

**Report to Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board**

## **Community Safety Services Annual Report**

**Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture

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**Purpose of the Report**

To provide an update on the activity of Community Safety Services

**Executive Summary**

Community Safety Services (CSS) carries out statutory functions on behalf of the Council to ensure its legal duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 are met. The key role of the Service is to keep residents and communities safe by working in partnership to prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.

**Recommendations**

To note the content of the report.

## **Community Safety Services Annual Report**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 Community Safety Services (CSS) was introduced in 2001 in response to the statutory duties the Council holds under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 1.2 CSS operates a matrix model, with Community Safety Officers aligned to each of the five districts, whilst also working in the Neighbourhood Prevention Hub in the MASH, alongside colleagues from Greater Manchester Police and other service areas within the Council, including Children's Social Care and Adult's Social Care.
- 1.3 The CSS Team also includes a Community Insight and Problem-Solving Officer, whose remit is to gather and analyse data to ensure any strategic and operational responses are intelligence-led.
- 1.4 The Service also has close working relationships with a number of other key external partners, from both the statutory and VCF sectors. Key statutory partners include Action Together, Registered Providers of Social Housing, GMFRS, TfGM, NHS Greater Manchester ICB, PCFT and Northern Care Alliance. CSS also works closely with schools and education providers of all ages including post 16 education.
- 1.5 Community Safety Services also coordinates the statutory Community Safety Partnership and ensures Oldham's voice is represented within activity and decision making across the GM conurbation and nationally.

### **2 Current Position**

- 2.1 The current key objectives for Community Safety Services are to:
  - contribute to the development and implementation of the 3-year Community Safety Plan
  - work with Elected Members, partners and communities to strengthen community resilience and develop place-based partnership problem solving solutions to anti-social behaviour and criminality;
  - strengthen the borough's approach and capacity to recognise and respond to the needs of vulnerable individuals and families and/or those with complex dependencies;
  - work with partners to strengthen the response to serious and organised crime; and
  - work with partners to reduce offending and reoffending
- 2.2 There has continued to be significant demand upon the Service over the last 12 months, with reliance upon external grant funding being necessary for staffing both within the management structure and front-line delivery.
- 2.3 There has been a vacancy in the Community Safety Officer Team for a number of months, and this has placed additional pressure on the whole Team, however, the Team has worked together to ensure that the impact of this has been limited. A recruitment exercise has taken place and it is hoped that the vacancy will be filled by the end of January 2025. There is reliance upon external grant funding for the entirety of this post.

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2.4 As a reflection of demand, in Q1 and Q2 of 2024/25 there were 226 new cases opened, each requiring regular contact with residents, investigation, action planning and liaison with partners.

### **3 Activity Update**

#### **3.1 Strategic Overview**

3.1.1 The co-ordination of the Community Safety Partnership is a significant function. In addition to ensuring implementation of the 3-year Plan, grant allocation and monitoring is a key part of the work which is undertaken. A copy of the current 3-year plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

3.1.2 Work has commenced to review the CSP Plan and this will involve consultation with residents and Elected Members. It is expected that the new Plan will be published in mid-2025.

3.1.3 Work has also commenced to re-brand the CSP with Oldham College agreeing to be the key partner in this activity.

3.1.4 In February 2024, the Violence Reduction Strategy was published in accordance with new statutory functions which came into effect in 2023. The duty required the completion of a Strategic Needs Assessment for Violence followed by the production and publication of a Strategy. This was completed in accordance with the timeframes set by the Home Office and work is now ongoing to deliver on the strategic objectives, through a robust partnership action plan. The Strategy aligns with the GM version and has two pillars – prevention and response. A copy of the Strategy can be found at Appendix 2 to this report.

3.1.5 In 2024, the Service continued to coordinate Domestic Homicide Reviews on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership to ensure duties to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews were met. Such Reviews are required when there is believed to be a causal link between a domestic relationship and a death, including suicide. In the last 12 months, two DHRs have been concluded and a further one commenced. The purpose of the Reviews is to identify learning which informs future practice. DHRs involve a large number of organisations, which can be from across GM or from a wider geography dependent upon the circumstances of the case.

3.1.6 Alongside the DHR process itself, there is a DHR Governance and Scrutiny Group, led by the Head of Community Safety Services, which monitors the implementation of service improvements. The Group, which looks at thematic learning has determined that the impact upon children is the first priority area for consideration.

3.1.7 Serious and organised crime (branded Challenger) is also a strategic area of focus. Locally the Head of Community Safety Services co-chairs the Challenger Strategic Partnership and has been involved in the review of the boroughs 4P plan (Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue), and the introduction of the Challenger Silver Meeting which brings partner organisations together to share information and identify opportunities for the disruption of offending. The Head of Service also represents the 10 GM Community Safety Partnerships on the Challenger Executive Board, ensuring that issues faced by residents, communities and services are discussed, and responded to at the highest level.

3.1.8 Community Safety Services is an all-age offer. The Service is represented on the Safeguarding Children's Partnership, the Safeguarding Adult's Board and the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board.

#### **3.2 Operational Delivery**

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- 3.2.1 The CSS Team consists of specialist officers who have received training in problem-solving and situational crime prevention. In addition, they have an extensive knowledge of informal prevention and intervention methodologies, alongside legal tools and powers to respond to and tackle anti-social behaviour and criminality in communities.
  - 3.2.2 The Team works with a resident focus at all times and within the District space, the Community Safety Officers work closely with District colleagues and Elected Members. They attend the Community Councils and public meetings as required. Place-based working is fundamental to the offer and is embedded in service delivery.
  - 3.2.3 In 2024, following the move to the Spindles Offices, a rota system was introduced to ensure a duty Community Safety Officer was always available to provide advice, guidance and support.

### 3.3 **Public Spaces Protection Orders**

- 3.3.1 The use of Public Spaces Protection Orders is a key crime prevention tool to keep residents safe. PSPOs enable gating of highways and restrictions on types of behaviour in geographically delineated zones where there is evidence to support that behaviour controls are required to keep residents and communities safe from harm.
- 3.3.2 There have been over 200 PSPOs in place across the borough and in 2024, the team concluded an extensive statutory consultation exercise with over 9000 residents to review the PSPOs which were in place. Through the exercise the individual PSPOs have been collated into five overarching PSPOs to align with each of the District areas. This will ensure that residents are able to find their respective schemes much easier online.
- 3.3.3 Through the consultation, resident's views have been fully considered, and this has resulted in one scheme being withdrawn completely, and one being amended. Further consultation has taken place in relation to one scheme following additional representations from residents and this is expected to be resolved in January 2025.
- 3.3.4 The PSPO for Crompton Moor has also been renewed in 2024 and new signage for the PSPO in Oldham Town Centre, which restricts the consumption of alcohol in public spaces where there is associated ASB, has been installed at various locations around the area.

### 3.4 **Target Hardening and Risk Management**

- 3.4.1 The protection of vulnerable residents of all ages is a key priority for Community Safety Services.
- 3.4.2 The Team works closely with the Domestic Abuse Team to protect victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The Team conducts Sanctuary surveys which are security assessments of the home. By completing the surveys the Team are able to make recommendations on how home security measures can be improved. This enables victims and survivors to remain in their own homes, with their established support networks remaining in place, rather than them having to move to other locations or present themselves as homeless.
- 3.4.3 In Q1 and Q2 of 2024/25, the Team conducted 58 Sanctuary Surveys
- 3.4.4 The Team have also offered and conducted target hardening surveys on the homes of vulnerable individuals, including children and young people who have been identified as at risk of harm from others.

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3.4.5 Surveys have also been conducted on the homes of Elected Members where a risk has been identified.

### 3.5 **Problem-Solving and Partnership Working**

3.5.1 Where there have been persistent issues with ASB at any given location, the Team have conducted full problem-solving exercises, using specialist methodologies to understand the root causes of the issues, so enabling responses to be produced which provide short, medium and long-term outcomes. The associated action plans have included crime prevention measures, informal activities and more formal action, including legal action.

3.5.2 Significant work has also been carried out in response to the concerns of residents, Elected Members and partners around key issues which impact residents across the whole of the borough, such as vehicle and firework nuisance.

3.5.3 During Q1 and Q2 of 2024/25 as part of the situational and environmental crime prevention problem-solving work, 25 Environmental Visual Audits took place across the borough. This included assessments of open spaces to identify any improvements which may be needed e.g. cutting back of shrubbery to increase visibility, improved lighting, signage as part of rule setting and installation of CCTV, either permanent or temporary.

3.5.4 As part of crime prevention activity in the town centre, a number of CCTV cameras have been installed along the King Street corridor, between Oldham College and Oldham Sixth Form College.

3.5.5 A large exercise is ongoing to install signs at locations across the borough in response to the anti-social use of vehicles. The signage warns of the power to seize vehicles. A number of vehicles including e-bikes and cars have been seized and this work is continuing.

3.5.6 Where Community Safety Services has not had the legal powers to take action, for example for the illegal use of fireworks, the Team has provided advice and guidance on the legislation, the organisations and services which do have powers, and how to report incidents to them.

### 3.6 **Prevention and Early Intervention**

3.6.1 The Team attends the Daily Risk Management Meetings in the MASH, alongside Strategy and Professional's Meetings to offer advice, guidance and support on measures which can be taken to protect vulnerable individuals and communities. In Q1 and Q2 of 2024/25 the Team attended over 140 Strategy Meetings and Professional's Meetings to provide advice and guidance.

3.6.2 The Team is also a member of the Prevention and Intervention Diversion Panel, which is hosted by Positive Steps. The aim of the Panel is to identify young people at risk of becoming involved in serious offending, in order to offer diversionary pathways and activities to prevent any escalation of behaviours. This approach is recognised as a successful methodology in engaging young people and diverting them into more positive activities.

3.6.3 As part of the informal response, in Q1 and Q2 of 2024/25 the Team issued 38 warning letters to individuals who have been involved in low level ASB or on the periphery of it.

### 3.7 **Formal Action**

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3.7.1 As part of problem-solving and business as usual activity, throughout the year, the Team have secured Criminal Behaviour Orders against serious and/or prolific offenders and Civil Injunctions against individuals who have caused harassment, alarm and distress in communities, or towards colleagues.

3.7.2 The Team have also secured two Closure Orders where premises have been used for serious criminality, including drug dealing. Such Orders are sought when behaviours are so severe, that immediate respite is needed for the community. When a recent Order was secured, one of the victims of the behaviour said "This is the best Christmas present we could have ever wished for." This is a reflection of the importance of taking the right action at the right time.

3.7.3 Closure Orders are a temporary measure and when used, the Team continues to work with partners, to ensure more longer-term remedies are put in place, such as possession action with housing providers.

### 3.8 **Water Safety Partnership**

3.8.1 2024 has seen the introduction of the Water Safety Partnership. The Operational Manager of the Service has worked closely with colleagues from GMFRS and other partners to map the open water spaces across the borough, risk assess them and introduce risk mitigation measures. This has been alongside key messaging delivered in schools by GMFRS and the Safe4Summer Partnership activity.

### 3.9 **Operation AVRO**

3.9.1 This is a GMP led day of action which the Service contributes to the planning and delivery of, making logistical arrangements and coordinating partnership activity on. In 2024 the day of action was in February and was focused on child-centred policing. In addition to traditional enforcement activity, the day involved activities with young people a Q & A session with the Chief Constable and a meeting with the Youth Scrutiny Panel, which the GM Deputy Mayor Kate Green attended. AVRO for 2025 will take place on the 7<sup>th</sup> January.

### 3.10 **Violence at Work**

3.10.1 The Team provides advice, guidance and support to colleagues and Elected Members who are subjected to harassment or violence whilst undertaking their duties. This includes taking informal action and formal legal action when required.

## 4 **Challenges**

4.1 The key challenge for the Service is the level of demand and the continued reliance on external funding to meet basic duties and standards of service.

4.2 Repeat and vexatious individuals impact upon the capacity of the Service to protect vulnerable residents.

4.3 The quality of the service, advice and guidance delivered by the Team and the solutions delivered, result in non-community safety issues being directed into the Team. The staff within the Team always endeavour to assist residents and colleagues to ensure the best possible service; however, this does impact on demand. Work is ongoing to develop an online reporting tool, which will include signposting to appropriate services if the issue being reported is not community safety related.

## 5. **Appendices**

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Appendix 1 - Community Safety Partnership Plan  
Appendix 2 - Violence Reduction Strategy