

Report to: Environment Committee

Report Ref: ENV1906
Meeting Date: 17th June 2019
Agenda Item: 12
Prepared By: Deputy Town Clerk



Subject: Substance Misuse & Anti-Social Behaviour

1.0 BACKGROUND

This report was first presented to the Environment Committee in January 2019. The Committee indicated at that time that it should be considered by the new Environment Committee following the election. It is noted that during this time the Police have raised the need for engagement on the issues of substance misuse and anti-social behaviour in the Town.

A meeting was requested with local police representatives to discuss substance misuse issues in Knutsford and the strategies employed to address this.

Councillors attending the session were aware of cannabis use and cocaine dealing in licensed premises.

2.0 PREDOMINANT ISSUES AND POLICE STRATEGIES

PCSO Nancollas and Sergeant Johnson provided information about the predominant issues which included covert use of cocaine and cannabis use in the younger generation.

To enforce the use of substances, the police must come across the active using. Targeting suppliers is considered important but it is thought that a longer-term strategy is required.

Local reporting to 101 and Crimestoppers is encouraged as there is often the view that the police are aware of what is going on, which is not always the case.

The police use warnings for younger offenders, then using an escalating approach to management of offenders in terms of prosecuting. Stricter guidelines are now in place for searching properties than previously, meaning that a strong case must be made to acquire a warrant. The police approach is a fine balance of getting intel and not scaring off offenders to other areas.

Complaints regarding drug use on the Heath have been 'nipped in the bud' by active patrols and whilst CCTV can capture activities, it cannot be used to prosecute. Enhance lighting in problem areas such as the cut through from Westfield Drive to Northwich Road is something that the police have approached Cheshire East Council about, but this has been rejected due to budgetary constraints.



The Warren Avenue allotment site was highlighted as a problem area due to its location and open access along with other problem area of the town centre and housing estates.

Licensed premises are monitored by the police who can request additional conditions to be added to licenses, such as the requirement to have door staff. Licenses can be reviewed and removed if licence holders are seen to be continually breaching licence conditions.

The use of the police sniffer dog was discussed, and it was reported that, due to the limited resource of police dogs and risk to the animals of entering busy licensed premises spaces, this was not considered the most useful approach to locating drug use in the town centre. This could be used as an approach in schools if requested.

The police approach is a fine balance of getting intel and not scaring off offenders to other areas. Undercover officers are used in certain circumstances if considered appropriate.

The police can refer into treatment services including mental health and actively engage with parents of young offenders, also liaising with schools, The Welcome and local businesses via the Pubwatch scheme.

A combined 'multi-agency' approach to the issues is considered to be the most effective way of dealing with the problems.

3.0 SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

A number of multi-agency strategies were discussed at the meeting with the setting up of a working group being a starting point.

It is suggested that the group is made up of representatives as below: -

- Police
- Knutsford Academy
- North West Ambulance Service
- Housing Associations
- Fire service/cadets
- Town Councillor(s)
- GPs (Annandale or other)
- Youth Worker (The Welcome)

Each of these groups has been emailed to see if they would be interested in being part of such a group.

The police also invited Councillors to patrol with them to gain an insight into their approach to tackling the problems. The police welcome direct contact from the Council in relation to reporting drug related offences and have invited the Council to run surgeries in partnership with the police for mutual benefit.

Other strategies/issues discussed at the meeting include the following: -

1. Youth Council (representative of demographic) – Cllr Malloy is currently looking into this following the Full Council meeting on 3rd June.



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2. Lack of affordable cinema
3. Councillor mentoring schemes (representative from each ward)
4. Youth club/diversion activities
5. Consider new users from more affluent backgrounds (involvement is seen as fashionable) - how can this be approached? (Celebrity recovery/role model?)
6. Early intervention approach – parent education courses (how to recognise signs and info about use)
7. School projects – making videos, kids in charge
8. Fire cadets/youth engagement event on the Moor
9. Skate park – what happened to this plan. Do young people really want this? Will it help or lead to more antisocial behaviour? This is something that the Mayor would like to set up as part of his aims for his Mayoral year.
10. Street pastor scheme (See Congleton, Warrington, Middlewich)
11. Youth worker (as in Poynton)

4.0 DECISION REQUIRED

The committee should consider the establishment of a working group, approval of a terms of reference and the appointment of members.

A draft terms of reference has been prepared overleaf.



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Substance Misuse / Antisocial Behaviour Prevention Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. The Working Group will consist of:
 - a. 3 councillors, determined by the Environment Committee and the Deputy Town Clerk in an advisory capacity.
 - b. A representative from Knutsford Police, Knutsford Academy, North West Ambulance Service, Great Places, Peaks and Plains, Cheshire Fire Service, GPs and the Welcome
2. Councillor membership to be reconfirmed / changed by the parent body at its first meeting at start of a new Mayoral year. The working group may invite members of the public to attend meetings in an advisory capacity on an ad-hoc usually temporary basis.
3. At its first meeting (or first in a new Mayoral year) the working group members shall:
 - a. Review these terms of reference for approval as appropriate.
 - b. Appoint an elected member as Lead Member who should ensure the entire working group's members are kept informed and involved with progress and act as the primary reporting channel back to the parent body.
4. In line with the task set by the committee, the purpose and remit of the working group is to:
 - a. Investigate and develop strategies to deter substance misuse and antisocial behaviour, principally in the younger members of the community
5. The group does not have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Environment committee or the Town Council nor should exceed its purpose and remit (above) without the parent body's sanction to a change to this Terms of Reference
6. The group reports to the Environment Committee
7. The group shall provide timely reports to the parent body in the following manner:
 - a. Verbal updates when necessary
 - b. Written report with recommendations at end of investigation
8. Meetings of the working group are not usually but may be public meetings.



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