

# NORTHUMBERLAND

## Northumberland County Council

**Date of Informal Cabinet Meeting** : 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 (initially presented to informal Cabinet on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017)

*Changes to original paper highlighted in **BOLD***

**Title of Report:** Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) operational Community Safety Proposals

**Date of Scrutiny if applicable:** N/A

**Date of Cabinet if applicable:** N/A

**Date of Council if applicable:** N/A

**Report of:** Paul Hedley - Chief Fire Officer and NCC Head of Public Protection

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr John Riddle - Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Resilience & SNP Chair

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### 1. Purpose

This paper outlines the current operational arrangements of the Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) relevant to anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime. It discusses the impact of recent changes in the operational context of the SNP and the challenges these create. It puts forward a series of recommendations for changes to the structure of the partnership which are intended to respond to these challenges, improving its effectiveness and efficiency whilst maintaining or improving the level of service offered to partners and elected members.

### 2. Executive Summary of Main Report:

- General consensus that the current Community Safety Hubs (CSH) are not as effective as the previous Local Multi-Agency Partnerships (LMAPS) arrangements. SNP has been reviewing the operational community safety structures from some time.
- Attendance at the current CSH is inconsistent across Northumberland from both an elected member and professional officer perspective.
- NCC Strategic Community Safety team establishment has reduced significantly in the last 2-3 years (10 FTE to 2FTE with Admin Support); therefore capacity to drive and manage the CSH structures has been depleted.

- Since the introduction of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) post, community safety funding has been transferred to the Office of the PCC. NCC no longer has specific or dedicated community safety budget to pursue funding of projects or initiatives.
- Other multi-agency forums are now available and well established to assist with community safety and ASB, and the view of some key partners is that other areas offer better opportunities to have a direct impact on outcomes.
- Partners have highlighted a high degree of duplication between the current community safety forums.
- It is proposed to move to a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) arrangement for elected members to raise community concerns and have them addressed in a more efficient and timely manner through direct management by one of NCCs reactive community safety officers. In many cases, councillors will have existing relationships with members of the reactive community safety team.
- The SPOC can escalate issues to the other multi-agency forums if necessary or arrange bespoke and targeted meetings with invited partners and elected members.
- There is confidence from senior managers that there is sufficient latent capacity within the existing reactive community safety team to allow for the introduction of a SPOC arrangement.
- It is intended to replace the existing face-to-face information sharing function of the CSHs with a regular member bulletin providing information on crime and ASB statistics and community safety activities in their wards. Additionally, Northumbria Police supported by other partners have proposed regular engagement meetings with elected members to ensure effective liaison, challenge and information exchange.
- Following the success of ASBRAC (Person) the SNP should develop a ASBRAC (Localities) group specifically configured to deal with serious large scale ASB and similar serious area based Community Safety issues.
- Scrutiny and governance of operational community safety structures has been revised to ensure effective performance management and outcome success scrutiny.
- The SPOC proposal meets legislative requirements.
- If approval is given, formal consultation with all stakeholders on the proposed changes to the structures will begin for 6 weeks with a report to be taken back to informal cabinet on the results of the consultation process prior to any further actions.
- The introduction of a SPOC arrangement will be reviewed within 9-12 months to ensure that the expectations of NCC officers, elected members and community safety partners are being met.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Structure

In relation to ASB and crime, the daily officer level partnership working within the SNP is supplemented by a two stage escalation process involving more developed SNP structures, namely Victim, Offender, Location (VOL) and ASB Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC). Additionally, CSHs have historically provided an alternative access point into the SNP especially for elected members, primarily focussed around larger scale/area based ASB.

The operation of these three elements is briefly considered below.

**2.1.1 Community Safety Hubs (CSHs)** - These bi-monthly meetings evolved from the area based element of the former Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) meetings and are chaired by officers from the Strategic Community Team. Historically, LMAPS were the principal multi-agency working meeting within the SNP with sections of meetings dedicated to both individually focussed cases and area based ASB. They also administered significant amounts of central government funding and provided members with one of their principal methods of accessing the partnership.

**2.1.2 Victim, Offender, Location, meetings (VOLs)** - These are two or four weekly multi-agency meetings chaired by Community Safety Officers from the Council's Reactive Community Safety Team within the Public Health Protection Unit. They are attended by other key partners in particular the Police and representatives of housing registered providers. They were created following a restructure of the SNP in 2013 and were intended to replace the individually focused element of LMAPS meetings (rather than area based). There are six VOLs in the County, based around Northumbria Police Sector boundaries. Meetings are attended by operational staff and supervisory level managers. They are well respected, efficient and seen as effective by partners in dealing with cases up to a medium level of risk.

**2.2.3 ASB Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC)** - this is a higher level multi-agency group (again created in the 2013 restructure) which meets on an ad hoc basis to consider cases which VOLs feel they are unable to deal with because of resource or policy implications, or because the level of risk associated with the case is too great and they are unable to mitigate it effectively. ASBRAC is attended by more senior managers who have authority over appropriate resources and can take policy decisions. Cases are typically highly complex and relate to highly vulnerable individuals. ASBRAC's membership and referral mechanism are not particularly aligned with area based ASB.

## 3. Changing Context

**3.1** The previous LMAPS were supported by the NCC Strategic Community Safety (SCS) Team who provided the partnership management function and secretariat. At its peak this team comprised a Sc10 SCS Manager, 3x Sc 8 officers and 5x Sc 7 officers together with administrative support – a total team of 10 personnel. Among this SCS establishment there were 3 dedicated LMAPS officers. Since then there has been a significant reduction in SCS personnel and now the Team comprises only a Sc10 SCS Manager, one Sc 8 LMAPS officer and one admin support.

It is unlikely that a return to an LMAPS model based on the five Local Area Council (LAC) areas could not be delivered satisfactorily through the existing staffing establishment.

**3.2** There was initially a budget of circa £160,000 allocated to LMAPS for local problem solving, which gradually reduced to approximately £60,000 in the final years of the LMAPS. The introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners saw the PCC assume control of those budgets across the Northumbria force area. There is no budget allocated to the Community Safety Hubs. Because the CSHs do not have any capital funding they cannot initiate and fund specific projects through partner agencies or the third sector. This was a particular focus and purpose of the former LMAPS and often the primary reason why partner agencies attended.

A core business of those LMAPS was to hold partners to account for the delivery of funded projects.

**3.3** As mentioned above, the role of LMAPS/CSHs changed significantly in 2013 with the creation of the VOL/ASBRAC model. At this time responsibility for all individual cases of ASB transferred to the new arrangements. However, although not originally intended to do so, the restructure also resulted in a great deal of area based ASB gradually migrating to VOL. This appears to be due to both the reduction in the size of the Strategic Community Safety Team (which has impacted on the frequency of the CSH meetings) and the success of the VOL process. In particular this has resulted in a more timely approach to resolution because while the CSHs meet on a quarterly basis the VOLs meet every 2 to 4 weeks.

**3.4** Consequently, although historically LMAPS/CSH had allowed elected members a point of contact at the centre of partnership working in Northumberland, given the range of multi-agency forums, this is no longer guaranteed to be the case. As discussed, CSHs are no longer best aligned with the working practices of the partnership. In particular they do not have as well developed links to officer level working or VOL.

**3.5** A further issue relating to VOL's informal adoption of area based ASB has been that both the structure of ASBRAC and the escalation process from VOL are not ideally aligned with area based work. The group had been established to consider high risk individual cases and risk assessments and membership of the group reflected this.

**3.6** VOLs have responded to this situation by forming ad hoc task and finish groups in relation to more complex or large scale problems. However, at present this process is not as well controlled as it might be.

**3.7** Informal consultation with Northumbria Police and other partners on the SNP has indicated that there is considered to be a high degree of duplication between the CSH and VOL. Northumbria Police have also indicated that they would prefer to retain the VOL arrangements as their primary low/medium level intervention forum rather than seek to restructure the CSH

#### **4. Proposal 1 - introduction of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) system**

**4.1** It is proposed that every Councillor would be allocated one of five Community Safety Officers (CSOs) (4.5 FTE) based within the Community Safety and Environmental Health Team that is part of the Public Health Protection Unit. This officer would act as a referral and discussion point, and provide initial problem solving for any community safety based issues within a Councillor's ward or the wider Police sector.

**N.B.** Assurance has been provided by the Public Health Protection Manager and the Community and Environmental Health Manager that there is sufficient capacity with the existing Community Safety Officer structure to enable the introduction of a SPOC arrangement.

**4.2** As the CSOs have highly developed partnership arrangements within their own area they

are ideally placed for this role. Additionally, these officers also chair the six VOLs that operate across the County, allowing for quick and effective escalation of cases into formal multi-agency settings as required.

The Manager of the Community and Environmental Health Team within which the officers sit is also the chair of ASBRAC again allowing for rapid escalation of serious cases.

**4.3** When required the SPOC could arrange a meeting with the ward member(s), relevant Town and Parish Councillors, and those partner agencies that needed to be present to discuss particular area based community safety problems in a particular ward(s). These bespoke meetings would be outcome focussed and more efficiently use time and resources. They would also better meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 as those invited would be there on a '*need to know*' basis.

**4.4** Following the meeting the SPOC would then provide the member(s) with timely updates on the progress of actions initiated at the meeting. This would be an improvement on the current arrangements because the member would no longer have to wait for the next quarterly CSH to receive an update.

**4.5** Although primarily aimed at the communication of operational issues SPOCs would also act as the initial contact point for broader partnership matters such as the performance of partners, case review or areas where members thought further scrutiny was appropriate. SPOCs have excellent links to the Partnership Manager and are well placed to refer appropriate issues to them.

**4.6** Appendix One to this report provides process maps for both the current referral mechanism and those proposed under the new arrangements.

## **4.5 Effects of the Proposal**

**4.5.1 Resilience** – As the officers are part of a much larger unit with similar skills, the team will be much more able to cope with issues such as sickness, holidays etc. maintaining service standards to Members.

**4.5.2 Escalation** - The officers sit in a highly experienced and developed line management structure where issues can quickly be escalated to appropriate levels. Additionally, the proposed system is in complete alignment with the principal SNP problem solving structures.

**4.5.3 Experience** - The proposed SPOCs are amongst the Council's most experienced and competent complaint handlers regularly dealing with high complexity and politically sensitive issues, they have close and well developed links to local communities via the VOL system and the ability to manage risk effectively through ASBRAC.

**4.5.4 Accountability** – The move from a meeting based system to a SPOC offers both members and senior managers an assurance that issues and complaints are being coordinated by a single named officer and that officer has both the support but also the rigour of an effective line management structure.

**4.5.5 Efficiency** – The proposal seeks to concentrate all relevant resources into a single unit thus increasing critical mass whilst improving communication. Effective partnership working will still be maintained but with an emphasis on partnering at the right level whether this be via daily partnership working at officer level, VOL, ASBRAC, ASBRAC (Localities) or a bespoke task and finish group. The approach will seek to move from standing committees and fixed structures to a bespoke outcomes based focus.

**4.5.6 Real-time Information** - CSHs only routinely meet bi-monthly. This places an inherent delay into both the reporting of problems but also the feedback of information or the speed of problem solving. SPOCs will be available to discuss issues, problem solve and provide feedback during usual working hours.

**4.5.7 Problem Solving Environments** – A recognised benefit of the CSHs is that they do offer members the opportunity to meet multiple agencies simultaneously. However, under the SPOC proposal it is still envisaged that, when required, bespoke member/officer/partner task and finish groups would be established to solve more problematic situations. These groups would be based around established VOL structures meaning the groups could be called quickly and would already have appropriate membership and support in place.

**4.5.8 Member Updates** - It is intended to replace the existing information sharing function of the CSHs with a regular member bulletin providing information on crime and ASB statistics and community safety activities in their wards. In addition, senior Police partners have offered an opportunity to provide a quarterly engagement meeting as a way of directly updating councillors which means they can feed back into their constituencies and alleviate any tensions or concerns that are rising. The Police can be supported at these engagement meetings by other strategic partners such as Fire and NCC Community Safety.

## **5. Proposal 2 - introduction of a Localities ASBRAC**

**5.1** In 2016/17 there were two episodes of high level, widespread anti-social behaviour in the County. Centred in Ponteland and Blyth both of these incidents involved predominantly youth based disorder including vehicle and property crime, vandalism and intimidation. In both cases the issues took several weeks to address effectively. The multi-agency response to these episodes was included as part of a recent Police coordinated ASB Best Practice Sharing Event. A number of issues relating to multi agency working within the Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) were identified / suggested during the event particularly in relation to the large scale events type events discussed above.

**5.2** The VOL templates can contain significant number of cases and the emergence of a large scale issue such as those discussed above has the capacity to overload it. This can either lead to the case not being given sufficient attention or alternatively other cases on the template being displaced.

**5.3** VOLs have formed bespoke task and finish groups to overcome these issues although this has been on an ad hoc basis. The ASBRAC process was predominately designed for the escalation of individual cases of severe or high risk ASB. Its referral documentation and standing membership are not entirely aligned with large scale area based problems.

**5.4** The SNP should develop an ASBRAC (Localities) group specifically configured to deal with serious large scale ASB and similar serious area based Community Safety issues. This group's operational procedures, chairing and secretariat functions referral pathways etc. should reflect ASBRAC's however, its membership and application and accompanying risk assessment should be better aligned with area based issues.

## **6. Scrutiny Arrangements**

**6.1** Scrutiny of the effectiveness and performance of community safety interventions within Northumberland is provided by the Safer Northumberland Partnership and the formal NCC scrutiny process.

**6.2** Under the proposed SPOC arrangements this would continue to be the case with the Chair of the SNP able to request exception reports on VOL / ASBRAC performance for consideration by the partnership. The Manager of the Community and Environmental Health Team (C&EHT)

will be responsible for ensuring that the SPOC role is carried out effectively by his reactive community safety team.

**6.3** The NCC Community Safety Partnership Manager retains a strategic overview across all forums and together with the C&EHT Manager (who will operate as Chair of the ASBRACs), attends the SNP. There is resilience within the proposed structure as both managers are well placed, in the absence of the other, to provide feedback to the partnership about community safety and projects and initiatives being attended to by the SPOCs, VOL and ASBRAC.

**6.3** Additional Member and citizen scrutiny can be exercised via the Communities and Local Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (C&LS OSC). One of the terms of reference of C&LS OSC is to monitor, review and make recommendations about county council services concerned with community safety/crime, fear of crime and crime reduction.

**6.4** As previously mentioned in 4.5.7 and 4.5.8, bespoke meetings and member updates provide additional avenues for elected members to meet directly with professional officers to discuss the performance and effectiveness of the community safety / ASB arrangements and for partners to be held to account on behalf of their constituents.

**6.5** In order to improve the resilience of the VOL escalation process, it is proposed that minutes/notes of the VOL meetings are circulated to strategic officers within Police / Fire and NCC Community Safety to ensure that the potential of a delay in the escalation of high risk community safety and ASB issues to ASBRAC is minimised.

## **7. Recommendations**

To address the issues presented this report the informal Cabinet is asked to express support for the following recommendations:

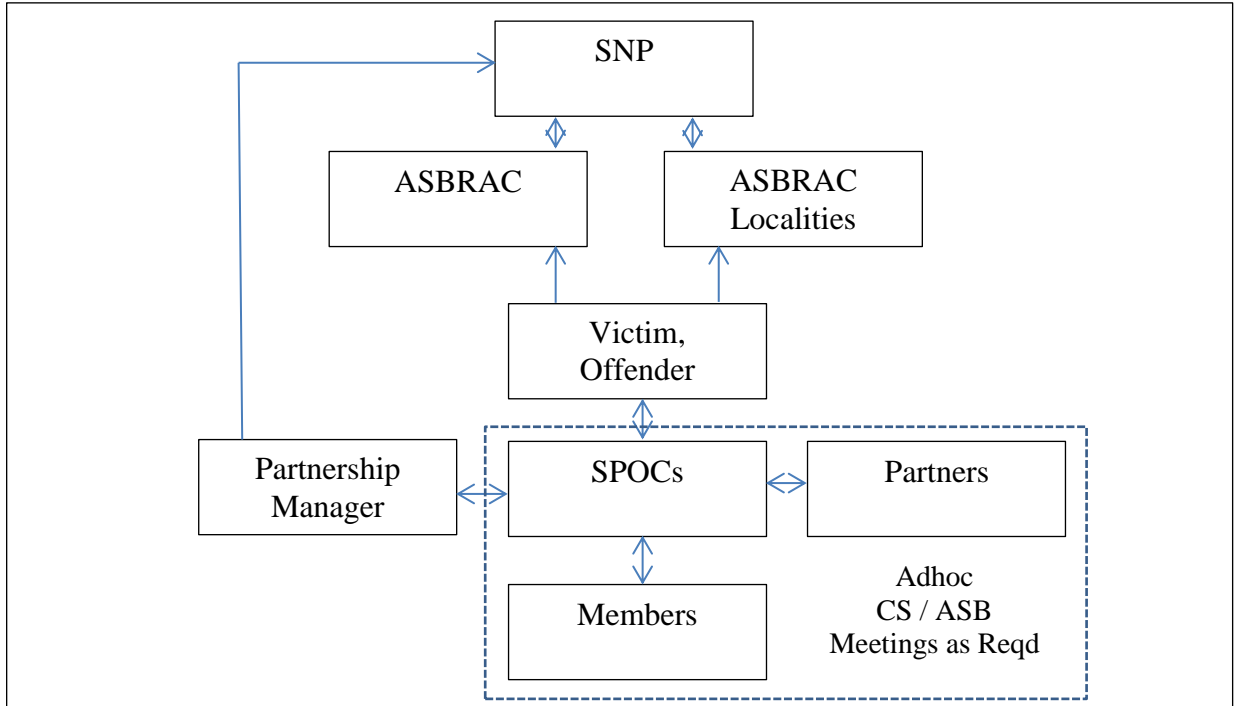
1. That approval is given to begin consultation with partners, officers and representative bodies for the disbanding of the CSHs and the transfer responsibility for all crime and ASB related partnership working to be formally aligned with the Officer/VOL/ASBRAC model.
2. That a ASBRAC (Localities) group be established aligned with ASBRAC but with a referral process, risk assessment, membership and terms of reference which reflect its area based remit.
3. That the terms of reference for the VOLs are updated to control the circumstances in which area based sub-groups are established, how they administered and their relationship with ASBRAC (Localities).
4. That subject to the outcome of the consultation process in (1), member access to the SNP is facilitated by the provision of SPOCs. Each SPOC would be the member of the Reactive Community Safety Team responsible for that area. This officer would typically also be the chair of the local VOL.
5. Subject to positive consultation feedback, and subsequent informal Cabinet approval, a commitment to review the proposed restructure after 9-12 months (or sooner if significant issues are raised by partners/elected members) to ensure that performance, effectiveness and outcomes have improved and met expectations.





**Operational Community Safety Process Maps**

**Proposed Arrangements**



**Current Arrangements**

