

**Communities, Housing &
Environment Committee acting as
the Maidstone Overview and
Scrutiny for Crime and Disorder**

30 March 2022

The 2022/2025 Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Martyn Jeynes, Community Protection Team Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The Safer Maidstone Partnership's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan for 2022-25 has been produced following the annual strategic data assessment, review of progress against the priorities of the previous Plan and engagement with community safety partners, Maidstone borough residents and members. The extensive consideration of data, changes in legislation, professional advice, public opinion and feedback from elected members has been collated, analysed and synthesised to identify the priority areas for action and themes of concern in the Maidstone borough. The new draft CSP Plan proposes four Core Priorities, underpinned by 5 cross-cutting themes for consideration and endorsement by the committee before going to Full Council for adoption in April.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the draft Strategic Assessment and its findings presented in Appendix 1 which provides the evidence base for the priorities and themes in the proposed Community Safety Plan 2022-25
2. To agree the draft Community Safety Plan 2022-25 contained in Appendix 2 subject to any amendments that the Committee makes, for recommendation to Full Council
3. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Housing and Community Services to amend the draft Community Safety Plan 2022-25, as per the Committee's comments and in consultation with the Chairman / Vice Chairman of the Committee, ahead of its submission to Council.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing & Environment	30 March 2022
Council	13 April 2022

The 2022/2025 Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling • Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the corporate priority of a 'safe, clean & green place'.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
Risk Management	<p>Approving the recommendation in the report minimises the risk of the Council and the Maidstone Community Safety Partnership not having an up-to-date Community Safety Plan and ensures compliance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
Financial	<p>Delivery of the proposed Community Safety Plan can be undertaken within existing resources. The Community Safety Plan 2022-25 will provide the foundation for the Community Safety Partnership to prioritise and apply partner resources and bid for additional resources to achieve the outcomes identified</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
Staffing	<p>We will deliver the Community Safety Plan document with our current staffing.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
Legal	<p>Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p>	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and

	The Council has a duty under Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to formulate and implement strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area (including antisocial and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and for combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area and for the reduction of re-offending in the area	Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Public Health	By adopting a new Community Safety Plan, we recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder.	Head of Housing & Community Services
Procurement	None	Head of Housing & Community Services
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Head of Housing & Community Services

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 31 August 2021 Committee received a report from the Head of Housing and Communities outlining the process that would be undertaken to bring the revised Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan to Full Council in April 2022, via this committee. As part of that process, further reports and briefing sessions have been provided to ensure members had the opportunity to be engaged in the process and their feedback, local knowledge and concerns considered as part of the underpinning assessment and identification of priorities for the future.
- 2.2 For a variety of reasons, including access to partnership data, the Strategic Assessment is still being finalised. However, the assessment is sufficiently complete to be considered alongside resident survey data, member feedback and professional advice to enable identification of CSP Plan priorities for 2022-25. Input from partners confirms that there is an evidence based need to adopt these priorities.
- 2.3 The Community Safety Plan 2022-25 has been drafted and circulated to members of the Safer Maidstone Partnership for their comments, which have been incorporated in the plan.

Strategic Assessment 2022/23

- 2.4 The Strategic Assessment (Appendix 1) has been developed over the last 3 months. Data is sourced from a variety of statutory partners including police, health, probation and Kent County Council. The Safer Maidstone Partnership partners have analysed and added further information to enable intelligent insight to be drawn from the data. It has been complemented by surveys of the community in general and an additional survey which engaged specifically with young people. This comprehensive piece of work is indicative of our objectives led, evidence based, and outcomes focussed approach. A briefing on 25th January gave members an opportunity to consider and debate the findings at that time and highlighted how the data and the surveys were used to develop themes, trends and ultimately priorities.
- 2.5 The Strategic Assessment provides:
- data from across the Partnership looking at longer term trends and the last 12 months.
 - information around the impact of the pandemic on crime and disorder and behaviour
 - key findings from community safety surveys of the public undertaken in 2021.
 - details of work undertaken towards the priorities in the current CSP Plan.
 - an update on the new Multi-Agency Task Force, who are currently taking a public health approach to reducing crime and health inequalities in the Shepway area.
- 2.6 The Strategic Assessment also outlines key conclusions and recommends changes to the Community Safety Partnership, which have been incorporated into the CSP Plan within this report.

- 2.7 Owing to delays in receiving partnership data the Strategic Assessment is still currently being finalised, but it is not envisioned that the outstanding information will change the outcome of the analysis and is merely required to ensure the assessment is complete.
- 2.8 The strategic assessment outlines a number of data trends from the last 3 years. These include:

Community Safety Surveys

- More people feel safe in their local area during the day than in 2019, but less people feel safe at night
- The town centre is seen as an “unsafe place” by adults and young people
- Residents in Maidstone are worried about Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), Knife Crime and Drugs, but whilst reports of ASB continue to rise, knife crime and drugs offences are falling
- There is a strong contrast between perception and associated fear of crime and anti-social behaviour and the facts concerning the levels and nature of reported crime and antisocial behaviour across the borough. Perception and consequent fear of crime is likely to be impacted by how this is reported in the media with implications for the effectiveness of how the SMP and individual partners communicate with the public. For the town centre there are potential implications for community cohesion where isolated incidents are incorrectly perceived to be linked to people from London

Crime and Antisocial behaviour

- The pandemic significantly impacted on many crime types
- Crime continues to rise, but the rate of growth has slowed
- Violence Against a Person continues to rise for lesser offences, with “most serious” offences reducing
- Sexual offences continue to rise, as does hate crime, particularly racism
- Reports of Domestic Abuse, an under-reported crime, increased by 14%, indicating more victims coming forward
- Anti-social behaviour reached significantly higher levels as a result of the pandemic and remains higher than before
- Use of formal Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) increased by 204% which are becoming more and more effective in achieving compliance
- MBC issued significantly more CPWs, on average, than other Kent authorities and our nearest CIPFA neighbours

Young people

- Youth offending has decreased by 60% since 2015-16 and the number of individuals committing offences has also reduced

- Children's educational and emotional development has been impacted by the pandemic
- There are no "home grown" Gangs active in Maidstone but the threat from County Lines remains
- 5 new School Police Officers have been added to the police and are actively working in and around secondary schools, utilising trauma informed practice

Substance Misuse/Mental Health

- 19% decrease in drug offences in the last year
- 56% decrease in needles found or retrieved from public places in the last year owing to work to support/challenge our most prolific users/offenders
- Significant increases in alcohol consumption, which can be linked to 60% of hospital admission being alcohol and/or substance misuse related in the last year
- Mental health remains an area of concern, consuming resources and linked to significant hospital admissions for self-harm

Building on the delivery of the Community Safety Plan 2019/22

2.9 As highlighted in the draft Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-25, delivery of the previous plan has embedded a number of new ways of working, working practices and initiatives that will be carried through into the new plan. The SMP has been able to demonstrate that the work undertaken by the partnership can deliver outstanding results, often exceeding the outcomes that would be achieved by any single agency or partner.

2.10 In the last three years, for each of the priorities, we can demonstrate the impact of the actions of various sub-groups, working groups and the dedication of individuals and teams to embrace the need to prioritise initiatives linked to the objectives of each priority, to ensure best practice is utilised and shared and that a victim first approach is at the heart of everything we do.

2.11 For the priority "**Protecting our communities against serious, violent and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)**", amongst the achievements are:

- Closed down action plans for four Organised Crime Groups due to disruption of activities. These groups were known to be linked to Money Laundering, Drug Supply, Human Trafficking and Firearms and often have international links. Intelligence gathering, followed by targeted enforcement has led to several arrests and jail time for those involved. Another OCG was identified as engaged in the housing of trafficked female sex workers. The females identified and safeguarded were

found to be Chinese, Romanian, Thai and Brazilian. Several arrests were made as a result of these operations

- Undertook operations to disrupt County Lines, including operations with the Metropolitan Police, in order to target the very top of the organisations. Consequently there are currently no established County Lines in Maidstone
- Developed intelligence in order to target businesses selling counterfeit goods and seized tens of thousands of pounds worth of illegal tobacco
- Won the first ever Kent Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Hackathon, securing funding to develop an initiative to support young people who have witnessed violence before being relocated to Maidstone, which was rolled out last year
- Secured over £60k in funding from the VRU to run initiatives, purchase equipment and undertake awareness arising to reduce violence

2.12 For the priority “**Keeping children and young people safe**”, amongst the achievements are:

- Our Youth Safety Forum was used to develop the new District Contextual Safeguarding Meetings, which are now implemented in every Kent District and focus on locations where young people of concern in our community
- Implemented new enforcement methods to discourage ASB and to encourage parents to take more responsibility in not allowing their children to cause harm and distress to others, including the use of Buddi Tags (voluntary GIS ankle bracelets) and extensive use of Community Protection powers.
- Successfully undertook a Youth Safety survey, receiving over 2000 responses
- Raised awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences, ensuring that a “trauma-informed approach” was adopted by all partners

2.13 For the priority “**Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking)**”, amongst the achievements are:

- Delivered awareness raising events to over 1000 people from across a variety of sectors including GPs and NHS staff, Schools, Children’s Services, Hair and Beauty professionals and trainees, Night-Time Economy Staff and Elected Members
- Trialled the delivery of rural One Stop Shops for victims of abuse, which has led to the Countywide roll out of a new Domestic Abuse Champions Network

- Introduced a new emergency support fund to enable victims of abuse to flee safely

2.14 For the priorities around **substance misuse** and **mental health**, the partnership has:

- Adopted a trauma informed approach to look at the complex needs of individuals with both substance dependencies and mental health conditions, known as co-occurring conditions.
- Significantly reduced homelessness and anti-social drinking associated with more prolific offenders, through our assertive outreach work
- Trained PCSOs and One Maidstone Ambassadors in the use of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order??
- Increased participation of Mental Health services to the weekly Vulnerability meeting, to increase support of the most vulnerable people in the borough.

2.15 In addition to, but very much with the CSP Priorities in mind, 2020 also saw the SMP create the Maidstone Task Force. The implementation of the Task Force saw additional police officers working alongside partners from a number of agencies/partners, including KCC, Probation, DWP, Golding Homes and others in a purpose-built collaborative workspace, based at Maidstone House.

2.16 Using an evidence led approach, the Task Force identified the wards of Shepway (North and South) as areas where there was not only a disproportionate amount of crime and ASB, but where poverty and health issues were also significantly disproportionate to other parts of the borough.

2.17 The Task Force have utilised a Public Health approach to target those people committing offences and targeting vulnerable people, but to also look at some of the causes of crime and disorder, including poverty, access to services and other push/pull factors linked to crime, social exclusion and the wider determinants of health.

2.18 In the Task Force's first year, using two defined work streams, Pursue and Engagement and Legacy, the task force has been able to not only increase the provision of services but has been able to reduce the harm caused by crime by 33%. This is significantly higher than the District and Force average reduction in the same period.

2.19 It should be noted that everything achieved by the SMP and the Maidstone Task Force in the last three years has also been achieved during a world-wide pandemic.

2.20 Whilst the pandemic disrupted and delayed the delivery of initiatives, the SMP has remained agile and has adapted to the challenges it faced. It ensured services for the most vulnerable, including domestic abuse victims, remained available during lockdown. It challenged the behaviour of those who broke the laws and restrictions put in place to safeguard our community and the NHS. It found ways to manage significant increases in service demand triggered by both the initial lockdown and then the easing of restrictions. It supported businesses to reopen safely and to deliver socially distanced

events. Our front-line staff also continued to operate, alongside other key workers, to investigate concerns, challenge behaviour and provide support and advice where necessary, whilst managing the impact of the virus on their own staff.

2.21 None of the above could have been achieved without the culture the SMP has strived to develop over recent years.

Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-25

2.22 The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-25 (Appendix 2) has been refreshed, as detailed in the Strategic Assessment.

2.23 The information collated for this Strategic Assessment, identifies the need for four "Core Priorities" to be delivered by the Safer Maidstone Partnership:

- Protecting our communities against serious, violent and organised crime (including modern-day slavery)
- Keeping children and young people safe
- Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking)
- Providing a Safe Town Centre

2.24 The information within the strategic assessment, including the legislative changes and the available data, supports the retention of three of the previous priority areas, i.e. Protecting our communities against serious, violent and organised crime (including modern-day slavery), Keeping children and young people safe and Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse (including stalking).

2.25 A fourth priority has been added around the growing reputational concern and the nature of incidents in Town Centre.

2.26 There are some areas of concern which themselves are intrinsically linked to the delivery of the Core Priorities. Our priorities should therefore be underpinned by the following cross-cutting themes:

- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in Our Communities
- Taking a Public Health Approach
- Improving Public Perception /Confidence
- Reducing Reoffending and Tackling the Drivers of Crime
- Reducing The Impact of Substance Misuse on Our Community
- Safeguarding People Whose Mental Health Makes Them Vulnerable to Becoming a Victim or Where it Leads to an Impact on the Wider Community

2.27 The Safer Maidstone Partnership, through its various subgroups, will develop action plans for each core priority. Each action plan will not only develop and deliver initiatives that will meet the overarching objective of that priority but will also ensure that consideration each of the cross-cutting themes is undertaken and contributes to identification of actions incorporated into any delivery plan.

- 2.28 The Strategic Assessment and the Community Safety Plan are both still in a draft form and at the same time as coming to committee, are being reviewed by representatives from several partnership agencies. Whilst we do not anticipate any significant changes there may be some amendments to improve accuracy.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The committee could decide to approve the new Community Safety Plan 2022-25, subject to the Head of Housing and Community Services seeking final approval from the Chair of the Committee for any changes that the Committee would like to see and recommend to Council that it be adopted. This will allow for the plan to be implemented by the Safer Maidstone Partnership and its subgroups commencing in the new Municipal year
- 3.2 The committee could decide to not approve the proposed new Community Safety Plan. This is not recommended as the Community Safety Plan sits behind the work of the SMP and should reflect current trends and working practices and is based on evidence, feedback from the public and professional analysis.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The option set out in paragraphs 3.1 is the preferred option, as it will enable the Council, as part of the Safer Maidstone Partnership, to implement a robust and focussed CSP Plan and to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The recommendation, if adopted, will reduce the risk of the Council not being compliant with its statutory duties and will assist in reducing crime and disorder within the Borough.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Once approved the Partnership Plan will be disseminated to all partners for their information and implementation through the subgroups.
- 6.2 The Plan will also be shared with the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC).
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- *Appendix 1: Strategic Assessment 2022-23*
- *Appendix 2: Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-25*