

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6 January 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR MICK DEBENHAM - REGULATORY

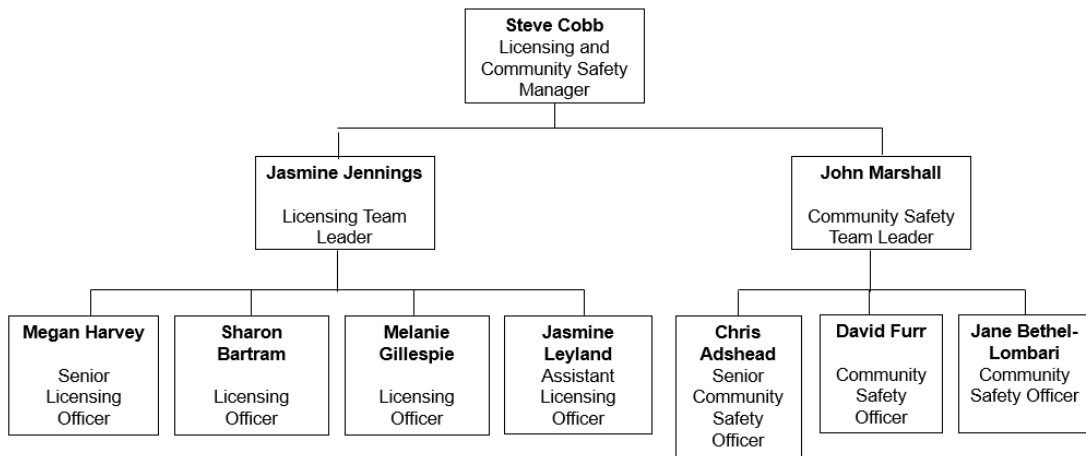
PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this Information Note is to provide the committee with an overview of the work undertaken by the community safety team.
- 1.2 The Information Note will also highlight the impact of the additional officer and new budget approved by Full Council for 2025/26.

2. TEAM OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The community safety team sit within the licensing and community safety team in the Regulatory Directorate.



- 2.2 The new officer for 2025/26 is the senior community safety officer.
- 2.3 There are some synergies between the two teams which allow officers to work together on certain issues.
- 2.4 The community safety team are the Council's first point of contact for partnership working and information sharing with Hertfordshire Constabulary.
- 2.5 The team are responsible for the administration and chairing of the Community Safety Partnership Joint Action Group.
- 2.6 The licensing and community safety manager is the Council Lead for the PROTECT and PREVENT strands of the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy.

- 2.7 The community safety team leader represents the Council on the CCTV Partnership management group.
- 2.8 The community safety team are also responsible for:
- Abandoned vehicles
 - Fly-tipping
 - Littering
 - Dog fouling
 - Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
 - Unauthorised encampments
 - Hate crime

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 Prior to 2025/26, the two community safety officers worked primarily on envirocrime but also assisted the community safety team leader with ASB issues.
- 3.2 This resulted in most ASB work being reactive rather than proactive, and the fly-tipping resource being insufficient.
- 3.3 The addition of a senior community safety officer has strengthened the team and now enables it to be more proactive, both with ASB and fly-tipping.

Fly-tipping

- 3.4 Increased patrols are now taking place at fly-tipping hotspots which has received a positive response from our customers.
- 3.5 Two recent joint working operations have taken place with the Hertfordshire Constabulary Rural Operations Support Team to target fly-tipping hotspots. This resulted in the seizure of a vehicle.
- 3.6 Since 1 April 2025, the team have issued 56 sanctions to the end of November comprising of fixed penalty notices, community protection warnings/notices, or prosecutions. The previous highest annual total was 54 which has already been exceeded with 4 months remaining.
- 3.7 There has been 3 successful court prosecutions this year, 1 for an abandoned vehicle and 2 for fly-tipping. Additionally, there are 3 outstanding warrants for suspects that have failed to appear at court and one ongoing case.
- 3.8 Joint working is being planned with neighbouring authorities to prevent cross-border fly-tipping

ASB and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- 3.9 With the new community safety budget allocation of £10,000 the team has been able to undertake proactive work to tackle ASB by engaging with and educating children.
- 3.10 During September Freshers Week, 4 separate Women's Safety Talks were held at Emil Dale Academy in Letchworth. Approximately 250 male and female students attended to learn about the importance of women's safety receiving positive feedback from the Academy.

- 3.11 In November, the team were the main sponsor of a Crucial Crew event that ran for 2 weeks. Over 1,000 year 6 primary school children in North Herts attended to receive educational training in a range of personal safety topics including online safety, bullying, railway safety, drugs, alcohol, and basic cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- 3.12 Work is ongoing with the Educational Support Centre in North Herts to produce 6 short 'Tik-Tok' style video clips to warn about the dangers around alcohol, drugs, sexting, cyber-bullying, smoking and vaping. These videos are being written and produced by the children to ensure the format is one that will capture the interest of children. These videos will be made professionally using actors from the Emil Dale Academy.
- 3.13 In addition to targeting children to raise awareness at an early age, a Women's Safety Talk was also held at the Council Offices in June that was open to residents. Over 50 residents and staff attended, both male and female, with a positive response. It is hoped to organise more of these talks around the district in due course.
- 3.14 The team have worked with colleagues in the licensing team to promote the roll-out of the Women and Girls Safety Charter. The Charter is now in operation in Hitchin and Letchworth, with Royston currently being targeted. Further work will include Baldock and the villages to help ensure North Herts remains a safe place to visit as part of the night-time economy.

Other successes

- 3.15 In July, the team applied for and was granted a Closure Order for a vape shop in Royston that was selling unlawful products. North Herts was the first local authority in Hertfordshire to achieve this and has already been asked to assist other local authorities based on its experience. This was a superb partnership working operation between the community safety team and Hertfordshire Trading Standards.
- 3.16 To address youth-related issues on the Jackmans estate, the team provided funding to launch Jackmans Youth Club.
- 3.17 Existing mobile CCTV locations were limited due to new restrictions on the placing of cameras on street furniture. Having undertaken a review of ASB hotspots in conjunction with Hertfordshire Constabulary, funding has been used to upgrade street furniture in current hotspots to allow for the installation of mobile CCTV.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The team strongly believe that a more targeted approach at fly-tipping hotspots, in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary and neighbouring authorities, can have a significant impact on current high fly-tipping statistics.
- 4.2 Additionally, one of the best ways of reducing ASB and VAWG is to educate children at an early age.
- 4.3 The £10,000 budget and additional officer has allowed a range of proactive work to be undertaken in tackling fly-tipping, ASB and VAWG that was previously unable to be delivered. Having a budget also opens up the ability to bid for external funding which is easier to obtain when you have match-funding opportunity.
- 4.4 2025/26 has been an excellent start but there is so much more the Council could do with an increased budget utilising existing staffing resource. More engagement with schools and colleges, more resident safety talks, targeted joint working at fly-tipping hotspots, increased fly-tipping enforcement, to name a few.

- 4.5 One area where the team can improve is public engagement, specifically letting our customers know what we are doing to improve the district. This is also the case with keeping Councillors informed. Feedback has been received as part of the biannual community safety survey that customers would appreciate understanding more about the work undertaken and some evidence that their survey contributions are being listened to.
- 4.6 The one area out of the team's control is the frustratingly low sanctions given by the courts for fly-tipping. A prime example is where an offender is offered a fixed penalty notice (FPN) but opts to go to court, where the court issues a fine less than the FPN value and only partial costs. It makes it very difficult to use press releases of prosecutions as a deterrent when the sanctions are not prohibitive.

How can the Overview & Scrutiny Committee assist the team?

- 4.7 The team would like the committee to endorse its work and recognise the additional proactive work being undertaken by the new budget allocation.
- 4.8 The committee comments on this report, and any suggestions on how the service could be improved would be welcomed.
- 4.9 The licensing team provide an annual report to the Licensing and Regulation Committee which includes:
- Comparative data over a 5-year period (applications, licences, service requests, enforcement actions, etc)
 - A summary of work undertaken (policies, engagement, service improvement, etc)
 - An overview of planned work for the following year

Would the committee find it beneficial to have a similar annual report on the community safety service?

5. CONTACT OFFICERS

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