

Classification:

Public

Key Decision:

No

Gravesham Borough Council**Report to:** Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee**Date:** 2 April 2019**Reporting Officer:** Strategic Manager, Community Safety Unit**Subject:** Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 - Priorities**Purpose and summary of report:**

To apprise the Committee of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) new three-year Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 and the priorities contained therein.

Recommendations

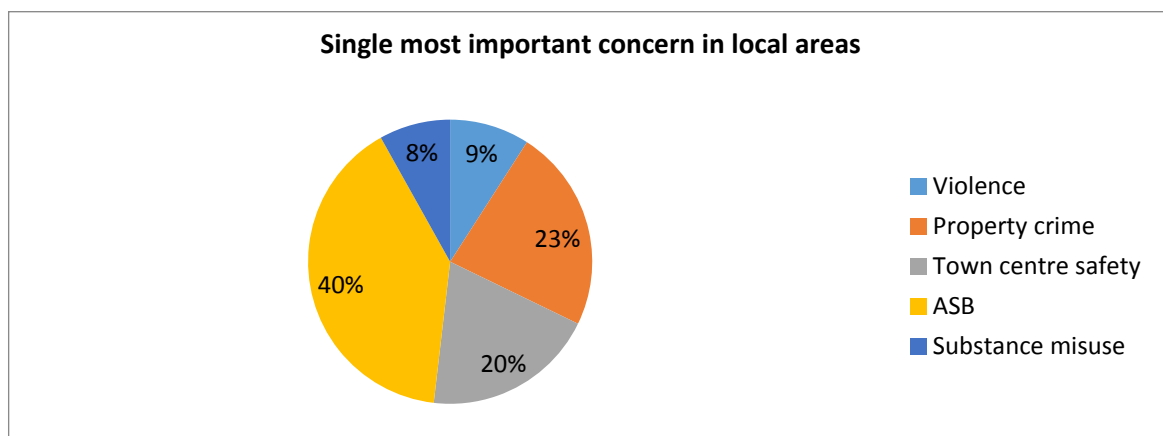
Members are asked to:

- a) Note and comment on the new priorities for the CSP.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dartford and Gravesham's joint Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) last Strategy came to an end in March 2019 and a new draft Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 has now been produced following the completion of the annual Strategic Assessment (audit of levels of crime and disorder based upon data and intelligence provided by partner agencies) and the carrying out of a public opinion survey in each Borough.
- 1.2 The Strategic Assessment process allows the Partnership to consider the current community safety position and any changes in circumstances or emerging issues that require different approaches or interventions. It is also an opportunity to check for any new legal obligations or recommended good practice that we could adopt locally. Other considerations that have also been taken into account in identifying the new strategic priorities include:
 - Volume – the level of specific offences as a proportion of total crime;
 - Level of harm – the impact certain offences have on victims and communities;
 - Partnership-added value – the extent to which multi-agency working can enhance the ability of agencies to tackle a particular strand of offending behavior;
 - Trend analysis – patterns of increase or decrease in an offence type (where it is possible to ascertain).
- 1.3 As this year the CSP has had to produce a new three-year Strategy, a short public consultation exercise was also carried out over a two-week period between 18 February and 3 March 2019. This was made available on both the Gravesham and Dartford Borough Council websites and via each Borough's social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. People who either live or work in Dartford or Gravesham were invited to complete the survey which asked them to identify those community safety issues that, in their experience, were of the greatest concern in their neighbourhood. A total of 420

people responded – 299 (71.19%) of these either lived or worked in Gravesham and 121 (28.81%) of respondents either lived or worked in Dartford. Respondents were asked to select the single MOST important issue in their local area. 407 people answered this question and the vast majority stated that ASB was their main concern – 163 (40.05% of all respondents).



1.4 A full breakdown of the survey findings will be made available on the Council's Community Safety website pages shortly.

2. The new CSP Strategic Priorities

2.1 Having given due attention to the above, the following broad priorities were considered and approved by the CSP in January 2019:

i) Violent Crime including Domestic Abuse

Recorded violent crime has seen an increase both nationally and locally and levels of domestic abuse have continued to rise. Proportionally violent offences account for over 40% of all crime recorded in each of our Boroughs (although it is important to maintain perspective – almost half of all violent crime involved **no** injury). Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse is a high national priority – something that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Public safety is a matter of the highest concern amongst local people; the impact of violence on individuals, families and communities is profoundly negative and issues of violence occurring in town centre locations also affects the ability of evening and night-time economies to develop.

ii) Persistent Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime

Preventing and tackling persistent ASB is frequently identified as a key priority by local people and even when its' nature is considered low-level, the impact it has on people's quality of life, health and well-being, can be significant. Within town centres, ASB also has the ability to negatively impact local businesses and is particularly damaging to public perceptions of local areas. Tackling ASB is resource-intensive and benefits from multi-agency working, bringing together all relevant agencies to address the issue in question from every angle.

iii) Preventing Offending and Reducing Reoffending

Within this priority it is suggested that a firm focus is specifically maintained on:

- (a) Disrupting Serious and Organised Crime (SOC);
- (b) Preventing and reducing youth offending (with an emphasis on gang-related activity).

SOC and gang-related youth offending are now recognised as issues of the highest priority by Central Government and the drive is for CSPs and local partners to work much more closely with law enforcement agencies that have traditionally had primary responsibility for tackling these issues. Whilst hard facts to inform the current position are limited, the experience of CSUs through the work of local OCG Groups and through the multi-agency Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation Group, suggests that this is a growing area of day-to-day business. Intelligence and information-sharing through a partnership approach is absolutely key to responding effectively in dismantling OCGs and the different skills and expertise of a variety of agencies are needed to address youth violence and safeguard young people from harm. Whilst neighbouring London Boroughs have been experiencing these issues for a much longer period of time our geographical proximity to the capital is making our areas more attractive to cross-border criminals travelling from the London area.

Work to reduce reoffending should also consider geographical locations in which certain categories of property crime such as residential burglary and shed and garage break-ins are more prevalent with a view to identifying prolific offenders and delivering interventions for them to prevent future offending.

iv) Protecting Vulnerable People and Strengthening Communities

CSP members share Safeguarding responsibilities to protect vulnerable people from harm and recent work in both Dartford and Gravesham has demonstrated the value of a joint, multi-agency approach to delivering tailored interventions to identified individuals and/or families. Vulnerable people are frequently repeat victims – ensuring they are aware of the services available to help them and fully supported will help to bring offenders to justice and ultimately, reduce demand on services.

Our Boroughs have the most diverse populations in the county and they continue to change at a much more rapid pace than in the past. Increasing levels of hate crime (all categories) indicate a need to carry out a much more detailed analysis of this issue in order that preventive work can be put in place, that we can address the under-reporting of hate crime and reduce risks to community cohesion and resilience. Additionally, our Local Authorities each have a legal duty to take steps to reduce threats posed by terrorism and extremism and to mitigate more broadly against security risks.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 At the time of writing the new three-year Strategy is being finalised and once approved by the CSP, will be available on the Council's website. It will be reviewed in full each year and progress will be reported against its objectives to the CSP at its quarterly meetings.
- 3.2 A 'Strategy on a Page' document has also been produced to provide a quick-reference and easily digestible description of the Strategy and is attached as an Appendix to this report.