

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 11th December 2008

Subject: Action to Reduce Incidents of Physical Violence

Report of: Executive Director – Environmental Services

Contact officer: Ian Harrison 827915

Purpose / summary: To inform Cabinet of the work already done by the Council in respect of physical violence and looking at outstanding areas of concern

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: Not to inform Cabinet – Cabinet have requested this report following a Council motion

Recommendation / decision: That Cabinet notes the contents of this report

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks / Implications:

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Policy:

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? Not necessary in relation to this report. A diversity impact assessment will be carried out in respect of any interventions implemented to reduce incidents of violence

Wards affected: All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **No ***

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **No ***

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	X
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
		11.12.08	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 24 November 2008

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its October meeting Council referred the following motion to Cabinet for consideration and report back:-

“This Council notes with deep concern that violence against women causes more deaths and disability worldwide amongst women aged 15 - 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war.

This Council believes that Wigan Council and its partners should consider women's safety as part of their routine risk assessment. Some policies contain an obvious potential impact such as the physical environment; street lighting, planting along paths, the use and location of CCTV cameras; house building and provision, estate design and the routing of pedestrian walkways; the availability of public transport, particular for women who need to travel after dark.

However, this Council believes that many less obvious policies would also benefit from this inclusion in their risk assessment. (For the avoidance of doubt, this Council recognises that men can also be the victims of violence. This Council further believes that measures which will help to keep women safe will also keep men safe and so does not believe this as a divisive motion).

This Council reconfirms its commitment to the safety of women and calls upon Wigan Council and its partners to ensure that all that all policy makers consider the impact of their decisions on women's safety.”

- 1.2 Cabinet subsequently resolved to receive a further report in respect of the motion on the work already done in respect of physical violence and looking at any outstanding areas of concern

2. Background:

- 2.1 The issue of violence, in particular domestic violence has been recognised by the Council and its partners for a considerable time. Dealing with the most serious violent crime and incidents of repeat domestic violence are a priority within the Local Area Agreement.
- 2.2 Understanding the true picture surrounding Serious Violent Crime is complicated by a change to Home Office counting rules from the 1st April 2008 that has resulted in a change to the recording of certain categories of violence. However when examining recorded crime for the current year, serious violent crime as defined by the new national indicator set, which includes offences of wounding and attempted murder indicates there is a far greater risk of becoming a male victim (113) than female (18) within the Borough.
- 2.3 The Council motion identifies some of the policies and actions put in place by the Council to either specifically or consequentially reduce incidents of violence and protect citizens of and visitors to the Borough, particularly around the built environment.

- 2.4 There are also a wide range of other actions taken by the Council which have an underlying objective of reducing the risk of physical violence. For example research shows there is a clear link between excessive alcohol consumption and becoming a victim. This is particularly significant with regard to sexual offences.
- 2.5 The type of preventative activity undertaken by the Council to address these issues includes test purchasing at off licences for under age sales, monitoring and enforcement in relation to the use of unlicensed taxis and private hire vehicles and management of the night time economy in Town Centre, specifically the provision of late night Taxi Marshalls.

3. Domestic Violence

- 3.1 Domestic Violence targeted at women is a significant issue for the Council and its Crime and Disorder Reduction partners,(CDRP) as has already been mentioned it is featured in our LAA priorities.
- 3.2 The Councils contribution to the domestic violence agenda is well established. The multi agency funded CDRP Domestic Violence Co-ordinator whose responsibility it is to co-ordinate delivery of the Domestic Violence Action Plan is housed within the Community Safety Team.
- 3.3 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC') in relation to domestic abuse cases are now embedded within the borough and demonstrate excellent collaboration between agencies to protect victims and reduce re-offending.
- 3.4 The Council contributes directly to the work of the MARAC in a number of ways, for example providing resources through Private Sector Housing to improve the physical protection of a victims home which allows them and their children to remain. The Council, through the supporting people programme also facilitates the provision of refuge accommodation where it is needed.
- 3.5 The CDRP also provides a range of other interventions to support victims and reduce the risk of further offences such as Independent Domestic Violence Advocates who give personal support to victims.

4 Proposals

- 4.1 Whilst much activity has and continues to take place aimed at preventing offences of violence it is important that we do not become complacent in any way. This is clearly a multi agency responsibility and the emerging Building Safer Communities Partnership, which will take responsibility for the statutory functions of the CDRP, is establishing a dedicated Violent Crime group to ensure all appropriate activity takes place to address the needs of the Borough.
- 4.2 This thematic partnership approach is in keeping with the Government's Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008-11 (Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public, Home Office, 2008).

4.3 The Council together with its partners in the CDRP has responsibility for 9 of the 51 actions identified in the National Plan. One relates to gun crime and gang related violence, the remaining 8 are:

Objective	Key Actions	Outcome	Measurement	Timing
To ensure that local agencies work together to identify those individuals in their communities who are involved or at risk of involvement in violence, either as perpetrators or victims, and are in a position to respond appropriately and robustly to prevent offending and re-offending	26. CDRPs to develop mechanisms for sharing personal information between agencies about those involved in or at risk of involvement in violence, as part of core business	Facilitation of multi-agency information sharing and enhanced identification and management of risk; reduction in offending and re-offending as a result	GO reports to HO; PSA 23	By 2009
	27. CDRPs to develop mechanisms to share relevant information about violence between health services and the police, in order to target resources effectively	Facilitation of multi-agency information sharing; resources targeted effectively to reduce violent offending as a result	GO reports to HO; PSA 23	By 2009
To ensure that all local partnerships are equipped to develop an effective local response to serious violence	46. CDRPs to develop a problem profile for violence which provides a clear picture of the local priorities	Clear understanding of the nature of the challenge with respect to violence in local areas; improved response to tackling violence as a result	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	By end 2008
	47. CDRPs to access and, where appropriate, implement existing good practice with respect to serious violence	Improved response to tackling serious violence; reduction in these offences as a result	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	Ongoing
	48. CDRPs to develop a local action plan for violence which addresses identified local priorities	Improved response to serious violence in local areas	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	By end 2008
	49. CDRPs to develop appropriate responses to hate crime, guided by new comprehensive, cross-government hate crime strategy	Improved response to hate crime in local areas; reduction in hate crime offences and improved Criminal Justice response as a result	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	By 2009

	50. CDRPs to demonstrate to Government Offices that they are taking action to reduce the incidence of serious sexual offences, improve their investigation and prosecution, and provide effective victim care and support to minimise harm	Improved response to serious violence in local areas	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	By end 2008
	51. CDRPs to consider establishing a dedicated strategic group for violence. Where appropriate, this should be accompanied by an additional tactical group and the appointment of a dedicated violent crime lead	Improved response to serious violence in local areas	GO reports to HO; PSA 23; PSA 24	By end 2008

5. Policy Development and Legislation

5.1 Under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act, the Council and its CDRP has a duty to ensure that it does everything it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. That means that the Council needs to consider crime prevention in everything it does. Some people refer to this duty simply as 'Section 17':-

'Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it , it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (S. 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998)'

6. Conclusion:

6.1 The Council has already undertaken significant work aimed at reducing and preventing incidents of physical violence including domestic violence and it continues to do so together with its CDRP partners.

6.2 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act provides adequate assurance that in the development of all their policies the Council and its partners should consider the impact of their decisions on women's safety.