

## **BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan**

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS and COMMUNITIES TO CABINET**

#### **The South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit**

##### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report is to provide information to cabinet with regards the work of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and the implications for Barnsley.

##### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Cabinet acknowledge and are aware of the Violence Reduction Unit, the local profile produced, the proposed priority strategic themes and timescales for further development.**
- 2.2 **Cabinet are asked to endorse the future local governance arrangements for the VRU aligning the Response Strategy and delivery to existing arrangements within the Safer Barnsley Partnership.**
- 2.3 **Cabinet are asked to agree the priority themes note the headline actions in the local action plan.**

##### **3. INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1 On 19th June 2019, the Home Secretary announced that £35m would be made available to establish Violence Reduction Units (VRUs). Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in 18 Force areas, including South Yorkshire, were invited to apply for an amount proposed by the Home Office.
- 3.2 Following a successful application, South Yorkshire secured £1.6m in August 2019 to establish the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (SYVRU).

The three main elements of work are:

- **Enhancing Partnership Arrangements:** these arrangements are intended to lay the foundations of a sustainable, multi-agency approach, both at strategic and operational levels
- **'Scale Up':** local delivery of tried and tested multi-agency public health approaches to reducing violence
- **New Projects -** To deliver a range of new interventions and initiatives with partners across the county focussed on violence prevention and violence reduction

The funding must support delivery of the VRU function, which the Home Office defines as being, “to offer leadership and, working with all relevant agencies operating locally, strategic coordination of the local response to serious violence”

The Home Office specified two mandatory products to be delivered by the end of March 2020:

- A South Yorkshire **Area Profile** – identifying the drivers of violence in local areas and the initial steps to identify the people most affected.
- A South Yorkshire violence **Response Strategy** – setting out the multiagency response to be delivered by the SYVRU and partners across South Yorkshire.

3.3 The VRU has adopted a public health approach to violence which starts with the needs of the public or population group rather than with individual people. This means that work will be focused on communities, and with communities, groups and partners. There is already a vast amount of work ongoing in Barnsley and South Yorkshire. Success of the VRU will be built upon coordinating, utilising and learning from existing initiatives and resources in communities with partners, to ensure a comprehensive approach to tackling violence across the borough and county.

3.4 A public health approach has five common elements<sup>2</sup>.

- prevention
- data and evidence base
- looking at what causes violence
- taking a population level approach
- working together in partnership

Taking a public health approach means analysing what drives violence. These are often ‘social determinants’ or ‘structural factors’ and include things like: access to services, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), childhood trauma, family and social support, education, housing, community cohesion, income, work and physical/mental health, all of which underpin people’s lives. These drivers illustrate the need for partnership working, which is central to taking a public health approach.

3.5 The volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous nature of violence (and the causes of it) makes collaboration across many professions and services essential. Each partner has access to different skills, levers and mechanisms to affect change.

Public health approaches consider the wider system, including communities. It is the VRU’s intention to start with the voice of communities across South Yorkshire, combining this with evidence of what works, to ensure a comprehensive approach that reflects the reality of life in local areas.

3.6 Since inception the VRU has developed a robust governance structure headed by a Strategic Board which is an amalgamation of senior multi agency representatives including all four South Yorkshire local authorities the council’s representative on the Board is the Service Director Communities. Governance also include a cross authority elected member consultative group with the council’s representative being the Cabinet Spokesperson for Adults and Communities.

- 3.7 Barnsley council have also seconded a Community Safety Team Leader into the Violence Reduction Unit Officer Team which comprises of link officers from other local authorities, a civilian and police lead officer, and a communications and research function. The Police and crime Commissioner has committed to funding the work of the VRU for at least another full financial year 2020/21.
- 3.8 To date the VRU has been responsible for producing a local profile of the various manifestations of violence in our communities, has proposed a response strategy and has commissioned a number of bespoke programmes of activity to enhance prevention approaches. Four schemes in Barnsley have been funded by the VRU those being Naturewood, Greenacre, Exodus & Springwell totalling £58,939 to the end of financial year 2019/20.
- 3.9 As part of the work to develop the Area Profile the VRU also commissioned the voluntary sector to undertake some focused community engagement activity to ascertain public views around the causes, perceptions and prevalence of violence in local communities and determine community perspectives on how to address this. Locations chosen were ones which had been identified as having higher than average incidents of violence across most categories and in Barnsley two groups were convened, one in Goldthorpe and one in Thurnscoe.

#### 4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

- 4.1 The Violence Reduction Unit has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of violence in South Yorkshire to produce an Area Profile which summarises the principles of a public health approach, identifies the causes of the cause of violence, sets out the overall and locally specific profile of violence in South Yorkshire, considers perceptions of violence in communities and sets out a number of priorities. (See SYVRU web link at Appendix 1)
- 4.2 The profile describes key factors associated with violence in South Yorkshire as follows;
- Age and gender related – A disproportionate amount of violence in all categories both offenders and victims involve young males between the ages of 14 and 39. (This excludes domestic violence)
  - Most violence does not involve weapons
  - There are some areas in South Yorkshire where violence is higher
  - There is a clear link between the night-time economy, alcohol and violence
  - Violence with injury in South Yorkshire is strongly linked to deprivation, child development as at age 5 and alcohol related harm.
- 4.3 The profile has informed the production of a Response Strategy which is currently in draft form awaiting ratification by the Board. The Response Strategy establishes the following key high-level themes with a delivery plan to follow;
- **Outcomes** – Safer Communities. Reduced violent crime | Improvements in the factors that are causing violent crime | Strong, empowered communities
  - **Outputs** - Early Intervention & Prevention, Disrupt & Divert Violent Crime
  - **How** - Strengthen Local Multi-Agency Partnerships, Develop a Joint Strategy

- **Foundations** - Provide Evidence & Insights, Engage Communities & Build Trust, Establish Long-Term Funding. (Appendix 2 Strategy on a page)

- 4.4 The VRU Board has also agreed to allocate another round of funding for projects and initiatives aimed at supporting prevention activity to reduce violence. These allocations are being made according to priorities identified in the local action plan with a total of £20 000 allocated to support domestic violence actions and a further £30 000 to support prevention work with young people.
- 4.5 In order to align the violence response strategy to the key priorities for Barnsley it is proposed that any specific delivery objectives identified in the strategy delivery plan are agreed and monitored through the existing Barnsley Community Safety Partnership arrangements. The Safer Barnsley Partnership Board will oversee the assurance of delivery with delivery responsibility being driven by various sub-groups of the Safer Barnsley Partnership, the Alcohol Alliance the Evening and Night Time Economy Group and Youth Crime and ASB Board.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that cabinet be sighted on the Area Profile, Response Strategy and Commissioning approaches of the VRU and endorse the oversight of any future delivery through the existing governance arrangements for the Barnsley Community Safety Partnership.
- 4.7 In response to the Response strategy Barnsley CSP has endorsed a local action plan identifying the following 6 themes as priority for local intervention:
- Priority 1 – Locations – Prioritise local areas where violence is most common.  
 Priority 2 - Alcohol – Reduce the impact of violence associated with alcohol.  
 Priority 3 - Evening and Nighttime Economy – Reduce the levels of violence associated with the evening and night time economy.  
 Priority 4 - Young People – Target the disproportionate levels of violence (victim and offender) associated with young people between the ages of 15 and 30.  
 Priority 5 - Domestic Violence - work to end domestic abuse/violence in our town.  
 Priority 6 - Weapon Enabled Crime – Prevent the escalation in the use of weapons in Barnsley.

## 5. **CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

- 5.1 Cabinet may choose not to endorse stronger local governance arrangements for VRU driven activity however this may result in a disjointed approach to achieving long term reductions in violence and impact the potential to draw in resources and funding for preventative schemes and initiatives.

## 6. **IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS**

- 6.1 The aim of the approach being driven by the VRU is to achieve change which will result in the reduction of violence across South Yorkshire and in Barnsley. The work done so far has helped to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the causal factors and prevalence of violence in Barnsley which should assist in determining approaches which may contribute towards a reduction. Overall implications for local people would be positive if this refocusing of approach is

successful as it would mean that people in Barnsley would be less likely to be drawn into being victims or perpetrators of violence.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The representative of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer) has been consulted.
- 7.2 There are no direct financial implications for the council associated with this report. Funding for the VRU including the seconded role from the council is wholly met by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner supported by ring fenced Home Office grant.

## **8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Barnsley council has seconded a Community Safety Team Leader to act as local link within the VRU. The vacant team leader role has been backfilled from staff resources within the Safer Communities service. These arrangements are in place until March 2021 and there are no other employee implications.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 No direct implications associated with this report.

## **10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 None associated with this report.

## **11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 It will be important to ensure that any key communications messages associated with the publication of the area profile and response strategy are considered with regards to how our communities will respond. Generally, Barnsley compares favourably with other South Yorkshire areas with regards violence and victimization however any messages must be handled sensitively and collegiately to avoid unnecessary alarm. To this extent it is intended to foster a stronger link between the council's communications team and the communications team within the VRU to ensure a measured and locally sensitive approach to key messages about violence and violence reduction.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 All aspects of VRU activity, the production of the profile and strategy and the commissioned initiatives have been subject to scrutiny by the multi-agency/authority strategic board and the member consultation group. Furthermore, the VRU has provided regular updates through the Safer Barnsley Partnership. Representation from Senior Management Team and Barnsley Leadership Team has been maintained at every stage of development and the local VRU link officer has maintained and developed dialogue channels with key service leads in Community Safety, Children's Services, Public Health and the Police.

### **13. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

- 13.1 The overall aim of the VRU is to contribute towards establishing the conditions which will result in the reduction in violence in our communities. The approach is clearly underpinned by the principles established in the Crime and Disorder Act whereby tackling crime and the causes of crime is deemed the business of all statutory partners. This approach draws on the involvement of all partners to contribute towards facilitating the environments which will lead to a long-term reduction in violent crime of all categories.

### **14. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 14.1 None associated with this report.

### **15. HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES**

- 15.1 None associated with his report

### **16. LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: [SYVRU Maps](#)

Appendix 2: Violence Reduction Unit Strategy

### **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation



Joshua Amahwe (25/06/2020)

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(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer  
where there are no financial implications)