

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**  
Date: **4 October 2018**  
Title: **Report on the outcomes of the Drugs and Alcohol Task and Finish Group**  
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: N/A

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Any recommendations will be presented to the Executive at its meeting on 18 October 2018

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**Recommendations:**

1. That the Committee agrees to recommend to Executive that South Hams District Council supports and participates where possible in Police and Public Health England campaigns around drug reporting, harm minimisation and education.
2. That the Committee considers the response from the Task and Finish Group that CCTV linking into a central hub is cost prohibitive.
3. That South Hams District Council consider annual funding for youth activities/engagement as a diversionary approach to Crime and Disorder (including drug use) within the four main market towns.
4. That South Hams District Council explore the possibility of obtaining funding from outside bodies so as to enable the Council to support recommendation 3 by a part time post or by other

means.

5. That South Hams District Council proactively supports and participates in Junior Life Skills as part of a preventative approach and early intervention/education for young people.
6. That South Hams District Council supports and proactively participates in partnership working with multi agencies in order that the Council does not work in isolation to the detriment of its residents.

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 At the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018 Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting, a resolution was passed to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider the impact that illegal drug taking was having on the South Hams Community and what the district council could do to help the situation.
- 1.2 The Task and Finish Group was set up (following the 18<sup>th</sup> January Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting) with the proposed Group consisting of;
  - Cllr. Smerdon (Chair);
  - Cllr. Birch
  - Cllr. Cuthbert
  - Cllr. Green
  - Louisa Daley – Community Safety and Safeguarding Specialist
  - James Kershaw – Senior Specialist Environmental Health
- 1.3 At the 8<sup>th</sup> February Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting, terms of reference for the proposed task and finish group were circulated and approved (see appendix A).
- 1.4 The Task and Finish Group have convened on 8 occasions and also representatives have attended meetings with Parents on Drugs meeting in Totnes to gather evidence, held a meeting with Sarah Wollaston MP to discuss potential solutions, met with Inspector Chris Tapley to discuss concerns and attended Totnes Caring meetings.
- 1.5 The group has heard from Police, licensing specialists, parents and other agencies that no evidence has been found to suggest endemic underage alcohol sales.
- 1.6 Concerns remain regarding messy disposal of needles as a result of adult intravenous drug-use. The public concern raised on this matter and its impact on Council facilities, cleaning staff and associated budgets.

- 1.7 James Kershaw, Senior Specialist Environmental Health presented a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September regarding finance required to change the interior of the male toilets to reduce risk of drug taking/preparation in the cubicles. This was approved at said Committee.
- 1.8 There is concern over an increasing recreational drug use in the younger population, however this is seen as a national trend. Information on how South Hams District Council is working with partners to address this can be found later in the document.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In December 2017 following increasing reports of anti-social drug use and dangerous disposal of dirty needles in public conveniences, the Council took the decision to close the public conveniences in Totnes in order to protect the public due to a decreased ability to resource toilet cleaning over the Christmas period.
- 2.2 Following the closure local member Cllr John Green requested that a task and finish group be set up to look at the escalating problem of drugs and alcohol consumption and its impact on South Hams residents and its visitors.
- 2.3 Terms of reference (ToR) for the group were proposed and agreed at the February O&S committee (see appendix A). Notes of the meetings are available in the appendix to this document (Appendix B).
- 2.4 The group attended the Parents on Drugs meeting in Totnes Methodist Hall on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018, where they heard about the concerns of local parents in relation to their children's exposure to recreational drugs and what the panel of multi-agencies were doing to help. The aim of this was to gather evidence on the scale of the problem, as per objective 1 of the ToR.
- 2.5 A multi-agency meeting was created and held (objective 2 of the ToR) to gather evidence of the extent of the problems in relation to intra-venous drug use in the South Hams. **It was recognised by all attendees that the intra-venous drug use should be viewed separately to youth experimentation of recreational drugs.**
- 2.6 The task and finish group met with Inspector Tapley and Totnes Neighbourhood Beat Manager P.S. Tim Perrin to discuss the potential for multi-agency working to tackle the perceived escalating problem of drug consumption in Totnes. Insp. Tapley confirmed that additional resources had been approved to further continue Operation Venus (operation to disrupt the flow of drugs into the area, following the death of Nathan Woods in August

2016), there was also discussion around the removal of Youth Leisure nights in Totnes and schemes that the Police were hoping to support to provide youth distraction services.

- 2.7 The T&F group also drafted and sent a questionnaire to all South Hams secondary education facilities, to try to gather further evidence of the perception of drug and alcohol consumption by the young persons of South Hams. The questionnaire formed part of objective 1 from the ToR. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix D. No completed questionnaires were returned despite regular liaison with the schools.
- 2.8 The Caring Town Totnes group, attended by Cllrs Green and Birch, created a digital questionnaire for young people to complete. The results of this are due in late September and a verbal update will be provided at committee if the results are available.
- 2.9 On the 6<sup>th</sup> July members of the T&F group met with Sarah Wollaston to discuss the issues found and what advice and support she could offer to tackle the drug problems in Totnes; (notes of this meeting can be seen in Appendix E). There were a number of agreed actions arising from the meeting. The awareness and support from an MP for such matters formed objective 4.

### **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 Within the multi-agency meeting various agencies recognised that there was a particular problem in Totnes with "messy" users i.e. those who spray blood and dispose of needles and drug preparation paraphernalia inappropriately. An outcome of the meeting was for SHDC to produce a report for consideration by Members regarding redesign of toilet cubicles to minimise opportunity from any users. This report forms part of objective 3 from the Task and Finish Group ToR.
- 3.2 The group recognised that the standard operating practice at the local needle exchange was encouraging the disposal of "clean" syringes and equipment, as the standard pack consisted of 40 syringes and users were not wanting this volume.

Various options were discussed and an action plan was agreed which consisted of Devon County Council (Public Health England) funding a trial "pick and mix scheme" to minimise needle waste from the needle exchange. This action plan forms part of objective 3 of the Task and Finish Group ToR. The scheme is the only one in Devon and is based on a model from Penzance, Cornwall. A report was recently produced which provides an update on the scheme which has had a positive response (appendix C)

- 3.3 The Police highlighted that the design of the toilets did not discourage illicit drug use, and their Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) produced a report for the group to consider. Objective 3 of the ToR was completed by obtaining the ALO report and James Kershaw, Senior Specialist brought a separate report to this committee in September identifying potential improvement to the conveniences and the associated costings for this.
- 3.4 During the meeting anti-social behaviour powers held by the Council were discussed, and it was agreed that South Hams District Council would commence the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) escalation process on those "messy" user individuals that agencies were aware of. Senior Case Management work began on this and 3 individuals were identified and entered into the ASB escalation process.
- 3.5 As part of the meeting the use of drugs by young people was discussed. This is a different cohort of people to those highlighted above. Diversionary activities for young people were discussed, as in Totnes particularly there appeared to be a gap in provision. This had been highlighted by Police following the ending of the Youth Leisure Nights in Totnes.

A sub group of the Task and Finish Group met with representatives from the Councils Leisure provider, Fusion. A way forward was agreed with Fusion and a local youth group provider, Youth Genesis. Funding has been secured from the following who support the scheme. This forms part of objective 4 of the ToR:

- Community Safety Partnership
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- South Hams District Council (Members Locality Fund)
- Devon County Council (Members fund)
- Totnes Town Council
- Tadpool

A start date of 28<sup>th</sup> September has been set to launch Totnes Youth Leisure Nights which will be open to all young people at the Leisure Centre on Friday evenings between 7-9pm. Work has started to undertake press releases in order to promote the Youth Leisure Nights across mainstream and social media.

- 3.5 Partnership working continues with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to educate young people and engage with treatment agencies at a strategic level to influence commissioning through Devon County Council. Appendix F is the Local Delivery Plan from the CSP showing the Drug and Alcohol priorities and actions to which South Hams District Council contribute. One of these is a project identified through the CSP's close working with secondary schools and the highlighted gaps and inconsistencies within the Personal, Social and Health Education faculty. A

resilience programme has been funded through Devon County Council and training for schools commences in October 2018.

- 3.6 Following the T+F meeting with Sarah Wallaston MP the "giving back scheme" and promotional poster have been developed, with close working with Caring Town Totnes. The poster lets people know where they can give money if they want to help local homeless people or those in need, rather than giving the money direct to people begging on the street.

#### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1 The option of the installation of CCTV systems in the Town centres and other high risk locations was considered. Officers attended a meeting held with an officer of the Police Crime Commissioners Office. The meeting was advised that the average cost of CCTV was £50,000 for up to 6 cameras and then an additional cost of £2000 per camera for the monitoring of the cameras by trained operatives for approximately 40 hours per year.
- 4.2 Whilst the benefit of CCTV in preventing crime is well established, it was felt that the costs were prohibitive to the local authority providing CCTVs in the town centres.
- 4.3 With regards to funding for youth nights, the removal of youth engagement activities (particularly in Totnes) has accompanied an increase in reports of anti-social behaviour. There is no statutory duty on the County Council or on South Hams District Council to provide these services. However, Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act states:

"...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,

(a) crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and

(b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area

and

(c) re-offending in its area"

It is impossible to determine the financial cost of the impact that anti-social behaviour has on our community. However, the emotional cost to residents is well documented in their concerns and subsequent contact with Ward members, which has resulted in the creation of this Task and Finish Group.

- 4.3 The cost of provision of a “youth night” at local leisure centres including youth support workers, hire of venue, hire of specialist sports equipment and commissioning of qualified sports staff per annum is estimated to be £9,684.
- 4.4 It is recognised that this is a significant amount of money for a community or the local authority to find, therefore consideration could be given to how these costs could be reduced through negotiation with our leisure contract provider and others.

## 5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 For South Hams District Council to adopt the contents of the report from the Task and Finish Group and to agree the recommendations at the head of the report.
- 5.2 It is clear that there is no simple solution to the complex issue of drugs in our society. South Hams District Council is one agency with responsibility to ensure public safety. The need to work in partnership with our residents, Devon and Cornwall Police, Schools, Public Health and others with a cohesive, targeted response is evident in order to ensure:
- monitoring of substance misuse
  - recommendations to clinical commissioners
  - open dialogue through encouraging reporting of incidents
  - partnership working with to share professional knowledge
- 5.3 For the multi-agency group around needle finds, set up by the Task and Finish Group to continue as appropriate.

## 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 District Councils are required to work with other agencies including the Police to reduce crime and disorder in their localities. This duty is discharged through the Council’s involvement within the South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership.
Financial		There are associated costs in relation to costings for alterations for the conveniences (a separate report has been presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2018)

Risk		Reputational risk to the Council if recommendations overlooked following the six month research and information collation by the Task and Finish Group.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None foreseen.
Safeguarding		South Hams District Council has a duty to safeguard residents as far as is practicable.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		To ensure that South Hams Council complies with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as stated above within legal/governance
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		As above
Other implications		None foreseen

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group

Appendix B: Meeting notes

Appendix C: Pick and Mix Report (published September 2018)

Appendix D: Questionnaire

Appendix E: Summary of the Action Points arising from the meeting held with Sarah Wollaston MP

Appendix F: Community Safety Partnership Local Delivery Plan information regarding Drugs and Alcohol

#### **Background Papers:**

None