

**Report to Audit and Governance Committee 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 on actions taken in relation to key recommendations made in the audit report relating to the audit of Project Solace**

**Lead Officer: Anne Brinkhoff – Corporate Director**

**Presenting officers:**

- **Ruth Saunders – Community and Wellbeing Manager.**
- **Lloyd Griffiths – Head of Communities.**

**Summary of Audit Area**

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) covers a wide range of activity that can have a significant negative impact on people's lives on a daily basis, affecting them as an individual, their community or their environment. It is widely recognised that single agencies cannot tackle ASB alone and there is a need to work in partnership to address these issues.

In Gloucester, Project Solace, a multi-agency team between Gloucester City Council (GCC) and Gloucestershire Constabulary brings agencies together to deal with ASB involving homeowners, private landlords and tenants, and ASB in public places. Project Solace is currently in a process of transition, as GCC took over the operational day-to-day running of Project Solace (from Gloucester City Homes) in 2016. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) is due to join the partnership from January 2018 and structural and staffing changes have taken place within the team to accommodate a wider partnership, called Urban Solace.

**Summary Terms of Reference of the Audit**

This audit reviewed the Council's role within the Project Solace partnership to provide assurance that:

- The partnership's financial governance and reporting arrangements are in place and effective; and
- ASB is being handled appropriately in line with the Project Solace objectives and service level agreement.

Areas for improvement and development will be considered in the transition to the new and extended partnership model.

**Risks**

- ASB is not dealt with effectively between agencies causing distress to individuals affected by ASB and reputational damage to the Council.

## Key Findings

- The Project Solace partnership (GCC, GCH and Gloucestershire Constabulary) was formed in April 2010, with existing ASB teams co-locating under the management of GCH. However, in 2016 the involvement of GCH ceased and the management of Project Solace moved to GCC, with staff co-locating within the council offices.
- Referrals to Project Solace can be made through a variety of channels (e.g. from the Police, individual reports via the Council's Customer Service Contact Centre, or from other Council departments).
- Project Solace also delivers Street Aware (operational aspect of Gloucester's Safe and Attractive Street Policy, relating to tackling begging in Gloucester city centre).
- Key staff are aware of and refer to Project Solace; however there may be opportunities to expand engagement activity to ensure appropriate links with other schemes designed to tackle ASB, street begging and homelessness are in place.
- In April 2017 Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) Cabinet approved a proposal for Cheltenham to become a member of the partnership. At the point of Cheltenham joining the partnership it will become known as Urban Solace.
- This expansion receives support from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in the form of £22,500 per annum for a period of four years. This forms 50% of the costs of a Senior ASB Officer / Solace Team Leader who will be responsible for the management of Solace teams at both GCC and CBC. The additional sum is being funded equally by each Council (£11,250).
- Ongoing delays have been experienced regarding the implementation of Solace and it is now anticipated that the extended Solace partnership will be in place early in the New Year (January / February 2018) although definitive timescales are still to be confirmed. Consequently there is less line management performance oversight currently available for the existing arrangement due to staffing structural changes.
- There is no Governance Board in place for the current Project Solace arrangement; however the new arrangements will see a Governance Board with clear terms of reference and membership to commence in spring 2018.
- A Solace Decision Making Forum meets at regular intervals and is attended by representatives of all partners. This meeting focuses on

the development of Solace, and whilst progress has been made towards Solace implementation, there remain key actions outstanding including:

- The Senior ASB Officer / Solace Team Leader commencing in post;
  - The completion and approval of the Service Level Agreement and key information including funding, governance, role and commitment of each partner, performance monitoring / review arrangements, security and confidentiality, budget and billing, communications, business continuity and complaints;
  - The Information Sharing Agreement being agreed and signed by all partners; and
  - The development of the Solace ASB, Hate Crime and Incident Policy and key staff guidance documents.
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- Quality assurance sampling is not carried out to ensure cases are being dealt with appropriately and areas for improvement or areas of best practice identified.
  - Performance reporting is not generally carried out on Project Solace activity or presented to management, the exception being the 'Street Aware' aspect which was reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6 months following implementation.
  - Key performance indicators and other measurable outcomes to be reported on are still to be agreed between partners. Updates to the PCC are a condition of funding.
  - Future funding arrangements enabling the continuation of Solace (post the PCC grant funding contribution) are unknown at this stage and will need to be discussed and agreed by all partners.

## **Action taken as at 05.03.2018 or proposed**

### **Recommendation 1**

The Solace Team Leader to identify and liaise with other schemes working to reduce ASB to ensure knowledge and information is shared and appropriate cases are referred to Solace.

### **Management response**

The incoming Solace Team Leader plans to visit other Local Authorities delivering partnership projects around ASB to increase learning and the effectiveness of Solace for Gloucester and Cheltenham.

The Solace Officers are currently working with the police to trial a 'queuing system' which will help officers to prioritise and for the Force Control Room to refer appropriate cases to us.

Reviewing best practice and processes will be an ongoing task for the Team Leader when she is in her full time role.

### **Update: 05.03.2018**

The Solace Manager commenced in post at the beginning of February 2018 but benefitted from a period of handover stretching back to Autumn 2017. Through membership of RESOLVE and being linked in to the Christine Graham organisation Solace staff will receive up to date guidance and best practice from across the Country. The Solace Team Leader represents the team at several key multi agency partnership meetings including Street Aware Gloucester, Restorative Gloucestershire, Gloucester Stronger & Safer Partnership and the Aston Project/Great Expectations. In addition members of Solace including the Team Leader would form part of multi-agency case specific meetings. It is through this wide range of forums that the work of Solace is publicised and in turn we can understand how other organisations operate so that synergies can be identified.

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### **Recommendation 2**

A Governance Board should be formed as soon as possible. Attendees from each partner organisation should be of a similar managerial level and be suitably removed from the day to day operational Solace activity in order to provide independent review, scrutiny and partnership decision making.

### **Management response**

Once Solace goes live as a project across Gloucester and Cheltenham (planned for the end of January), the current 'Decision Making Forum' members will become the Governance Board. Membership will be Ruth Saunders, Community Wellbeing in Gloucester, Sarah Clark, Public and Environmental Health Team Leader for Cheltenham and Tim Wood, Inspector for Gloucestershire Constabulary.

Update: 05.03.2018

A Governance Board is now in place and met on 23<sup>rd</sup> February for the first time. An information sharing agreement was signed off at this meeting and final changes are being made to a Service Level Agreement and which it is aimed to sign off at the next Governance Board meeting. Structure charts will be provided on the evening for further information.

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### **Recommendation 3**

The Solace Team Leader should undertake quality assurance sampling to ensure cases are being dealt with appropriately, any areas for improvement, and areas of best practice identified. Key themes could be reported periodically to the Governance Board (when in place).

#### **Management response**

This had happened previously but due to the project not having a full time Team Leader this was not possible. Regular sampling and quality assurance will be carried out by the incoming Team Leader as part of their role.

Update: 05.03.2018

The Solace Team Leader holds regular performance meetings with their staff at which a selection of cases are discussed and reviewed in order to support officers but also to ensure consistency across the team. In addition all cases are reviewed by the Team Leader before they are closed down and where enforcement action is proposed.

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### **Recommendation 4**

A performance reporting regime agreed upon by all partners should be introduced and performance information should be reported the Governance Board (once formed).

#### **Management response**

Training has been arranged with staff from the company who provide the information management service (HUB) used by Solace. HUB are in the process of setting up standard performance reports at the click of a button and in-depth reporting is being developed with Solace team leaders. A piece of work is being undertaken throughout January to improve the use and data input/analysis of HUB, so that more accurate reporting can take place. Performance will also be recorded through management of the Solace Team Leader by Gloucester City Council and their Covalent system. The SLA specifies that performance reporting will take place at each governance board meeting; this will be part of the Solace team leader role once in post.

Update: 05.03.2018

A suite of KPIs are currently being developed for sign off at the next Governance Board meeting with all partners aligned in respect of their thinking.

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**Recommendation 5**

A partnership risk register is developed / reviewed at future Governance Board meetings.

**Management response**

A risk register will be developed by and be overseen by the Governance Board, with input from the Solace team leader.

Update: 05.03.2018

Risk is a standard item on the Governance Board agenda and initially discussion has been around data sharing and business continuity. A partnership risk register is currently being developed and will be taken to the next Governance Board meeting for discussion and sign off.