

TITLE	Community Safety Partnership Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 July 2023
WARD	None specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framaliccio

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Crime, disorder & anti-social behaviour issues affect all sections of society. Whilst Wokingham remains a very safe place and has one of the lowest crime rates in the Southeast, some categories of crime are seeing an upward trend.

The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership, made up of key stakeholders including, Wokingham Borough Council, Thames Valley Police, Berkshire Fire and Rescue, Health and Probation Services. Continue to work together to address issues and concerns effecting the borough's residents, business and wider communities.

The Wokingham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is two years into its three-year strategy, this report outlines the progress and outcomes achieved in year two.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers and offers comments on the crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour issues and the work of the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership from April 2022 – March 2023.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Wokingham Community Safety Strategy was adopted in June 2021. The focus for the 2021-2024 strategy is on the following three strategic priorities, underpinned by five specific aims:

Strategic priorities

- 1 Listening to needs and concerns of local residents.
- 2 Intervening early and preventing issues escalating.
- 3 Working together to protect vulnerable residents.

Specific Aims

- 1 Work with communities to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots.
- 2 Reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse.
- 3 Reduce incidents of serious violence and knife crime.
- 4 Tackle exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 5 Reduce incidents of residential burglary and theft from vehicle.

Crime Performance

All crime across the borough has seen an increase of +11.4% (841 offences) in the year ending 31st March 2023 when compared to the same period the previous year. Increases have been seen largely in categories in relation to theft as well as some other crime types.

Crimes that have decreased when compared to the same period last year, include drugs possession, drugs trafficking, possession of weapons and public order offences. Some categories including burglary dwelling, robbery and hate crime have all seen reductions.

The partnership's draft end of year report 2022/23 is attached in Appendix A and provides further detail.

Background

Statutory and other partners

The ability to tackle crime and disorder is maximised if everyone including local residents and businesses, community and voluntary groups, and services work together in a coordinated way. The local authority, police, health, probation and fire services are statutory partners under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. However, in practice, the Community Safety Partnership works across a much wider range of partners at different levels and on different topics to address what needs doing, who can help and to take action. There is good information exchange between those concerned, including with residents, so that agencies can listen and respond to the needs of local people.

Setting our work in context

As well as the negative impact on the daily lives of individuals, the effects of crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder draw widely on public service resources. Working in partnership and adopting a 'whole systems approach' is essential for both for prevention and positive action. The partnerships work contributes to the Police & Crime Commissioner's Police and Criminal Justice Plan and to the council's Corporate Plan as well as measures set out in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

2022-2023

This past year the Wokingham Community Safety Partnership was Chaired by Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive of Wokingham Borough. The work of the board was supported by the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, Ian Shenton and the Executive Member for Arts, Environment and Resident Services Sarah Kerr.

Analysis of Issues

This year the partnership has made positive progress on several of its workstreams, the Community Safety End of Year Report for 2022/23 attached in Appendix A, provides a comprehensive overview of the work delivered in respect of each of the partnerships workstreams. This includes, domestic abuse, prevent & channel, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour, serious violence and exploitation & violence against women and girls.

Crime Performance

All crime has seen an increase of +11.4% (841 offences) in the year ending 31st March 2023 when compared to the same period the previous year. Increases have been seen largely in categories in relation to theft, including Shoplifting (+470 crimes), Bike Theft (+122 crimes), Theft of and Theft from Vehicle Offences (+54 & +60 crimes respectively). There has also been an increase of +29 offences in relation to Sexual Offences Non - Rape, an increase of +83 more Harassment incidents and +72 more Domestic Abuse incidents.

Crimes that have decreased when compared to the same period last year, include Drugs Possession down (-72 crimes) and Trafficking (-24 crimes), Possession of Weapons down (-9) and Public Order Offences down (-54 crimes), and Rape (-5 crimes). Some categories including Burglary Dwelling, Robbery and Hate Crime have reduced by small percentages. Drug related offences are often linked to active police operations, this year there have been fewer proactive police operations across the local police area due to frontline operational resourcing demands.

Anti-Social Behaviour

This is the first fully operational 12 months of the councils Anti-Social Behaviour Team which has proved to be both successful and busy with over 1900 service requests being received. In addition to this newly formed service, the Council Housing Anti-Social Behaviour response for high level ASB cases has also been integrated into the Community Safety Teams existing ASB service.

Multi- agency ASB Panel meetings continue to share information and have oversight of high and medium level ASB cases.

Violence Against Women & Girls and Domestic Violence

The partnership continues to make improvements with respect of this area or work, it has been working on a violence against women and girls strategy to draw together work already in situ, but also to identify gaps and work on more early intervention, prevention work to ensure joint work on initiatives is explored and implemented. Large amounts of training across a cross section of professionals has been delivered, this will help to ensure professionals can identify and assist DA victims at the earliest opportunity. Literature has been reviewed as part of a large communications plan in connection with DA and work to improve the offer of safe accommodation continues together with work towards completing and achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation for Council Housing in the coming year.

Further detailed information on progress is attached in Appendix A; the draft Community Safety Partnership end of year report for 22-23.

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)	Nil	Nil	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Nil	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Nil	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

N/A

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard has been given to WBC's duties under the Equality Act.

Climate Emergency – *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*

The CSP has no negative impact on WBC's Climate Emergency Objectives

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

List of Background Papers

None

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