

Communities, Economic Growth and Property Cabinet Advisory Committee - Tuesday 11th January 2022

Swale Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment Overview Report

Introduction

This paper summarises the findings from the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Strategic Assessment completed in December 2021 and asks the Cabinet Advisory Committee to consider any feedback or comments to be provided to the CSP, on behalf of Swale BC, ahead of their agreement of the priorities of the CSP for 2022/23 within the Community Safety Plan.

Overview

The CSP strategic assessment has been completed by Swale BC on behalf of the CSP. The purpose of the strategic assessment is to provide an understanding of community safety problems within the Borough, in order to inform and help determine partnership priorities for 2022/23. This includes a performance assessment against the current priorities; discussion of emerging issues; and consideration of wider threats and opportunities that will impact upon the work of the CSP. Data has been gathered from a variety of partners, for the period October 20 – end September 21 and compared with the same period the previous year unless otherwise stated. Partners also submitted wider contextual information to support this process. The recommended priorities will be discussed by the CSP Executive Group and used to formulate the Community Safety Plan for 2022/23, which will detail the action planned to be taken to address these by partners (including Swale BC).

Key Findings

Crime:

- All crime is down 971 incidents or 6.3%; with victim-based crime also down by 6.4%; burglary residential down 10.7%; Burglary Business and Community down 30.4%; and vehicle crime down 36.4%.
- Serious Violence for those aged 25 and under has reduced by 12.7% and there is ongoing engagement with the county Violence Reduction Unit to tackle this crime type, ahead of a new duty being placed on CSPs.
- Violent Crime in general has seen an increase in reports, with Violence Against the Person seeing an increase of 3.2% or 215 incidents. This is broken down into a number of sub-categories, with stalking/harassment and rape contributing to this increase, however further work is needed to determine whether these are linked to domestic abuse.
- Violence Against Women and Girls (see separate section for domestic abuse) in public places has been a focus for the CSP since Autumn 2021 and this focus will need to remain whilst these figures are better understood and monitored; and to increase feelings of safety of women and to seek to address behaviour or perpetrators.
- Hate crime has also seen an increase of 28.4% (68 incidents) for which again further analysis is needed to better understand the victim profile and whether there is any wider support the CSP can give to tackle this problem.
- Tackling organised crime has continued to be a priority of the CSP and will need to remain one to ensure that all partners share appropriate intelligence to best understand the local picture and tackle national concerns.

Domestic Abuse:

- Domestic Abuse reported to Kent Police has increased by 2.2%, which follows a continual increasing trend. Whilst this can be seen as positive that victims are reporting, the recent county domestic abuse needs assessment highlights continued concerns of under reporting by victims. As discussed above, there has also been increased reports of stalking/harassment which may be linked to domestic abuse.
- This county needs assessment also highlights wider partnership work that will need to take place to ensure compliance with the new Domestic Abuse Act regarding Safe Accommodation.
- There are strong relationships between partners tackling domestic abuse in Swale, including with the voluntary and community sector. These will continue to grow and develop to tackle known gaps in provision (including face to face access to services).
- Although services for perpetrators of domestic abuse are in place, there is concern that these do not fully meet the needs of the borough and this work will continue to be reviewed and developed.

ASB:

- ASB reported to Kent Police has reduced by 5.2% (or 203 incidents) although overall volume remains high at 3676. Optivo have also seen a reduction in ASB reported to them; and environmental ASB reported to Swale BC (fly-tipping and noise) has also seen a reduction in reports.
- The Community Safety Unit continues to lead on tackling ASB with support to victims; enforcement against offenders; and coordination of actions to tackle location-based problems. Within the last 12 months this has included Sheerness town centre; Sittingbourne town centre; Murston; and Thistle Hill.
- The District Adolescent Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DACSM) is a multi-agency forum in place to support young people at risk of becoming a perpetrator of crime/ASB; and leading on actions in identified locations where young people have congregated. This group continues to find its feet and increase the number of locations it reviews.

Vulnerability:

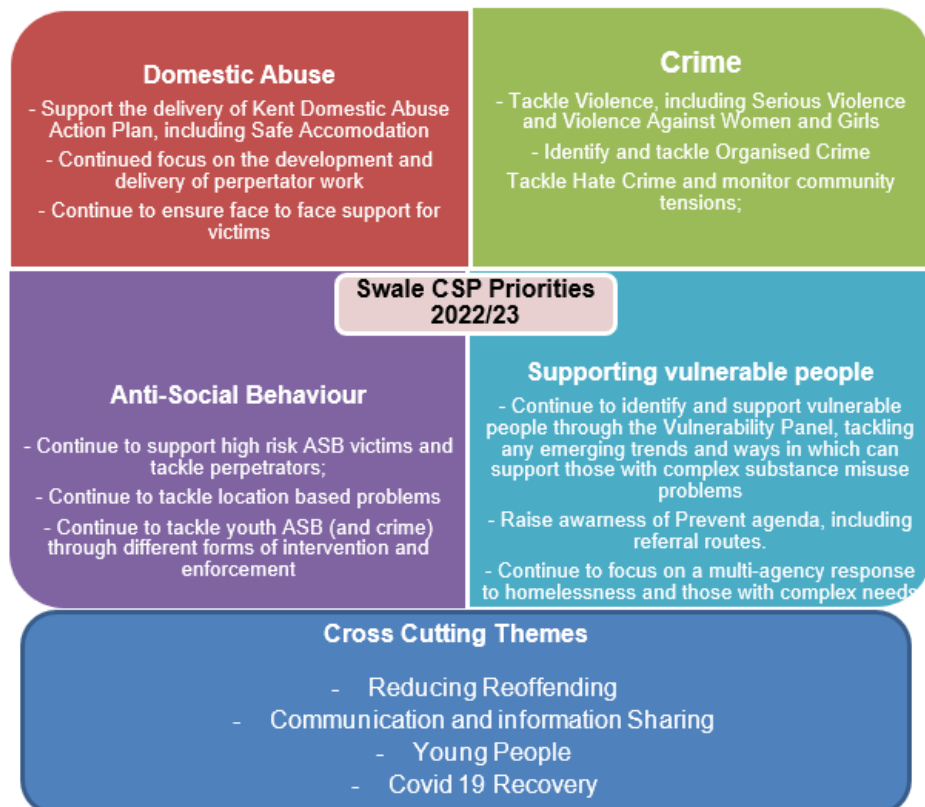
- The number of people identified by Kent Police as vulnerable/repeatedly targeted remained stable.
- The CSP Vulnerability Panel continues to see a high number of cases (56 for the year). This panel is a problem solving forum for vulnerable adults that are either victims, or at risk of becoming victims of crime/ASB. This group has identified a gap in service for those with complex needs, including substance misuse, in accessing services.
- The Prevent area of work, focuses on identifying and supporting young people or adults at risk of radicalisation/extremism. A concern has been identified that there are limited referrals for Swale compared with other areas and our risk profile, so a focus needs to be on raising the profile of this agenda with partners and community groups.

The ongoing impact of covid across all priority areas remains a concern – in relation to immediate service delivery if there is an increase in cases, as well as supporting the community tackling the longer term impacts.

Recommended Priorities

The below diagram details the recommended priorities and key areas of focus within these. These priorities remain the same as for the previous financial year, with amended areas of focus based upon the findings of the assessment. There also remain 4 cross cutting themes, which highlight issues that are common across all priorities and for which individual actions will also be undertaken.

No emerging issues have not been identified that couldn't be incorporated within the existing priorities.



Questions for Cabinet Advisory Committee

1. Do the recommended priorities and focus areas reflect areas of concern known to you?
2. Are there any other areas of concern you would like the CSP to consider tackling?