs Partnership to successfully address the harms caused by illicit drugs.

The Office of the Police Crime Commissioner across the OPCC footprint met to consider the expectations. Discussions also took place to consider other footprints with possible geographic areas to establish the Combatting Drugs Partnership. Discussions were held with senior officers and the Chairs of the Community Safety Partnership to propose that the new partnership operate at a Berkshire West level across the three local authorities. The SRO and Chair of the CDP is Matthew Barber (TVP Police and Crime Commissioner)

The information and strategic direction on drugs and alcohol is variable across Berkshire West currently. The mandate to deliver against the criteria presented by Dame Carol Black is, as well as establishing a partnership, that a comprehensive needs assessment was undertaken, and an action plan be produced by December 2022. The needs assessment has been produced and this has informed Berkshire West action plan with individual requirements for the three local authorities. The Public Health grant is used to ensure provision of services to support people to recover from misuse of drugs and alcohol. Additional government grant funding has been provided to these services, to support delivery of the strategic ambitions set out in the 10-year plan. The individual money awarded to Wokingham for this work outside of the Public Health grant is £83,007 per annum for 3 years. There will be a requirement of other members on the Combatting Drugs Partnership to undertake additional work programmes and commission/ deliver additional services. It is anticipated funding for this will flow directly from central government to the relevant organisation/s.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
N/A

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
An equalities assessment was undertaken in February 2021.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
There will be no impact as a result of this decision on the Council’s carbon neutral objective.

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
None

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report/reviewof-drugs-summary">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report/reviewof-drugs-summary</a>  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-two-report/reviewof-drugs-part-two-prevention-treatment-and-recovery">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-two-report/reviewof-drugs-part-two-prevention-treatment-and-recovery</a>  <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1079147/From_harm_to_hope_PDF.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1079147/From_harm_to_hope_PDF.pdf</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-strategy-guidance-for-local-deliverypartners">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-strategy-guidance-for-local-deliverypartners</a>

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