



Report of Councillor David Smith Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services

September 2023

COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

Safer Communities

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Our Anti-Social behaviour team continue to offer a comprehensive service to the residents of West Northants, together with our Police colleagues and external partners.

We are monitoring an individual on a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO), as well as enforcing any breaches of the others now in place, we have two CBOs on persons under 18 which is testament to the hard work put in by the ASB case manager and is being used as an example of good practice by other interested parties.

Since June the ASB Team have issued 16 Community Protection Warning Letters, 3 Community Protection Notices and 3 Criminal Behaviour Orders.

The ASB team led on the Multi Agency response to the ASB week of action 3 July-9 July and delivered an event or had a presence at every known ASB hot spot across West Northants together with Housing Providers and Northants Police.

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence

Through the delivery of our Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy we continue to develop a holistic and strategic response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, together with the subsequent DA duty funding which is now confirmed up to 2025.

Training to support staff in identifying domestic abuse victims, assess risks and refer appropriately continues.

Work is being undertaken to allow true partnership working; with domestic abuse being recognised as one of Northamptonshire Children's Trust's priorities, there is collaboration to ensure the Domestic Abuse Strategy supports the Trust and vice versa within the action plan. Partners are meeting regularly to focus on specific issues that create barriers to victim survivors accessing support and safe accommodation. Schemes designed to specifically remove or reduce barriers are in progress, including the issue of insecure immigration status and emergency funds.

We continue to explore new ways to improve the service we offer to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence within West Northamptonshire. We are having regular discussions with DLUHC, the Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office, other Local Authorities, and service providers to share and support ideas and change. Ideas and proposals are shared with the domestic abuse and sexual violence board which continues to meet bi-monthly and has oversight of progress and ensures accountability.

Planning for this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign is underway, aiming to reach further and have even greater impact in 2023.

Serious Violence and Knife Crime

Our new partnership role, Serious Violence Coordinator, hosted by West Northants Council is now in post, the role will focus on the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty.

Support has been given to Police colleagues around Weeks of Action against Serious Violence with social media campaigns and community engagement. A football event was recently held at Goals, Mereway, with Police Officers and the young people from Blackthorn Premier Kicks project.

Two new knife amnesty bins have been installed along with 24/7 bleed cabinets – Vernon Terrace in Northampton and New Street in Daventry. The bleed cabinet for Vernon Terrace was funded by NPH.

Public Spaces Protection Orders

A number of PSPOs are due for renewal:

- The consultation process for the renewal of the Daventry-wide PSPO will start at the end of September.
- Consultation is also open for the second renewal of the order covering Marble Arch.

A new PSPO has been proposed to temporarily close Emporium Way until such a time that regeneration works are complete, and the space can be made safe. The consultation process opened in August, closed 19 September.

Neighbourhood Working

Safer Streets Bellinge & Blackthorn - Awaiting installation date for the upgraded LED lighting in 7 underpasses in and around Blackthorn. Awaiting BT to undertake the fibre upgrade works so 3 CCTV cameras can be installed in Bellinge and 3 in Blackthorn. Youth provision work in Bellinge has included 1:1 mentoring sessions and outreach work along with a youth event in July which was well attended. We have had some significant successes with the mentoring supporting young people to get back into school and work on their CVs.

Safer Streets – Town Centre; Final stages of work completed during August/September including, an upgrade to a town centre CCTV camera, moving a street light column to provide better visibility, lighting enhancements on Becketts Park footpath and the installation of bollard covers promoting key safety campaigns across the town.

Cameras installed and operational at Northampton international Academy building, bridging the gap in CCTV in this area.

The Northampton Town Centre Task Group has drafted a nighttime economy strategy in the form of a plan on a page to deliver on the Nighttime Economy Solutions report that was recently carried out as part of the safer street's initiative.

On the 26 May, the first St George Neighbourhood Partnership group was held in the Guildhall; the group has continued to grow and further develop its aims and objectives, in relation to the

new lap area objectives. The group has met a total of three times, with the emerging focus around waste/fly tipping, and safe spaces for young people.

Stronger Communities

Southbrook Community Centre, Daventry - West Northamptonshire Council continues to support the trustee board with advice and guidance in carrying out their aims and objectives. Their Community Food Larder has just celebrated its first birthday and every week continues to see over 70 residents. West Northants Customer Services also attend regularly along with welfare and debt advice advisors. The VCSE lead has approached the Chief Officer at Daventry Town Council to help secure funding the community centre in its role in improving community connection and cohesion and in pursuit of the antipoverty strategy on Southbrook. The board are also exploring the possibility of running 4 community events a year where all the VCSE organisations can show case what they are doing and look at better ways to work together. This is in support of the LAP priorities within this area. Southbrook is also running a youth club. A Community Garden Club has started and operates every Sunday at 12pm, this is open to all residents who can plant flowers, get involved with craft activities, all ages and experience are welcome. At present they are also running a community campaign to help provide a better environment for all users by sponsoring a chair to either dedicate to a person, a business or community organisation to refurbish the centre's assets.

Welcoming Spaces

Following on from the success of the Warm Spaces initiative over the winter we have since granted organisations over the Summer with an additional £250 grant funding to help provide refreshments and support to the local community. This included libraries and VCSE organisations. Key headlines from the winter grant funding from Public Health seen 58,602 attendees and 3,505 clients referred on to wrap around services that were granted amounts between £500 - £1500. Communication between West Northants Community Team and Public Health continues to progress with the provision of wrap around support services in the now newly named Welcoming Spaces. A survey was conducted within the 96 spaces to see what services we could help facilitate and of those 30 spaces came back with a wish list of our network of partners. Frontline workers and volunteers have also received information on how to access free online bite size courses through The Community Training Partnership, partnership working with Northampton Hope Centre and Community Law, funded by West Northants Council's Public Health Team. Courses include Introduction to Universal Credit, Mental Health referral guidance, debt advice, key conversations and many more. This has been successfully received by the Spaces and we have had positive feedback from attendance. To pilot the wrap around support provision we are trialling the LAP area of Rural East due to the data driven by the grant monitoring. A stakeholder group has been set up and will meet to shape the work going forward. We will take learnings from this Pilot and use to roll out across all LAPS (Local Area Partnership).

Emerging LAP priorities to reduce social isolation and loneliness created an opportunity for Welcoming Spaces to become part of the national Chatty Café Scheme initiative. WNC has utilised the Homes for Ukraine fund to buy 50 yearly memberships to extend this across further geographical areas across the West. Each venue receives support and advice and volunteer recruitment, this is also in partnership with Action for Happiness who has recently become a member of the Mental Health Northants Collaboration (MHNC) and the 'The 10 Keys to Happier Living' have been incorporated into the Integrated Care Northamptonshire Prevention Concordat Action Plan. In the last couple of months conversations have taken place with Adult Social Care, Employment Support, Money and Debt Advice, Mental Health, Public Health

Checks, Healthy Eating and immunisation support. Frontline staff and volunteers have also received Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Prevention Training.

Well Northants

Community Development workers are active in Kings Heath, St David's (Kingsthorpe), Blackthorn and Southbrook in Daventry. Over the summer period community development workers have been engaging with communities, attending summer fundays and events and talking about Well Northants. This has given us the opportunity to review and test the local priorities identified by communities. We have been promoting the local action groups as an opportunity for people to get involved in their community, to volunteer some time and support delivery of action plans. Initial local action group meetings are set to take place in early autumn. The Well Northants community grant has been launched in Southbrook and applications are being received for projects. What and who gets funded will be decided by the community at a voting and fun day on 7 October.

Work to support inclusion groups continues and we have facilitated partners to come together to develop a night-time drop-in service for sex workers. This initiative is in its early development stage, and we hope to see a collaborative approach being launched in early 2024. The community development worker is bringing together people with lived experience of sex work to help define our priorities and develop the action plan. A similar process is happening with the Gypsy Romany traveller community. The community development worker has "tested" the identified priorities with the GRT community and is developing an action plan which will include adult literacy, skills development, access to education, access to services including advice.

Community development workers have been attending LAP meetings in their areas to ensure community insight.

School Engagement

Planning for our Young Citizens Scheme in 2023/24 is at an advanced stage and the first events will take place on 18th and 19th October 2023, with the second taking place on the 6th and 7th February 2024; the scheme promotes healthy, safe and strong individuals and communities. Participants become better citizens, are safer in their schools and communities, online and on the roads; are better equipped to make choices and understand the consequences of their actions; better informed of how to react in an emergency and have a better understanding of and relationship with the range of agencies which operate in West Northants. The upcoming events have been set to support both the Hate Crime Awareness Week and the Internet safety week; with both subjects playing a key part in the events.

Not all schools are able to attend Young Citizens, so we commissioned Amplitude Media to produce a series of animations which cover this range of subjects. The project has been launched to schools, youth groups and professionals working with young people. Feedback from partners has resulted in additional modules being added, with further ones being considered: Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) has been added as a subject, following the work commissioned by the county schools challenge.

The Community Safety & Engagement Team have taken over from OFPCC Chairing the Schools Contextual Safeguarding meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Leads. This is an ideal conduit for exchange of information around emerging issues and concerns. There will

be two meetings, one focused on the Northampton locality schools and another focussed-on Daventry and South Northants locality areas.

Community Forums

The Diverse Forum - has been working to support the police and local partners to further raise awareness around issues relating to hate crime and planning is underway for a partnership response to Hate Crime Week in October. Support around employment continues through projects being driven by Diversiti UK; they have a new project that looks to help diverse community groups work on their skills regarding job applications and interviews.

Youth Forum – have met with partners on their chosen priorities, ‘Sexual Health and Sex Education, and Substance Misuse (drugs/alcohol/vaping)’. They have produced digital content to raise awareness of topics on social media and have produced a guidance poster for teachers for dealing with period poverty and sanitary issues in schools. These are being shared to schools. Forum members received Heritage Training in August and lead tours of the Guildhall in September for Heritage Open Day.

The Women’s Forum - have joined up with the Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire to offer a quarterly Women’s Business Networking meeting. The first meeting will be held at Northampton’s Guildhall and on Teams, on Thursday 5 October, 12 noon.

The Disabled People’s Forum - the first face to face Daventry & Disabled & Proud Support Group went well on the 16 August, 50+ people attended the Saxon Suite at Daventry Leisure Centre, stands from The Cube, Physical Vascular Therapy, Northamptonshire MIND, Northamptonshire & Buckinghamshire Dyslexia Foundation, Everyone Active, Daventry Dolphins, GP Swim Active Referrals. Partnering with Daventry Leisure Centre who has provided the room hire for free in the first 6 months. The Disabled Peoples Forum took place on the 4 September and included guest speakers from Space 2 Talk CIC about their wellbeing and wellness activities at Delapre Abbey and Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board.

The Daventry & District Older People’s Forum held their Autumn event on the 6 September at the Saxon Suite at Daventry Leisure Centre where around 50 members attended, guest speakers included WNC’s Supporting Independence Programme, Age UK Northamptonshire, along with promotional stands including Deafconnect, Physical Vascular Therapy, Everyone Active/GP Referrals, The Happy @ Home Partnership, WNC Library Service, University of the 3rd Age, and entertainment was provided by DUO – Danetre Ukulele Orchestra.

Community Events

Srebrenica – Civic event took place in the Guildhall Courtyard with speakers and a minute of silence to mark the genocide in Srebrenica before refreshments and engagement in the court room.

Northampton Pride - In July we held our biggest Parade through the town and longest event for Pride on the University Campus. The event was extremely well attended with positive feedback.

Ukrainian Independence Day – In August we raised the Ukrainian flag across all West Northants Council (WNC) office buildings in Towcester, Daventry and Northampton to mark 32 years since Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union.

There was a ceremony to commemorate the day in the Guildhall Courtyard attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire and the Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council, and representatives of the Ukrainian community.

Sunflowers - the national flower of Ukraine were laid in commemoration and a variety of stalls, performances and artwork by members of the Ukrainian community were on display.

Resettlement Schemes

Homes for Ukraine

We have now seen approximately 850 Ukrainians arriving across West Northants, with over 450 currently still residing in West Northants, although some of these have now moved on from sponsor accommodation and into Private Rented accommodation.

The hubs continue to support hosts and guests in local communities, and we are finding that engagement is generally increasing. The team use the hubs as a point of contact to help bring the community together and also to engage with other services and with prospective hosts.

Day	Time	Location
Tuesday	2pm – 4pm	Brackley Library NN13 6AJ – 5 th & 12 th September <i>English lessons available every week 1pm -3pm</i>
Wednesday	10am – 12 noon	Daventry Methodist Church, NN11 4FB – 6 th September
		Woodford Halse Library, NN11 3RL – 13 th September
Thursday	2pm – 4pm	Towcester Library NN12 6AD <i>Russian-speaking Support Worker normally available at this Hub</i>
Friday	1pm – 3pm	Brixworth Library NN6 9DS
	10.am – 12 noon	Emmanuel Church, Weston Favell NN3 8JR <i>Russian-speaking Support Worker normally available at this Hub</i>

We continue to visit every household at the six and twelve-month mark, to ensure that the guests are still resident, there are no safeguarding concerns, and any issues can be addressed. The team support those Ukrainians on the scheme when placements come to an end, looking at the options available, including finding a new sponsor through the rematching process.

Afghan Bridging Hotels and Resettlement

We have worked hard to find housing solutions for all residents of the two Afghan bridging hotels up to the closures on 26 August and 31 August. We are positive that everyone has been moved safely into either temporary or settled accommodation through a range of options and that we will continue to support those with upcoming moves and the small minority of people who currently do not have a plan in place.

The resettlement team will also provide three years' integration support to all households settling in Northampton – currently projected to be between 15 and 20 households. This includes two families supported to find their own accommodation from a bridging hotel in West Sussex.

Asylum Contingency Hotels

We continue to regularly engage with the organisations that are providing the support for those in both hotels currently in West Northants. We are exploring the use of funding to facilitate ESOL attendance at college for some residents and also the use of a small grants programme, to enable wellbeing and positive activities.

Voluntary and Community Sector and Grants

During the first five months of this financial year, we have awarded £1.2 million in community funding grants. 71% in the form of Direct Grants that support our residents and communities, for example, grants to Local Infrastructure Organisations, Community Transport Projects, and Information and Advice Services. And 30% in Discretionary Community Funding Grants to registered charities, voluntary and community groups, local clubs, and not for profit organisations that operate and provide services to residents within the geographical area of the Council.

The community funding grant schemes currently open are:

- Youth Violence & Knife Crime Grants: for projects that will mitigate youth violence and knife crime in our communities; and
- Creation Of New Volunteering Opportunities through Social Action Projects: for the creation of new volunteering opportunities within the Voluntary and Community Sector.

These are part funded by the Northamptonshire Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC), and funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) following successful bids.

REGULATORY SERVICES

To say that regulatory services have had a busy summer would be an understatement.

Our management restructure is nearing completion.

Building Control

Our Building Control Manger has been actively involved in dealing with the aftermath of the recent fire in Bridge Street. Work continues to ensure public safety and find a long term solution to this complex situation.

The team have also been dealing with a number of other cases involving dangerous structures across the area in addition to the inspection work on a wide range of construction projects.

I'm pleased to report that two members of our support team have recently taken up Assistant Building Control Officer roles. They will undergo training and work towards qualifications whilst providing some additional resources in the team.

Health Protection

Health Protection Officers joined forces with Trading Standards Officers and an officer from the Food Standards Agency to carry out an unannounced inspection at Wold Farm Industrial Park,

Old on 6 July 2023 and found that food has been unlawfully processed and a considerable amount of food was being unlawfully stored on the premises. WNC had not been previously made aware that the food business was operating; all businesses have an obligation to register with their local authority. As a result, the Health Protection Officers instructed the business to cease processing food and sought to have the food on site condemned as there is no legal way to determine if the food was safe to enter the food chain under these circumstances. Magistrates agreed with the Council during a hearing on Wednesday 16 August 2023 and the food was ordered to be destroyed to prevent it from being used for human consumption. It has since been destroyed and investigations into the findings of 6 July 2023 are ongoing.

Health Protection Officers have provided advice on numerous large scale events over the summer months to help ensure that they were run safely. Events included the Balloon Festival, Silverstone events, Shambala, Music concerts at Saints and many more. That process is made more effective through the Event Safety Partnership that Regulatory Services fairly recently led on developing.

Progress on Food Hygiene Inspections is steady due to many competing demands including the continuing identification of a drop in food safety and health & safety standards as the team strives to address the backlog caused by the pandemic leading to the need to carry out enforcement action.

Environmental Protection

The Council's Air Quality Annual Status Report has been submitted DEFRA for evaluation, once this is completed the report, which gives comprehensive data for 2022 will be made publicly available

Summer is always a busy time for the team with a seasonal increase in noise complaints tending to occur in hot weather. There were a large number of events across the area and the team were involved in setting licence conditions and in a small number of cases, dealing with complaints where noise problems were reported. The team have positive working relationships with many of the venues and the consultants that they employ to monitor and regulate noise. For example it was possible for the team to log into the consultant's systems to review sound level data from the consultant's monitoring of the Shambala Festival.

A number of the officers in the team were recently involved in dealing with a complex case with a hoarder whose property was crammed full with belongings. We are dealing with an increasing number of these challenging cases, often working closely with partner agencies under the Northamptonshire Hoarding Framework.

The team are working with Community Safety and Police colleagues to implement a protocol which aims to ensure that calls about noise are directed to the correct team and that where repeat calls are received, appropriate vulnerability checks will be undertaken.

Environmental Crime

Our Cleaner Communities Campaign continues to attract lots of hits on social media as details of the work carried out by the team are shared. We have carried out a number of successful prosecutions for waste offences along with removing untaxed and abandoned vehicles under the ELVIS scheme and putting out appeals for witnesses to fly-tipping incidents.

The team continue to work with colleagues in waste and community engagement on a pilot project dealing with mixed commercial and resident waste in part of the Abington area.

We are also beginning to progress work which aims to address the problems of bins on streets in the centre of Northampton. We will be sharing more details of this project in the coming months.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards team continue to progress a large number of investigations.

A car clocker investigation has progressed to an appearance in court on 1/8/23 when the accused and refused to enter a plea. Magistrates declined jurisdiction and sent the matter to the crown court for an administrative hearing on 12/9/23.

Other ongoing investigations include a complex animal welfare case involving multiple defendants, fraudulent sale of fake car service books and stamps via the internet and a doorstep crime investigation.

Animal welfare complaints being dealt with include concerns about welfare of cattle on a farm, concerns around fitness for transport of sheep from a local dealer and the unintentional illegal import of two three week old kittens from Portugal that had been shrink wrapped within a pallet on a lorry. Quarantine kennels were sourced where they will have to remain until October due to their young age.

300 Electric Clothes Dryers, 96 Electric Balloon Pumps, 11 baby highchairs, 40 Children's bed rails, prevented from going on the market in a WNC fulfilment house.

512 toys seized from a new retailer on Abington Street, all toys with insufficient labelling, mostly with no CE marking or traceable name and address of manufacturer or importer. Toys included soft toys and slime. Also 11 caps seized bearing 9 unauthorised trademarks.

Seizure of 40 unsafe toy dogs, 40 caps bearing unauthorised trademarks and many balloons with no toy safety labelling from street seller on Abington Street. The seller was Romanian and spoke no English. He returned a week later to sell further toy dogs so another 20 were seized. He was told not to return.

Seizure of illegal lasers and counterfeit phone cases from an M1 service station.

180 unsafe electric chainsaws that require destruction in a WNC fulfilment house. Unsafe tea lights that allegedly caused a fire. Alleged unsafe scatter cushion, all ongoing

To date have conducted 25 test purchases of disposable vapes using underage test purchasers. 10 premises have sold to the young people – a 40% failure rate. Disposable vapes are a national issue with concerns around unknown health implications for children using them, many illegal vapes being sold, waste and fire problems, and the general marketing and availability to children. The LGA and Chartered Trading Standards Institute have called for much stricter controls including banning disposable vapes.

TS have seized 5200 illegal vapes to date with an approximate retail value of £46,000.

Following persistent problems over a number of years with the supply of illicit tobacco and more recently the supply of illegal vapes from a Daventry premises the landlord has finally taken positive action against the tenant. The tenant has been served with legal papers, the locks will be changed and a notice of forfeiture of the tenancy will be issued.

Licensing

After lots of work from the team collating and making sense of the consultation responses the draft Taxi policy is due to be taken to Licensing Committee in early October. This policy will bring together a whole range of measure to regulate the operation of taxi and private hire drivers, vehicles and operators across West Northants.

The draft Street trading policy for West Northants has been out for public consultation and will come back to committee for approval in the coming months.

The team have been working hard over the summer dealing with large numbers of licence applications including many temporary event notices and a continually large number of applications for private hire driver and vehicle licences.

Councillor David Smith

Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services