

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee		
DATE:	4 January 2023		
TITLE:	Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023 - 2026		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces Reading's Community Safety Partnership's new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy, which has been co-produced with key stakeholders following a comprehensive strategic assessment and consultation exercise. The Strategy has been approved by the Community Safety Partnership Executive Group, which is now in the process of finalising a 3-year plan and will be launched following this committee adopting the new Strategy. A Community Safety Survey will commence at the end of February 2023 to provide a baseline to measure the impact of the strategy on public perception.

Appendix A - Reading's Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023 - 2026
Appendix B - Reading's Community Safety Partnership Priorities Consultation - Response summary
Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee adopts the new Strategy.
- 2.2 That a Community Safety Survey is undertaken in February/March 2023 to provide a baseline for the Community Safety Partnership's Community Safety & Serious Violence Strategy 2023-26.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Reading's Community Safety Partnership is required to produce a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder following the completion of a comprehensive strategic assessment to understand the levels and patterns of crime and disorder in the local area. Further to this, the introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 has placed further requirements on partnerships in the form of a Serious Violence

Duty, which sets out that partnerships must formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in their local area and produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those issues.

- 3.2 The Community Safety Partnership’s current Community Safety Strategy ended in 2022, therefore as part of its statutory obligations, the Partnership conducted a new strategic assessment which is being used to inform the development of a new 3-year plan. At the time of writing this report, the implementation date for the new Serious Violence Duty has not been published, however, given the timing of the need to produce a new Community Safety Strategy and the likelihood that the new Duty will be in place in early 2023, Reading’s Community Safety Partnership took the decision to undertake a joint Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategic Assessment and produce a combined strategy and plan.
- 3.3 A comprehensive Community Safety & Serious Violence Strategic Assessment was completed in the summer of 2022, with 7 priorities identified:

Community Safety Priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime in the top crime-generating neighbourhoods.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the way the Community Safety Partnership works with communities to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce community-based drug related activity.
Serious Violence Priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce knife violence, including the carrying of blades and their use in crime.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle organised crime gangs transporting illegal drugs across Reading’s borders, also known as ‘county lines’ offending.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve safety for women in public places and reduce sexually focused crimes and anti-social behaviour.
Combined Priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy and plan to reduce persistent offending.

- 3.4 A public consultation was undertaken between 25th July and 5th September 2022 which consisted of an online survey. The overview of responses is included in appendix B.
- 3.5 The Strategy (appendix A) has been developed in response to the consultation feedback and discussions with key partners and approved by the Community Safety Partnership at its Executive Group meeting in November 2022. The Strategy, after adoption at this committee has been agreed, will be formally launched at the Community Safety Partnership Executive Group on 2nd February 2023, along with the launch of a new Community Safety Survey, which is proposed to take place on an annual basis, rather than bi-annually, to support the monitoring of the new plan. In addition to this, the Community Safety Partnership will revert back to holding annual Community Safety Conferences to promote the work of the partnership and provide feedback to residents about what action is being taken to tackle crime and disorder in the town.
- 3.5 A Community Safety and Serious Violence action plan is being written by key CSP partners and will be presented for approval by the Community Safety Partnership at its Executive Group in February 2023. The plan will be overseen by the Community Safety Partnership Executive Group, with the proposal to set up a number of delivery groups to responsibility for the delivery of the action plan.

- 3.6 The Community Safety Partnership acknowledges that the Strategy will be published at a time when public finances are considerably impacted and when there are resourcing challenges across the partnership, both factors of which impact on its response to tackling crime and disorder across Reading. In addition to the this, the reduction in the contribution of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner's Community Safety fund to Reading between 2022 and 2025 requires the Community Safety Partnership to review how it uses this funding to tackle issues of crime and disorder and to target its use more effectively to ensure value for money, whilst tackling the priorities identified in the new strategy. In response to these challenges, the Partnership is committed to developing a realistic and achievable delivery plan and to ensure more effective and efficient use of the resources each agency has to tackle crime and disorder collaboratively.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Due to the statutory requirements placed on Community Safety Partnerships, the options are limited to producing a strategic assessment, consulting on priorities and producing a strategic plan. As the Committee that oversees scrutiny for the Community Safety Partnership, it is proposed that the strategy is adopted.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The purpose of this section is to ensure that proposals contained in reports support the Council's vision and Corporate Plan priorities:

Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 5.2 This area of work will contribute towards the Thriving Neighbourhoods priority, with a focus on reducing crime and to create safer communities and neighbourhoods for residents of Reading.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Community Safety Partnerships are required to consult on its proposed priorities prior to publishing strategies and plans.
- 7.2 The Council undertakes a Community Safety Survey every two years to gather views from local residents about community safety issues and fear of crime. The last survey was conducted late 2021 and, with the results being used to inform the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategic Assessment which has informed this strategy and its priorities.
- 7.3 Community Engagement and how the Community Safety Partnership communicates with local residents and businesses has been identified as an area for development for the Partnership and underpinning all of the priorities set out in the strategy is the need to improve how the partnership engages and communicates. A specific Delivery Group has already been introduced to oversee this work with an immediate action to refresh the Community Safety Partnership's branding.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (appendix C) in respect to the draft strategy. It is considered that the priorities within the strategy could have positive differential impact on groups with the following protected characteristics:

- Racial
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Religious belief

8.2 No Negative impact was recorded on any group.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, sets out a statutory requirement for key responsible authorities, including local authorities, to work together to reduce crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and minimise re-offending in local areas.

9.2 Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act of 2006 that requires the Local Authority to have a committee with the power:

- To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.
- To make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions.

9.3 The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 places a Serious Violence Duty on local partnerships to work together to share data and intelligence, formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problem and then produce a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. In addition, section 6(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which sets out the strategies Community Safety Partnerships must formulate and implement, has been amended to explicitly include serious violence.

9.4. The Policing and Crime Act 2009, which came into effect from the 1 April 2010, placed a new duty on CSPs to implement a strategy to reduce reoffending by adult and young offenders.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee Report - June 2022: Community Safety Partnership Update.

11.2 Reading CSP's Community Safety Plan 2019 - 2022.