

Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder	Council	4 April 2019

Executive Report: Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1** To inform council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio as set out below.

2. Community safety

Victim Services - performance

- 2.1** Wyre Council together with other District Authorities and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office contributes to the Pan Lancashire Victim Services commissioned in 2017 which, between April 2018 and the end of November 2018, received 858 Wyre referrals from a variety of agencies. As you would expect the vast majority of these referrals were made by the police and during this period they referred 513 cases to the service.
- 2.2** Of the 858 cases which were referred into the service 260 cases were rejected. The main reason for a case being rejected were that a safe phone contact was not provided; it was a duplicate case or the individual denied consent to be contacted. Of the remaining 598 referrals the vast majority of the victims in Wyre were identified as White British. The most affected age group were those aged between 25 and 34 and the majority of victims were female. 50% of the cases accepted by the service engaged with them, 18% of these were provided with immediate support only and 32% have been provided with ongoing support.
- 2.3** It is worth noting that in 2017/18 the service received 872 referrals between April 2017 and the end of March 2018, indicating that it will almost certainly be the case that the total number of cases referred for the current year will exceed last year's figures. In addition during 2017/18, 43% of the cases engaged with the service as opposed to 50% this year, indicating that the demand for the service is increasing.

Child sexual exploitation

- 2.4** Wyre Community Safety Partnership has obtained funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office so that AlterEgo Creative Solutions Ltd can deliver Chelsea's Story to each of the secondary schools in Wyre. Chelsea's story is a powerful production highlighting the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The production is raising awareness of the warning signs and the journey that can result in a boy or girl being exploited. Each performance is followed by a plenary session and follow up work delivered by Fylde Coast Women's Aid's specialist team WIRED. This is part of a wider project which will also include every secondary school in Fylde.
- 2.5** Wyre Community Safety Partnership believe that the project will help children and young people to recognise what is consent, grooming and sexual exploitation. The project will provide an important platform to better assist potential and actual victims of exploitation and abuse to seek help from specialist agencies and professionals who have the expertise to respond to disclosures. It is estimated, by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, that on average a child who has been abused will make seven attempts to tell an adult before any action is taken.

Lancashire Volunteer Partnership

- 2.6** At the recent meeting of the Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire a presentation was given by the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership (LVP) which works with a number of organisations within the County to better understand our communities. The partnership seeks to bring people closer together, to engage with local communities to improve lives and to reduce vulnerability whilst at the same time increasing volunteer numbers and confidence. The LVP is supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner and is already supported by Wyre Council staff and volunteers.

Community Safety Conferences

- 2.7** Together with Councillors Ballard and Barry Birch I attended a Cyber Security Conference at Ribby Hall Village. The conference highlighted the importance of choosing, using and protecting passwords, having internet security software, never revealing too much personal or financial information and the importance of not banking online when you are using unsecured Wi-Fi such as a hot spot in a cafe or hotel. A Modern Day Slavery Conference took place on 28 March and on 10 April a Business Crime Conference will be held. All these events are organised and sponsored by the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) and the Police.

3. Housing

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – One Year On

- 3.1** The main provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 were introduced on 1st April 2018. The Act placed new duties on local authorities to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage, provide more comprehensive advice to all those who approach the service and produce detailed action plans for those service users who require assistance.
- 3.2** Twelve months on from the introduction we can report on increases in demand and of the complexities of those in need of housing assistance. Although the overall number of presentations has only marginally increased (492 in 2017/18 compared with 506 to date (15 March 2019) the number of those in need of assistance has significantly increased.
- 3.3** External funding has been utilised to increase staffing levels within the Housing Options Team and fund external support through partner agencies. Further external funding opportunities are available and bids are ongoing to maximise the service the team can provide.
- 3.4** The availability of suitable accommodation continues to be a challenge and the full roll out of Universal Credit (UC) in December 2018 is proving to be a barrier to some private sector landlords in accepting prospective tenants on UC. The Housing Options Team are continuing to forge relationships with private sector landlords to increase available accommodation for service users.

Successful Bid For Homelessness Related Cold Weather Funding

- 3.5** Following a successful bid we have been awarded £6,000 as part of a Cold Weather Fund from MHCLG. The funding opportunity was launched at the start of the year with a view to assisting rough sleepers and anyone else in need of accommodation during the winter.
- 3.6** The bid was linked to the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which kicks in when the temperature drops to zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights. The fund encourages authorities to be more flexible this winter to keep rough sleepers safe, and if necessary to trigger SWEP based on factors such as wind, heavy rain and ice chill.
- 3.7** We have used the funding to provide additional temporary accommodation during SWEP provision, to provide basic furniture and food bundles and for support workers to engage with the service users to maximise benefits, signpost to any additional services required and to ascertain the root cause of homelessness to then source suitable permanent accommodation. The use of this funding is ongoing until such time as the night-time temperature is safely above the need for this extra provision.

Updates to My Home Choice

- 3.8** We have been working with Blackpool and Fylde Council's to make improvements to My Home Choice the Fylde Coast choice based lettings system for social housing. The improvements have included updates to the online system to make the application process simpler and faster and changes to enable more people to access the system to bid for properties.
- 3.9** The new system went live in January and has been well received by service users. A marketing strategy is being agreed to highlight the opportunities available for Fylde Coast residents to access social housing.

Regenda Homes

- 3.10** On 17 January myself, Cllr Lynne Bowen and officers met with Regenda Homes where we received updates on various projects in Fleetwood including on the Lighthouse View Extra Care Development and the extensive improvements underway to properties on the Flakefleet Estate. Regenda are also developing a Fleetwood 10 Year Vision Project which includes supporting employment skills and training, arts and creative learning, health and wellbeing and community inclusion. We will continue to support Regenda on these initiatives. The recent acclaimed production of Fleetwood Voice which was held at the Marine Hall was part of this project.

Proposed cuts to funding for Care and Repair (Wyre and Fylde)

- 3.11** Lancashire County Council are consulting on a proposal which might end funding for Home Improvement Services from January 2020. Care & Repair (Wyre and Fylde) relies on this funding to provide its services to elderly and disabled residents. Services include the Handyperson Service and help for clients dealing with home repairs. Residents are able to complete an online survey regarding the proposals which can be found at <https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=154998187431>.

4. Wyre Beach Management Scheme

- 4.1** The development of the studies required to produce an outline business case for the beach management scheme to the Environment Agency is ahead of programme. A short list of options has been produced. A contractor Volker Stevin has been appointed to assist with the pricing and buildability of the proposed options. Detailed topographic surveys have been undertaken of the area by the in-house team. A presentation on the scheme development to date has been given to Rossall Residents group and further wider public consultation is planned in April. Potential sources of recharge material have been investigated including surveying of the Fleetwood Island. An initial briefing note has been prepared for the Marine Management Organisation.
- 4.2** The scheme is on track for a commencement date in Spring 2020.

5. Flood Forum

- 5.1** A well-attended flood forum meeting took place on 7 March. A presentation was provided by the Wyre Rivers Trust on their work at Ainspool (Garstang / Churchtown) and potential natural solutions to assist with flooding through the retention of upstream water. This would also have the added benefits of improved water quality, less wash off of silts and positive bio diversity impacts. The Trust is also undertaking a scheme on Royles Brook near Stanah and has offered to assist within the urban catchment.
- 5.2** A response has been made to DEFRA's consultation proposals on "Improving our management of water in the environment". This is an important consultation which looks at the holistic management of water for the future. Unfortunately the consultation largely overlooked the role of District Councils.
- 5.3** Works to the Kirkland Embankment scheme, the first scheme in the country where a community group has procured and constructed a main river flood defence were substantially completed on 19 February.

6. Parking

- 6.1** New parking charges came into effect on 1 April. The changes to charges follow a consultation and review of parking and include lower cost options and multi car park tickets.
- 6.2** A report on motorhome overnight parking in Fleetwood and a business case for sluicing and provision of toilet and shower facilities has been prepared.

7. Comments and questions

- 7.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with procedure rule 11.5.