

Community Safety Briefing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Monday 27th November 2023

Gloucester City Council's Community Safety Work

The City Council has a statutory duty to address community safety issues and to convene a community safety partnership. Ours is called the Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership (SSGP) and is well attended by partners from across crime and disorder agencies as well as health and wellbeing colleagues.

The Council employs one Community Safety lead officer (the Community Wellbeing Team Leader for community safety and engagement) who administrates the SSGP and delivers most of the Council's community safety work. Community Safety and Engagement are strongly linked, for example we know that people who feel well connected and engaged in their communities are less likely to become a victim or perpetrator of crime. Our community safety and engagement work has an ethos of strengths based working, where we work with communities to use what is strong to address what is wrong, and we support resident led action in order to make our communities safer.

The community safety and engagement section of the Community Wellbeing Team has doubled in size (from 4 to 8) in 2023, thanks to external funding that has been secured. We have also commissioned a key partner to lead on an in-depth piece of community safety work in lieu of recruiting a ninth officer. This has helped us focus on some essential areas of work including youth engagement, youth violence prevention, and safer spaces.

It has been an exceptionally busy year for community safety and we are also in the process of updating our SSGP priorities with the aim of writing a five year partnership strategy to address crime, disorder and its root causes in our City between 2025-2030.

External Funding

The community safety lead has secured £1.08M of external funding since 2021 to enable the Council to deliver on it's community safety work. This figure does not include match funding in kind, secured via support from partner agencies in project delivery. In addition, we have also directed £95k of further external funding, through the Strengthening Local Communities fund, to support community safety and engagement work.

Funding breakdown:

Amount	Source	Expenditure
£440k	Safer Streets 3	mainly for community safety infrastructure (lighting and CCTV) but included allowances for community activity fund and engagement work.
£92k	Safer Streets 4	split of community safety infrastructure, community safety surveying, and Street Aware Lead Officer
£75k	via SSGP partners	youth violence prevention work including youth, partner and community engagement and the development of a 5 year strategy. We are exploring person centred funding for young people and their families as part of this

£217k	Shared Prosperity Fund	recruitment of Safer Spaces Officer, and including community activity fund grant pot and development of an engagement platform
£184k	Safer Streets 5	including £30k for youth peer research project, £70k for target hardening and £84k for hotspot officer team.
£95k	SLC	for Youth Engagement Strategy Officer, community engagement and to support safer spaces and youth violence prevention work

Key Community Safety work in 2023

Street Aware work and employment of Street Aware lead officer

Street Aware is our partnership approach to dealing with street-based nuisance; primarily street drinking this year but has also included begging, drug use and anti-social behaviour. The Street Aware approach is “engage, support, enforce” and is heavily reliant on partnership resourcing to be successful. Street Aware has been ongoing since 2016 and whilst the general issues we see, and the root causes that contribute to them, are largely the same each year, we experience different challenges in delivery each year.

In January 2023 we were able to recruit an externally funded Street Aware Lead Officer post. We were fortunate to recruit a local PCSO who already had involvement and knowledge of Street Aware and could get started straight away. Whilst the officer has delivered on a huge amount of work this year in terms of casework, communications and strengthening partner relationships, there have also been challenges and plenty of learning for us as the lead agency with regards to how the partnership was working on the ground and how it could be improved. This has included lack of reporting and data, unrealistic expectations of the tools and powers available and partnership challenges around resourcing and working together. We have noted these areas for improvement and are using them to reshape our work going forwards. The lead officer’s secondment comes to an end in December and we were unfortunately unable to secure additional funding for the role to continue, however we are working on a memorandum of understanding for partner agencies to strengthen commitments and resourcing of the Street Aware approach.

In addition to the above, we experienced several change resistant individuals through Street Aware this year and identified a need for some intensive enforcement led work. We were able to repurpose some underspent external funding to create Op Ebrus, a two-month intensive zero-tolerance approach to street drinking in the city centre. Op Ebrus headlines:

- **1,302** individual instances of PSPO engagement / offers of support.
- Seized **563** vessels of alcohol with an approximate value of **£1,300**.
- **64** named individuals engaged with:
- 18 only engaged with once and no more issues.
- 21 engaged with between 2 and 5 times.
- Top 3 offenders engaged with 38, 39 & 41 times respectively.
- In general offers of support were not accepted. Most active engagement was around housing, where support was given where it was available.
- Op was successful due to Council and Police partnership management and daily returns
- Enforcement was much lower when Neighbourhood Policing were not on
- 33 instances of seizures from “unknown person”, with 45 instances of engagement with “unknown person” highlighted concerns around partners following Street Aware approach

- 3 Injunctions obtained during Op Ebrius & one just before op started
- Very low levels of reporting from businesses
- Council have seen a lack of any reporting related to Op Ebrius since October.

Following on Op Ebrius we've been successful in bidding to the Home Office Safer Streets 5 fund to secure an additional £84k to fund hotspot officers for the wider City over the next year. We are currently working on the agreements and resourcing logistics but the officers will work closely with Solace, the Council and Neighbourhood Policing and will be able to deploy to hotspot areas as and when they come up, such as Kingsholm and Sinope Street.

Safer Spaces and Safer Streets funding from the Home Office and shared prosperity fund

A Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) grant has enabled us to recruit a Safer Spaces lead officer within the community engagement team on a two-year fixed term. The officer will cover the entire city, engaging with communities on where they do and don't feel safe, hoping to understand why and to duplicate what's good in areas that people feel might not be so good. We have recently launched a community safety survey and are in progress with a comms plan for this. The results of the survey will enable us to direct other external funding that we have secured; £70k of target hardening money to spend between now and March 2025 on things such as CCTV, lighting, and other environmental improvements as necessary.

The SPF funding also includes a £25k pot of small grants to support community led action across the city in order to make our spaces safer, more welcoming and inclusive. The framework for this grant funding is currently being drawn up and we will allocate the money in line with strengths based working and public health approaches.

Future work includes the development of a user-friendly engagement and consultation platform, and we are also supporting Council colleagues with Green Flag status for Gloucester Park by assisting community led action in the park.

Youth violence prevention and youth engagement

With funding pooled from across the Community Safety Partnership, we commissioned Young Gloucestershire to lead on a large-scale partnership project around youth violence prevention. We have held subgroup meetings and community engagement throughout this year, worked with partners and pulled together research to create a comprehensive information document and a draft strategy on how we could tackle youth violence in Gloucester over the next 5 years. We believe strongly in co-production and partnering with young people and community members on issues that affect them directly, so over the course of 2024 we will continue hosting 'Theory of Change' workshops and engagement sessions with residents and partners to truly co-produce a workplan to help us deliver on the strategy. With youth violence issues linking with county lines drug supply, fear of violence, peer pressure, health inequalities and deprivation there is a big task ahead of us but we are confident in our shared approach and have identified these themes for our future work:

- Children & Young People: Reducing Harm (Keep Young People Safe)
- Children & Young People: More Opportunities (Empower Young People) –
- Supporting families
- Strengthening Communities

We are working closely with the OPCC Serious Violence Duty lead as well as partners from safeguarding, police, education and many more.

Alongside the youth violence prevention work, we recruited a Youth Engagement Strategy lead officer with external Strengthening Local Communities funding on a three year part time fixed term post until March 2026. They are leading on engagement with young people as well as VCS and agencies who support young people. Ultimately their role is to develop the City Council's strategy for engaging young people, on issues that are important to the community but also in relation to work experience, employment, and Council priorities. Part of this work involves bringing together colleagues internally to improve our ways of working and make us more accessible and approachable to the young people.

We have also secured £30k to launch a youth peer research project over the next 18 months. We will recruit (by referral) and support up to 6 young people with paid opportunities who will help us to co-produce work with young people across Gloucester. This primarily links in to youth violence prevention, but due to taking a public health approach will touch on many issues.

Exploring public health approaches to tackling crime and ASB

We adopt the public health approach in our community safety work, which revolves around the idea that prevention is better than cure.

The public health approach is about partners working together and using our combined resources and influence to effect change. It means looking at the whole system and how different parts of it work together, constantly learning and checking how things are going, working together with others, leading and cooperating, involving the community, having a common goal and way of governing, and understanding the importance of local knowledge in shaping our approaches.

The public health approach uses three tiers of intervention:

- Primary prevention – preventing a problem in the first place.
- Secondary prevention – intervening early when a problem starts to emerge to resolve it.
- Tertiary prevention – reducing the harmful consequences of a problem and managing it as best as possible.

In terms of our community safety work, the public health approach applies in the following ways:

- Commitment to a system-wide approach underpinned by mature and committed partnership arrangements
- Interventions are guided by evidence and informed by data
- Focused on a defined population, often with a health risk or inequality in common.
- The approach is with and for communities, reflecting the voices and experiences of the communities served. This should also involve taking a trauma-informed approach
- Focused on long-term impact, acting on the root causes of the problem as well as short-term consequences and emphasising early intervention

A public health approach involves multiple tiers of intervention depending on risk level

