



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

21st March 2024

COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

Safer Communities

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team are aligned to the Local Area Partnership areas for West Northants.

We are currently supporting Northants Police with a Criminal Behaviour Order on an individual causing considerable disruption in the Daventry town area as well as Northampton town centre.

Since November 2023 the team have served 12 Community Protection Warnings, 5 Community Protection Notices & 1 Criminal Behaviour Order, and have been instrumental in obtaining a Closure Order on a Known Drug dealer in Towcester. This closure Order has now been extended for a further three months.

Op Fragment has been a huge success on Southbrook, a partnership response to local crime and ASB issues and has been extended into late summer 2024, we will be using this as a blueprint to run operations in our other high crime and ASB areas going forward.

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence

16 Days of Activism aimed at preventing Violence Against Women and Girls was a huge success with 14 events held over the 16 days. The reach was far greater than the previous year, there was tremendous community engagement which has identified areas where we have been able to use partnership expertise to offer additional support. Included in this is Northampton College town centre campus which identifies a specific need among female students.

We continue to cooperate and participate in the National Evaluation of domestic abuse support in safe accommodation. We are currently working closely with local domestic abuse services to safely gather the voice of victims which is an essential part of the process.

West Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was approached in 2023 by Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse to be involved in their Crossing Pathways scheme which explores the response to Domestic Abuse within Health. We have directed this project and introduced relevant partners, which has led to recruitment of a 12-month fixed term DA Health Coordinator role sitting across NDAS and Northamptonshire ICB.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week took place in February. This was shared on social media and support was provided by experts from our Community Safety Team and

Northamptonshire Rape Crisis in the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall. This has opened further opportunities for support within Northampton job centres.

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy, and the linked action plan will be reviewed in 2024 and updates will be provided throughout the year. This will link in with the formal commissioning process of safe accommodation services which will commence in March 2024.

Serious Violence and Knife Crime

Serious Violence Strategy Launch held on 6 March, which included a video featuring Cheri Curran, mother of fatally stabbed teenager Louis-Ryan Menezes sharing the impact of knife crime.

Work continues with the County Lines Unit planning another session of raising awareness of the signs of child exploitation to local businesses and the community.

Public Spaces Protection Orders

Town Wide PSPO renewals for Northampton and Daventry were approved at Cabinet in December and the new orders came into force from 1 January 2024.

Three Northampton town centre based PSPOs have been approved for renewal (Marble Arch, Jeyes Jetty and Dunster Street) and will all come into force between January and end of March 2024. New notice signs for all PSPOs are designed and on order to be installed to replace previous signage.

A new PSPO was made on 8 January to close Emporium Way. Hoarding was installed to close the large space and includes a fire exit for adjacent businesses out onto Sheep Street and access for contractors working on the Market Square. This has been positively received from the neighbouring businesses and partners after a long period of ASB, crime and nuisance in the area.

Neighbourhood Working

St Georges Partnership - Meetings have restarted after a brief reset. The working group now will focus on a thematic approach rather than a location based one. The key themes will link with the wider work in the area including-

- Youth intervention and prevention work
- Health and wellbeing
- ASB reduction
- Community engagement

The group are working closer with the schools to provide partnership support in a contextual manner. Engagement days relating to local and national events e.g. the Great British spring clean litter pick are underway. Work with the schools to link a new safer route campaign, to the wellbeing hubs, which will highlight safe spaces for young people on their way home or of an evening continues.

Kings Heath - The partnership has been working towards supporting the delivery of multiple wellbeing projects; both with the NHS, School and the Well Northants programme. A "whats

on" newsletter is being created to highlight all of the current work and projects that are ongoing in the area, plus highlighting what services are running and when. This includes-

- Financial advice and support drop ins (NPH with HSBC)
- Strong start food bank (School)
- Wellbeing walks and coffee mornings (GP and Well Northants)
- New resident's meetings (Monthly from March at the school)
- Parents support group (School)
- Free2talk youth support sessions

Northampton Town Centre Task Group - The Nighttime economy Strategy continues to be delivered and the Purple Flag submission was successful with accreditation achieved at the end of January. The Taxi Marshals scheme started during the Christmas period and has been well received, providing support to other services and intelligence to the licensing team. The underspend in Safer Streets Funding 5 is being used to produce a Nighttime Economy video that highlights all of the safety initiatives in place including, SNO Van, CCTV, Street Pastors, ID Scanning and Taxi Marshals. Filming of these services takes place between 1 March and mid-March in key venues in the town centre with student actors being involved. Alongside this, the group is refreshing the Ask for Angela campaign.

School Engagement

Young Citizen Event - delivered on 6 & 7 February, at the Deco theatre, 700 year 6 students from 12 schools in our priority areas attended. The students engaged in workshops, watched drama performances and watched a series of presentations covering a number of community safety topics, including;

- Online Safety and Child Exploitation
- Substance Misuse
- Road and Rail Safety
- Hate Crime
- Serious Organised Crime and Knife Crime
- Fire and Water
- Crime Prevention/Personal Safety

Feedback was gained from students at the end of each topic, more than 80% of the students suggested a positive response across all the topics. Feedback was also gathered from the teachers, all of which suggested that they would like to attend the event again next year.

University Safety Talks - in February the team supported the student safety talks for the international students that joined in January. The team provided safety advice and personal safety items.

Stronger Communities

Welcoming Spaces

The Welcoming Spaces network continues to grow with 101 registered across West Northamptonshire representing a partnership approach with community and voluntary organisations, faith communities and town and parish councils.

The welcoming spaces aim to tackle loneliness and social isolation by providing residents with a local place to go where they can meet new people, socialise, and access support services

whilst being in the warm, and all within reach of where they live. Each of the spaces will choose what they wish to offer, from cups of tea to knit and natters or board game activities for example.

Since its launch in December 2022, we have had 98,667 attendees at the Warm/Welcoming Spaces, and 4,525 total referrals to organisations including Money & Debt, Housing & Homelessness, Welfare Rights, Immigrations Issues, Education, Employment & Support, Mental and Physical Health.

Outreach engagement conversations continue with WNC Adult Social Care Team, WNC Customer Services, WNC Public Health Checks/Flu & Covid Vaccinations, GP Social Prescribers, Northants Fire & Rescue, Northamptonshire MIND, Northants Police, NHFT Talking Therapies, Northants ACRE, Northants Age UK. The Rural East pilot of timetable support services continues to evolve and develop based on local need.

34 grant funding applications have so far been received with the deadline of 1 March 2024. The Winter Wellbeing Campaign promoting the Welcoming Spaces was publicised on town centre billboards and local area magazines.

A digital information pack was distributed to all, and this included cost of living support, Adult Social Care information amongst many others.

The Community Training Partnership continues to provide online courses for frontline workers and volunteers to be upskilled to help vulnerable residents.

Armed Forces Covenant Engagement Sessions have been arranged within 11 Welcoming Spaces.

Extension of Chatty Cafe Scheme to reduce isolation and loneliness - 22 out of 50 have been registered so far, in partnership with Action for Happiness.

30,000 Cost of Living Support Cards available at all Council Offices across the West amended to include NHFT's/Mind 24-hour mental health number.

Funding from Public Health secured to provide each Space with Winter Warmth Packs containing size 6-11 pair of socks, fleece scarf, thermal gloves, thermal hat, 120x150cm fleece blanket (neutral) travel mug, hot water bottle (2L, complies to BS 1970:2012) with fleece cover packed in a reusable canvas bag. 600 have so far been distributed, with a 1,000 currently being allocated among Foodbanks, Community Larders and the West Northants Food Aid Alliance, working closely with partners to determine who is experiencing fuel poverty through criteria's of long-term health condition including; an underlying illness that makes them more vulnerable in colder weather (e.g. asthma; chronic bronchitis or emphysema; coronary heart disease; stroke) or a physical or mental health condition which results in them spending more time at home. A person registered with a disability that makes them less mobile or means they need to spend more time at home. Anyone aged over 65 years old. A family with dependent children. Pregnant women, and rough sleepers.

Currently working with Integrated Care Northamptonshire's Mental Health, Learning Disabilities & Autism Lead and St Andrews Health Care who have recently been awarded the contract for the Serious Mental Illness Outreach service to improve/increase the annual physical health

checks and indicated follow-up interventions for people with SMI, and looking to see how these checks and interventions can be undertaken in the Spaces community.

Well Northants

Work continues as planned in the Well Communities, Community Development workers are active in Kings Heath, St David's (Kingsthorpe), Blackthorn and Southbrook in Daventry, who also work with inclusion groups (sex workers and Gypsy Romany Travellers).

Our new Community Development Worker started in November and is working in the Briar Hill and Semilong areas of Northampton. Engagement has started with our communities in these areas.

The team have *almost* completed another round of community grant funding, using a participatory approach where community takes the lead in deciding what projects they would like to see funded and delivered in their communities. Community voting days were held in St Davids and Kingsheath on 24 February with 85 people coming to vote for projects. 11 projects to the value of £26,000 were funded. Blackthorn Community voting day is due to be held in March, 10 projects will be considered for funding.

Gypsy Romany Travellers (GRT) – our engagement work with the community has been fed into the draft Public Health GRT needs assessment and our well Northants action plan has been aligned. We continue to work with communities at Duston park delivering adult learning courses together with adult learning colleagues. Well Northants have funded a pilot project with Read Easy, this project will support 4 adults to learn how to read.

Boating Community - the team have been working with a wide range of partners to deliver outreach and pop-up food bank services to people living on the canal system in West Northamptonshire (as continuous cruisers) 3 sessions were delivered, attendance was excellent as were some of the issues raised and topics discussed. The community are positive and willing to come forward to develop and deliver local solutions. A community engagement session will take place on 6 March in Stoke Bruere, followed by a community and partners event in April which will draw out priority's actions and recommendations.

Community Forums

Women's Business Network continues to grow and the quarterly meetings have been extremely well received. January's meeting dealt with goals and April's will move onto values.

Disabled Peoples Forum - Born 2 Perform, Britain's Got Talent Golden Buzzer winners, helped celebrate the achievements of disabled people in West Northamptonshire during the International Day of People with Disabilities (IDPWD) on 1 December, organised by WNC's Disabled Person's Forum. Alongside delivering a captivating performance, Born 2 Perform also talked about living with a disability at the event between 1pm and 3pm at Sport4Fitness, Fernie Fields Sports & Social Club, Fernie Field, Moulton, Northampton NN3 7BD. The information filled event was hosted by our very own Paul Meadows who not only represents his Sends4Dads Charity but is also one of WNC's Unison's representative who shared their personal stories of living with disabilities. Partners included Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) offering free home safety checks, and WNC providing Cost of Living advice. Representatives from Adapt Ability, Northamptonshire's Childrens Trust, and Moulton Leisure Centre were also

among the many promotional stand holders. Link to the celebration can be found here [West Northamptonshire: International Day of Persons with Disabilities featuring 'Born to Perform' \(youtube.com\)](#)



Diverse Forum - From March, the forum will move to different locations across the West, including, Northampton Town, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley. Meetings will alternate between day and evening times, plus alternate between hybrid and face to face only. The aim is to help build more working relationship across the west, and to link more community groups/services together. Chairs and support officers will review the delivery throughout to ensure the forum is maximising its reach and engagement

Youth Forum - 12 new members joined for the Induction session in February, total of 21 members on the forum from across the West. The young people voted on their main priorities (Discrimination and Spaces for young people). These priorities will help shape the forums action plan for the year and highlight a pathway for the new young people, showing them what they will be working towards for the year.

LGBTQ Forum - Work has begun on the West Northants 'Pride Northampton' event with a call for sponsors and save the date promoted. A working group met in February to discuss the new school guidance and explore providing a response to the consultation from the forum.

Community Events

Holocaust Memorial Day - On Friday 26 January we marked Holocaust Memorial Day to remember the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust under Nazi persecution and in genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur. HMD 2024 marked the 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and this year's theme is Fragility of Freedom. This

reflects on how freedom is fragile and vulnerable to abuse. Genocide never just happens, there are always a set of circumstances which occur or are created to build the climate within which it can take place.

We marked the day with dignitaries and community groups coming together for a ceremony in the Great Hall. The event commenced with refreshments and Challah Bread followed by various speakers including Lord Lieutenant James Saunders-Watson, Chairman of WNC John Shephard, WNC Leader Cllr Jonathan Nunn, Pastor Volker Landing and Cllr Sam Rumens.

We were also joined Uta Esselborn from the Gröschlerhaus (Holocaust museum) in Germany and performances on stage by Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts (NMPAT) and Northamptonshire schools. The event concluded with the laying of flowers in the courtyard.
[Holocaust Memorial Day Service, Guildhall, Northampton 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Ukraine Invasion - Two-year Anniversary - On Friday 23 February our Ukrainian families and hosts joined us to observe this anniversary of the conflict in Ukraine (Saturday 24 February). The Ukrainian flag was raised at all West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) office buildings in Towcester, Daventry, and Northampton to mark two years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

International Women's Day - International Women's Day celebration took place on Saturday 9 March with performances, stalls, workshops and the presentation of the Inspirational Woman Awards.

Resettlement Schemes

Homes for Ukraine - Approx 270 people are living in hosted accommodation across West Northamptonshire, but the total number is around 460. We are seeing more people move on now into independent living, but this is very challenging for some people due to lack of credit history and the majority of households being comprised of mothers and children. Confirmation from central government that the schemes will be extended on application for a further 18 months, but the family scheme has closed and the sponsor scheme is now more restricted.

Afghan Resettlement - We have a handful of households in temporary accommodation while we get properties ready for them and help them to secure settled accommodation. The resettlement team continues to support these families during the next step of their lives in the UK and West Northants and this will be ongoing for a three-year period.

Asylum - There is one remaining contingency hotel (MK hotel), due to close by 19 April. We are still seeing those eligible to have their claims assessed under the streamlined process to start coming through now on a more regular basis, but not in high numbers. The procurement of dispersal bed spaces continues, but to date, only 4 have been secured.

Voluntary and Community Sector and Grants

One community funding grant scheme has recently closed:

- **Youth Infrastructure Support To Create A Youth Collaboration:** South Northants Volunteer Bureau (SNVB) has been appointed by the Northamptonshire Children & Young People's Collaboration to be the host organisation for the development of a youth

collaborative, known as Young Northants, supported by the Youth Offer Board of WNC and the Young People's Foundation Trust.

In addition to a £39K grant, funded by UKSPF, WNC will support the Local Youth Partnership in Northamptonshire by creating a Youth Engagement Lead role. This role will develop, plan and deliver youth engagement, working in partnership with Young Northants and internal services and external voluntary and community youth providers, public services, existing youth forums, panels and steering groups to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard in institutions and organisations that affect their lives. The post holder will also be the lead resource from WNC for supporting the delivery of Young Northants, they will work with SNVB to establish Young Northants as an operational organisation.

Free2Talk will deliver the Youth Ambassador programme on behalf of the Young Northants host organisation (SNVB) and Young Northants by recruiting fifteen Youth Ambassadors. These Youth Ambassadors, aged 13 to 24, will represent Northamptonshire's children and young people from urban and rural areas, youth groups, schools and colleges, BAME and LGBTQIA+.

Five recently launched community funding grant schemes have closed, or about to close, and will go to the two Community Funding Panels before 31 March 2024:

- **Community Transport Grant:** Prior to the creation of WNC, interim funding arrangements were put in place to maintain the community transport arrangements until these could be aligned to meet the needs and priorities of the new Unitary Council. Following the work undertaken by the Community Transport Transformation Project, these interim funding arrangements will end this financial year. For 2025/26 and 2026/27 we will replace the above with a £950K grant scheme. £547K is funded by REPF and £60K is funded via UKSPF;
- **Debt, Money Advice and Immigration Support Fund:** Following the work undertaken by the Debt and Money Advice Transformation Project, a £770K grant scheme, over two years, has been developed to maintain and enhance the current service provision provided by VCSE organisations within West Northants;
- **Local Infrastructure Organisation Support Fund:** Following the scoping sessions around understanding our priority areas and how we would like our Local Infrastructure Organisations to operate / prioritise their activities in the future, we have launched a £260K grants scheme, over two years, for them to provide a strategic point of contact for local VCSE organisations, and to develop the local capacity of the VCSE sector to deliver against the local priorities set out in the "Live Your Best Life" strategy (2023-2033), and the other strategic priorities of WNC; and
- **Creation Of New Volunteering Opportunities Through Social Action Projects (Rounds 2 & 3):** Funded via UKSPF, we aim to award over £37K in these two rounds to increase the number of volunteers in VCSE organisations within West Northants.

REGULATORY SERVICES

Building Control

In January the First-tier Tribunal granted a consent order under the dangerous structures provisions of the Building Act in respect of the fire damaged building at 21 Bridge Street. Discussions had taken place with the owner of the building to agree the details of the works required to make the building safe and the tribunal ruled that these works should be completed by 12 April. Progress is now being made with the works.

Major changes to the law relating to Building Control come into effect from 1 April and the team are working hard to implement new processes and to ensure that businesses are aware of their responsibilities.

Health Protection

Discussions have taken place with the Food Standards Agency to agree a program of inspections of lower risk food premises which are due for inspection.

The Business Development team:

- Tender submitted for WNC pest control contract across 13 WNC owned sites plus reactive work – outcome to follow.
- Business Health, Safety & Wellbeing Forum at The Forum Office for SME businesses to provide information on how WNC can support businesses, specifically around:
 - What we offer
 - Advice
 - Wellbeing Advice
 - Support
 - Signposting to grants and funding
 - Consultancy
- Work to review business support offer started with wider HP team and moving to user research work with businesses to gain feedback. This will include training and support packages business can buy in as a one off or possibly ongoing support.
- Engagement with a possible 5 new Primary Authorities which are looking for a Council partnership.

Environmental Protection

The team have worked with colleagues across the Council to develop the draft Air Quality Action Plan for West Northants. The draft plan has been submitted to DEFRA and the public consultation on the plan closed on 17 March. The plan highlights that a great deal of work has already been carried out to improve air quality across the district and that the monitoring carried out demonstrates significant improvements in air quality across the area. The plan which will be revised to take account of comments received, outlines a series of further steps that will be taken over the coming months and years.

Environmental Crime

Following the consultation on proposals for a policy to restrict the times that waste bins and bags can be presented for collection in Northampton town centre work is progressing to draft the policy which will come to Cabinet for approval in May.

The monitored CCTV cameras and other cameras continue to yield some useful information which has been used to progress action against people responsible for fly tipping. However, many camera deployments do not yield evidence and we can also use evidence from members of the public who report fly tipping that they witness.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards team played an important role in the success of the Youth Vaping Summit which took place on the 5th February. Members of the team gave a presentation which outlined the work that they are doing with test purchasing and seizures of illegal vapes causing significant disruption to the supply of illicit vapes in the area. The team await detail on the Government plans and timeline to ban the sale of disposable vapes. Seizure of disposable vapes continues with the current total around 284,000, a retail value of approximately £2.8million.

Following on from the summit, the team continue to be engaged with Public Health and other relevant partners and are currently involved in supporting a leaflet to be shared in schools and with parents.

Investigation regarding the supply of 'clocked' cars with false service histories and MOT certificates to consumers continues. Pre-trial hearing finally went ahead at the end of January. Defendant entered "Not Guilty" pleas to all 8 charges and trial date set for April 2025.

TS officers supported by Northants Police seized a quantity of trademarked plates and stickers that were to be fixed to counterfeit gym equipment to be supplied to commercial gyms. Further enquiries ongoing.

Avian Influenza outbreaks have been very low but the risk does continue. Report of one dead swan in Long Buckby from APHA in January, no further incidents. Did some social media around reporting dead birds and registering flocks.

Following new pricing analysis and consumer research, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a drive encouraging people to use unit pricing to help their grocery budget go further. It includes a short guide for shoppers on the CMA website and a social media campaign. The short guide explains what unit pricing is and how it can help people identify the best-value grocery items instore and online, to save money on their shop. It also aims to dispel some of the assumptions that are made about pricing.

The team have also been taking part in a Website Compliance Project which has looked at traders in the home improvement sector's websites and assessing whether they are compliant with relevant legislation. They completed audits on each of the trader's websites which looked at their legal requirements and some areas of best practice which could help to improve their website.

High risk food visits continue to be completed along with sampling of foods for undeclared allergens and responding to complaints from members of the public affected by allergen incidents.

Significant staff resources have had to be allocated to deliver the move of the Trading Standards database by end of March 2024.

Licensing

Following the approval of the new taxi Licensing Policy in January the team have been working to communicate the changes that result, including the first taxi and private hire newsletter supplied to the trade and interested parties. Many of these changes come into force in April. These include a new colour for licence plates for private hire vehicles and new requirements for driver training. Procurement ongoing for garages as the new policy implements the use of external contracted approved testing stations to undertake the taxi and private hire vehicle testing requirements.

A consultation has also been launched on a new street trading policy for West Northants.

As part of the Safer Streets 5 funding, two taxi marshals have been trained to provide support and safeguarding in the night-time economy.

Film licensing policy currently with legal.

Gambling policy training to be scheduled.

Investigation into an unregistered tattooist ongoing.

Licensing team members are busy processing applications for the wide range of licences issued by the Council and to carry out investigation activities to monitor compliance with these licences.

Rise in the number of taxi and private hire licence applications which may be due to a number of different factors including an increase due to persons looking for secondary employment due to the cost of living crisis.

There are also a high number of drivers currently under review to establish if they are fit and proper to hold a licence.

Safeguarding training will be rolled out to over 1800 existing licensed drivers and new applicants over the course of the next 1 to 2 years with compliance for attending the training being managed by the licensing team.

Members of the team are also actively part of the NAFN NR3 national register working group and are attending regular meetings to assist with improving and enhancing the newly implemented legislation. The NR3 contains information relating to any refusal to grant, or revocation of a hackney carriage/private hire driver licence. This information is important in the context of a subsequent application to another authority for a drivers' licence by a person who has had their licence refused or revoked in the past

CCTV

The CCTV operation continues to provide safety and confidence to visitors, as well as providing our Police colleagues with live information and retrospective evidence that enables successful outcomes in both detecting, deterring and prosecuting crime. CCTV has been helpful in protecting people or apprehending offenders in a number of significant incidents.

We plan to work with the Police and other stakeholder to review the system to maximise its benefits over the next 12 months. This may involve changes to technology, moving cameras, removing cameras no longer needed, or adding cameras in areas of need.

Councillor David Smith

Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services