

Meeting: COUNCIL
Portfolio Area: Community Safety
Date: 21 July 2021

COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the proposed Community Safety Strategy 2021-24, which outlines the emerging priorities of the SoSafe partnership for the next three years.
- 1.2 The Council's Constitution includes the Community Safety Strategy as a Budget and Policy Framework item and as such the draft document, post consideration by the Executive in February 2021, was reviewed by the subsequent Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Budget and Policy Framework requires the final report/strategy, incorporating comments made by that Committee, to be re-considered by the Executive and reviewed again by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was undertaken during March 2021 and the Executive has agreed the document and recommended it to Council for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the proposed final Community Safety Strategy (the Strategy), attached as Appendix A to this report, be approved, noting its focus on the work of the SoSafe partnership.

3. BACKGROUND

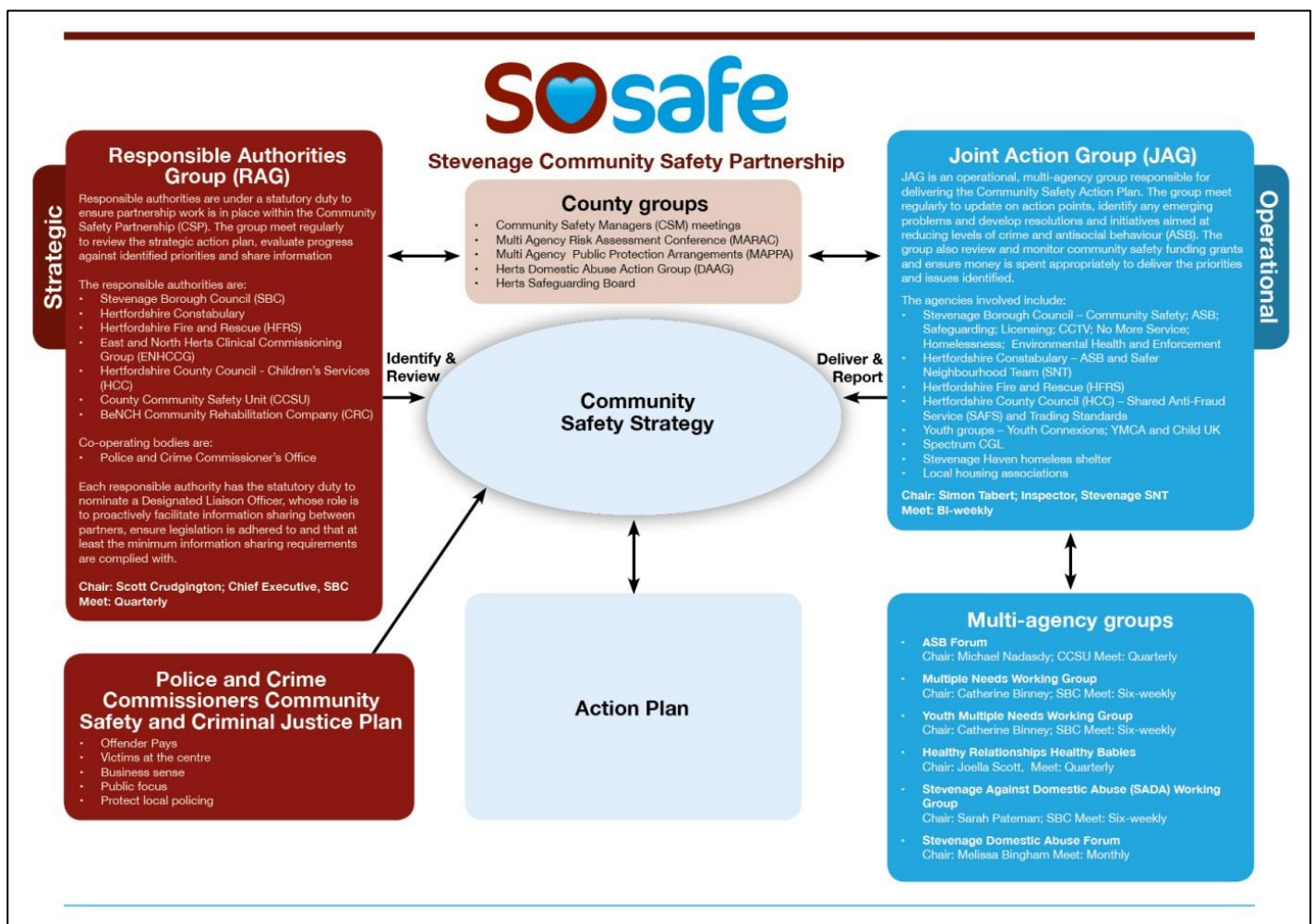
- 3.1 Stevenage is rapidly changing, with work having already commenced on the major town centre regeneration programme and new homes being built over the last three years, as more people choose to move to the town to live and work, along with new businesses that will help to grow our local economy. Stevenage is a safe place but like most towns there will always on occasions be peaks in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), sometimes due to a spate of connected incidents. The Council is aware through the engagement that has taken place as part of the review of the SoSafe Strategy that some

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residents remain concerned regarding the use of drugs and how, in particular, this affects our young people. The Community Safety Partnership – SoSafe will continue to address these and other crimes/ASB related issues as and when they occur by working co-operatively with local communities.

The development of a strategy is central to the overall purpose of the Community Safety Partnership – SoSafe and is summarised in the diagram below.

3.2



This Strategy will ensure that SoSafe utilises its resources in the most effective manner possible to deliver meaningful crime reduction outcomes. SoSafe is committed to building on progress achieved in recent years, and will strive to continue to drive down crime and disorder in Stevenage. During the Covid-19 pandemic Partners have continued to work to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime. SoSafe has introduced initiatives that have supported the most vulnerable and those with complex needs by making best use of the partners' resources and targeting them effectively.

3.3 Between 2018 and 2021 SoSafe secured over £450,000 of external funding to help it deliver on priorities and initiatives. This funding resulted in the delivery of some innovative projects including the SOS (Morse code: Save our Souls) Youth worker with joint funding through the Police and Crime Commissioners

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Office, SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse) Move on Accommodation, the recruitment of Specialist Domestic Abuse Workers and the recruitment of a Complex Needs Advocate for the No More Service. Funding was also secured for the introduction of Operation Urban which tackles homelessness and aggressive street begging. Funding is time limited with concerns for continuing the SADA and No More Services post March 2022. We will continue to apply for external funding and will internally apply for a growth bid, but will also have to consider reducing the level of services that are offered.

- 3.4 SoSafe has worked collaboratively on a number of complex cases which have resulted in successful enforcement action being taken. This has included: re-possession of a property on the Absolute Ground for Possession, as well as a Property Closure on an address where drugs were being dealt which resulted in a high level of ASB for the residents. Further to this SoSafe secured an injunction concerning an individual following an arson threat, and the two year Injunction with a Power of Arrest banning car cruising and meeting in Stevenage following a serious accident in the town in July 2019.
- 3.5 Numerous partnership operations with the Police were undertaken such as: regular residents' surgeries in those tower blocks where there had been reports of anti-social behaviour and crime, and the quarterly Police Priority Setting meetings with Ward Councillors - which have helped to reassure residents and encourage them to report nuisance behaviour.
- 3.6 During the last three years the Partnership has engaged with residents on a number of occasions including the Domestic Abuse 16 Days of Action and Operation Night Owl (which targeted anti-social drinking and the night time economy) has been instrumental in arranging training for front line staff, partners and volunteers; including tackling extremism, Domestic Abuse Awareness, Hate Crime Awareness Training, Safeguarding and Modern Slavery Training.
- 3.7 SoSafe actively engages with the local community and involves them in the design of the future service offer. SoSafe has increased the profile of the Partnership and highlighted the benefits of co-operative working through the work of volunteers and partners and through mechanisms such as the SADA forum. It has also been possible to highlight what can be achieved when resources are co-ordinated and strategically aligned, in particular the outcomes achieved through SOS youth project, SADA and No More Service.
- 3.8 During September and October 2020, the SoSafe Partnership worked with local partners to shape the draft strategy. The themes for the strategy were further developed through engagement with residents and visitors to the town through a number of social media consultations, surveys with clients and data collected from the police Echo platform. Data from annual strategic assessments and information shared at both Partnership and client led meetings have been analysed and used in the development of the 2021/24 SoSafe Community Safety Strategy.

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- 3.9 There are a number of differences between the 2018/21 and 2021/24 Community Safety Strategies. The 2021/24 Strategy focuses on our work as a co-operative Council and the importance of working closely with the Community. This begins by asking members of our communities how they would like to be consulted and what their priorities are. The SoSafe Partners are aware that priorities do change over time. This happened significantly in 2020 during the pandemic, where our priorities changed to reflect what our communities were telling us. This included the nature and level of support for our most vulnerable residents; specifically, those suffering with their mental health and complex needs. Also additional support was provided for those who needed to flee their homes and had nowhere to go. The underlying principle of the Strategy is co-operation, empowering residents and other stakeholders to engage with the SoSafe partnership by getting involved in whatever way they can. The 2021/24 Strategy aims to continue the work of the flagship SADA service, which now runs across 5 other district council areas as well as Stevenage. The service will also continue to expand its remit to supporting others experiencing abuse and those affected by Modern Slavery who needs advice and support. Our Safeguarding team will work co-operatively with partners to talk to our communities about the effects of Hate Crime and how to get help, support and also how to report a crime.
- 3.10 The police have introduced a prevention model as part of their partnership working, the “Prevention First” model has been rolled out across the force and in being adopted by partners. SoSafe is already prevention focused and will continue to work in this way.
- 3.11 The proposed Strategy accompanies this report. It is suggested that, subject to Members approving the Strategy for implementation, it should be adopted by SoSafe on 26 July 2021.
- 3.12 There are a number of key points that require consideration. These are set out in the following sections of the report which set out the rationale upon which the recommendations are presented.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Local priorities for Stevenage

- 4.1.1 The draft Community Safety Strategy has been compiled based on evidence obtained from Police Performance Reports including strategic assessments, engagement with members of the public, partners and customers, surveys completed by service users and those affected any nuisance. The priorities identified are those that ranked highest, following the consultation and engagement.

For the period 2018-21 the identified priorities were:

1. Helping to make People feel Safe
2. Reduce crime and Disorder

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3. Protect and Safeguard Vulnerable People
4. Tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) Co-operatively with partners
5. Break the cycle of substance misuse and offending

These priorities are underpinned by two overarching objectives to:

- Build Resilient Communities
- Work co-operatively with communities to help reduce fear of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

The five key priorities identified for 2021-2024 are:

1. Divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB
2. Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery
3. Promote reporting of hate crime and further promote equality in the community
4. Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol
5. Work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime

These priorities are underpinned by two overarching objectives to:

- Consult with the community and work co-operatively with partners and residents
- Promote reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

4.2 Rationale for priorities

- 4.2.1 This strategy provides a framework for the activities and initiatives that the Partnership delivers to improve community safety and community confidence in the town. Following consultation with members of the public and partners, this strategy identifies the priorities that SoSafe will focus on over the next three years. Whilst some of the priorities remain the same as in previous years there is a broadening focus on tackling concerns around the misuse of drugs, supporting and diverting young people away from crime and encouraging the reporting of Hate Crime. The Council also remains committed to maintaining and developing a co-operative approach towards tackling of domestic abuse, modern slavery and safeguarding our most vulnerable. Working co-operatively with partners and our communities across the town remains the overarching theme across all objectives.
- 4.2.2 Alongside the Strategy, a detailed action plan is produced each year, which shows how SoSafe will achieve its aims and objectives. The action plan contains specific targets and is monitored, updated and reviewed regularly ahead of the SoSafe meeting.
- 4.2.3 As the Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme progresses there will be further opportunities to develop localised approaches to support delivery of the Community Safety Strategy at a neighbourhood level. For example it may be

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possible to deliver more targeted intervention in neighbourhood hot-spots, and/or to work with residents, businesses and partners to design-out crime in planned neighbourhood improvement works. There will also be further opportunities to develop interventions with local neighbourhood-based community and voluntary organisations.

4.2.4 The Community Safety Strategy has been developed with due regard to the following:

- Public engagement and consultation
- National developments and changes to legislation
- Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plan *Everybody's Business*
- Annual Strategic Assessment for Stevenage 2016/17
- County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) Domestic Abuse Strategy and the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Strategy
- CCSU Drugs and Alcohol Strategy
- National Probation Service Reducing Offending Strategy
- Historical and current crime data
- Residents Survey

4.2.5 The Executive received an initial draft of the Strategy on 10th February. Comments included the need for road safety and speeding based on feedback from members of the public and Police Priority Setting meetings. There was also reference to the need to link work on Hate Crime with the recommendations of the Equalities Commission. The Executive supported an amendment of the additional words "further promote" to the third objective, "Promote reporting of hate crime and further promote equality in the community". The Executive approved a final draft of the Strategy on 10th March 2021.

4.2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Executive report and draft Strategy on 17th February. The committee enquired as to the ownership of the countywide Hate Crime Strategy. It was confirmed that this was led by Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Council would be partners in its delivery. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a final draft of the Strategy and associated Executive report on 17th March 2021.

4.3 Strategic fit and context

4.3.1 The profile of the SoSafe partnership is of growing importance and it is increasingly being called upon to share best practice and co-operative ways of working. The responsibility to make Stevenage a safe place to live, work and visit is paramount to all SoSafe partners. The strategy is a core component of the Council's Place of Choice, Future Town, Future Council Programme and is also fundamental to the Town's Covid-19 Recovery Plan and emerging Co-operative Neighbourhood arrangements.

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5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The Council will utilise existing resources to support implementation of the strategy. This includes communications functions, continued investment in CCTV and the work of the SBC community safety team. There is also recognition that a number of existing activities that are having a positive impact are reliant on time-limited funding which includes external funding resources. Given the financial position of the Council, some of these functions will be unable to continue without joint investment from others responsible for ensuring community safety and wellbeing in the town. The Community Safety Strategy remains a partnership strategy for the town and the Council will continue to work with other commissioners and funders such as Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Government Departments and other funders to help lever in investment wherever possible.
- 5.1.2 There may be some match-funding or pump priming requirements related to progressing certain initiatives and projects. The SoSafe partnership Action Plan is developed annually as part of the final strategy and will highlight where resources will be required to support delivery of specific projects, with a fundraising plan attached to each action.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Production of the strategy is a legal requirement of the community safety partnership. The Crime and Disorder Act 1988 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 1996) requires the responsible authorities for an area to formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and for the education of re-offending in the area.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The Council is committed to providing high quality services that are relevant to the needs and responsive to the views of all sections of the local community, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status. The General Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of its functions.
- 5.3.2 There is recognition that crime and anti-social behaviour can disproportionately impact upon those with protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act. The emphasis on Hate Crime as part of the Strategy highlights the potential for this to happen at a local level. The partnership will be working with the community to encourage reporting of Hate Crime and further promote equalities across our communities. SoSafe will strive to involve the community in the design and delivery of the interventions which

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tackle crime and drive down disorder and anti-social behaviour. Relationships will continue to be built with groups around the town, including those from different faiths, BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) groups and the traveller community, LGBT communities, women, girls and older people. It will be essential to ensure interventions meet specific needs for different parts of the community and are delivered in a meaningful and empowering way. The SoSafe Partnership will work with the Equalities Commission and other partners to set up to explore the particular challenges facing black people living in Stevenage and will seek to pro-actively tackle community safety issues as they emerge.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 The strategic commitment of key stakeholders in the development of the strategy has helped to mitigate key risks such as focussing on the wrong priorities or those over which the partners have little impact or influence. Risks will continue to be considered as interventions develop through the ongoing work of RAG.

5.5 Policy Implications

5.5.1 The Strategy links into other key SBC policies including the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and the health and wellbeing strategy.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

5.6.1 The posts within the Community Safety Team will be aligned to respond to the needs of the Strategy and the SoSafe Action Plan and other policies and procedures and in line with internal and external funding streams available.

5.7 Human Rights Implications

5.7.1 The development of the strategy has taken into account human rights including a person's right to defend their rights in the courts and compels public organisations (including local authorities and the police) to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and respect.

5.8 Service Delivery Implications

5.8.1 The Strategy will influence and shape the work of the SoSafe Partnership and its delivery strands are clearly aligned back to the outcomes that are sought. This will also apply to the function of the Responsible Authorities Group that will oversee delivery of the strategy reporting to Stevenage Together.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021/24

Appendix B – Strategy Plan on a Page