

Meeting Council
Portfolio Area Community Advice and Support
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COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2025 - 2028

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KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a final version of the draft Community Safety Strategy 2025-28, Appendix A, which outlines the emerging priorities of the SoSafe partnership for the next three years.
- 1.2 It is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1988 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 1996) for responsible authorities within 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 education to prevent re-offending.
- 1.3 The Council's Constitution includes the Community Safety Strategy as a Budget and Policy Framework item and requires the final Strategy to be considered by Cabinet and recommended to Council for adoption.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Council:
 - a) Notes the duty placed on the Council and other responsible authorities to publish and implement a Community Safety Strategy that addresses the reduction of crime and disorder.
 - b) Notes the feedback from Cabinet (January and February 2025) and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (January and February 2025) and

recommends that the Community Safety Strategy is approved by Council.

- c) That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP) after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and the So-Safe partnership, to agree and publish an annual Community Safety Action Plan and to make minor amendments to the Strategy.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Community Safety is about feeling safe whether at home, in the community or at work. Stevenage is changing at speed with new homes being built and investment being made in the town to develop its commercial, food & beverage and leisure / cultural offers.
- 3.2 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were introduced by Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and brings together local partners to formulate and implement strategies to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in their communities.
- 3.3 The responsible authorities that make up the Stevenage Community Safety Partnership are:
- Stevenage Borough Council
 - Hertfordshire Constabulary
 - National Probation Service
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Local voluntary services
- 3.4 Community Safety Partnerships are also required to develop effective annual action plans to ensure that the priorities set out in the Strategy are achieved.
- 3.5 This Strategy will ensure that the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership 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. In the last three years, partners have continued to work to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime. SoSafe has introduced initiatives that have supported some of the most vulnerable people in the town making best use of partners' resources and targeting them effectively.
- 3.6 SoSafe actively engages with residents and facilitates co-production of interventions through consultation sessions, various forums, satisfaction surveys and forums. Working with members of the community enhances the profile of the Partnership and co-operative working.
- 3.7 The proposed Strategy accompanies this report. It is suggested that, subject to Members approving the Strategy for implementation, it should be adopted by the SoSafe partnership at the next SoSafe meeting in April 2025.
- 3.8 The key points for consideration are set out in the following sections of the report which outline the rationale upon which the recommendations are presented.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The current SoSafe Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024 has now expired and the SoSafe Community Safety Strategy 2025-2028 builds on the previous Strategy and the key achievements that have been made against the previous five key priorities as identified below;

For the period **2021/24** the identified priorities were:

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

These priorities were 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 During April-October 2024, the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership engaged with key local partners to help shape the draft Strategy. The themes for the Strategy were further developed through engagement with residents and visitors to the town and were captured through social media consultations, surveys with clients and from data collected via the police Echo platform. The Council has engaged with over 1,200 residents and partners through the various consultation channels and the feedback gained, along with data from annual strategic assessments and information shared at both Partnership and client led meetings, has been analysed and used in the development of the Strategy.

4.3 The SoSafe partnership also actively engages with residents and facilitates co-production of interventions through consultation sessions, various forums, satisfaction surveys and working groups. Working with members of the community enhances the profile of the Partnership and co-operative working as well as giving live feedback during the duration of the Strategy.

4.4 Following consultation, the six key priorities identified and proposed for **2025-2028** are:

<p>Highlight the risks to the community of drug possession and crime.</p>	<p>Determined as a result of the community views collected anonymously through the Police’s Echo system. It has been identified that the biggest concern in Stevenage relates to drug use or dealing. This is followed by anti-social behaviour including noise and vehicle nuisance drug and parking.</p>
<p>Provide safe reporting and support to victims of Violence Against Women and Girls, including Domestic abuse.</p>	<p>After review of Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment and consultations with the community, we are aware that Violence Against Women and Girls, including domestic abuse is a point of concern. The SADA service records 1551 referrals for 2023-2024.</p> <p>For this reason, Violence Against Women and Girls, including domestic abuse has been made a priority and the SoSafe Partnership have created a Violence Against Women and Girls action plan.</p>

<p>Promote awareness of Cuckooing and the support available to victims.</p>	<p>Cuckooing has been determined as a local priority as part of the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment. Hertfordshire County Council have released a Cuckooing Pathway and Practice Guide to support agencies in relation to victims of cuckooing.</p>
<p>Divert individuals from becoming involved in Anti-Social Behaviour.</p>	<p>Determined because of the community views collected through resident consultations, street-meets and the Police's Echo system identifying that anti-social behaviour; including noise and vehicle nuisance, drug dealing and parking is of great concern to residents.</p>
<p>Collaborate with Partners and Young People regarding the risks around County Lines and associated Anti-Social Behaviour.</p>	<p>As a result of The Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment and feedback from partnership working with local schools, we have identified County Lines as a local priority. Local intelligence also highlights concerns around gang culture and peer pressure.</p>
<p>Raise awareness around online fraud and the warning signs to the community.</p>	<p>As a consequence of concerns raised by the community at various resident feedback sessions and partnership agencies, it has been agreed that online fraud will be a local priority.</p>

The priorities above are underpinned by two proposed overarching objectives:

- Engage with the community and work co-operatively with partners/residents and those that visit the town.
- Work with the community to increase the reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

4.5 Alongside the Strategy, a detailed action plan is produced each year, which identifies how SoSafe will achieve its aims and objectives. A copy of the action plan is attached at Appendix C. The action plan contains specific targets and is monitored, updated, and reviewed regularly ahead of each SoSafe meeting. The Action Plan is a working document that is updated as crime trends change and problem-solving strategies to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour are implemented.

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

- National developments and changes to legislation
- Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plan Everybody's Business
- Annual Strategic Assessment for Stevenage 2023/2024
- County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) domestic abuse strategy and the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse Strategy
- CCSU drugs and alcohol strategy
- Hertfordshire's Criminal Justice Board Strategy 2022-2025
- Historical and Current Crime Data.
- Customer Surveys
- Police Echo data

- 4.7 The draft Strategy report was recommended at Cabinet on the 15 of January 2025 and there were no further recommendations or comments.
- 4.8 Overview and Scrutiny sitting on the 21 January had oversight of the strategy where it was minuted that there were no questions or comments.
- 4.9 It is recommended that Cabinet recommends to Council that the Strategy is approved so that it can be adopted by the SoSafe Partnership in April, at the next SoSafe Community Safety Partnership meeting.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The Council will utilise existing resources to support implementation of the strategy. There is a recognition that a number of existing activities that are securing positive impacts are reliant on time-limited funding which includes that from external sources. Given budgetary constraints within local government and the wider public sector, some of these activities will remain at risk unless sufficient core or external funding can be identified. SoSafe will continue to work with other commissioners and funders to help lever in investment wherever possible, this includes match-funding or pump priming opportunities related to specific initiatives and projects. Stevenage Borough Council have previously committed to funding internal services including Survivors Against Domestic Abuse, The No More Service and The Welfare, Benefit and Debt Advice team to enable residents and customers to access continued support.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Production of the strategy is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1988 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 1996). This act 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 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 The strategic commitment of key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the strategy will help 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 the SoSafe Partnership.

5.4 Policy Implications

- 5.4.1 The Strategy links into other key SBC policies and Strategies including the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and the health and wellbeing strategy, and SADA Domestic Abuse Strategy.

5.5 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.5.1 Community Safety is an overarching commitment. Officers in various positions across Community Advice & Support and Housing and Investment support implementation of the Strategy and the SoSafe Action Plan and other related policies

and procedures.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.6.1 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.
- 5.6.2 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed, considering the implications of the Strategy for all communities. A copy of this Assessment is attached at Appendix D.
- 5.6.3 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 strives to engage the community in the design and delivery of the interventions which 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, different 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 works with the Equalities Commission and other partners to set up to explore the particular challenges facing people living in Stevenage and seeks to pro-actively tackle community safety issues as they emerge.

5.7 Service Delivery Implications

- 5.7.1 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.

5.8 Information Technology Implications

- 5.8.1 The Team have established understanding and use of the REACT system, as well as Jigsaw and NEC.

6 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Community Safety Strategy 2025/28
Appendix B – SoSafe Action Plan
Appendix C – EQIA