

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**Tuesday 30 August 2022 at 7.30 pm**  
**Council Chamber - Civic Centre**

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions
2. Declarations of Interest  

To receive Councillors' declarations of interest (if any) in relation to any matters on the agenda.
3. Minutes (Pages 3 - 7)  

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022.
4. Matters arising
5. Written questions from members of the public  

To receive any questions from members of the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
6. Written questions from Councillors  

To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
7. Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Scrutiny Committee  

To consider responses (if any) of the Cabinet to reports and recommendations from the Committee.
8. Housing and Accommodation Requirements for Adults with a Moderate/Severe Learning Disability - Update on Implementation of Recommendations (Pages 8 - 15)
9. Community Safety Strategy - Pre-scrutiny (Pages 16 - 38)  

Councillor Joel Charles will be in attendance.
10. Climate Change Strategy - Pre-scrutiny  

Councillor Alastair Gunn will be in attendance.
11. Council Home Working - Initial report (Pages 39 - 46)

12. Work Plan (Pages 47 - 48)

To review the Committee's work plan for the current year.

13. References from Other Committees

14. Matters of Urgent Business

Such other business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be received as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances to be specified in the minutes.

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON**

12 July 2022

7.30 - 8.37 pm

**PRESENT****Committee Members**

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)  
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Nick Churchill  
Councillor Colleen Morrison  
Councillor Matthew Saggars  
Councillor Stacy Seales  
Councillor Lanie Shears

**Also Present**

Councillor Russell Perrin  
Councillor Dan Swords

**Officers**

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support  
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Danielle Pritchard.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

It was explained that contact information for the Police Officers assigned to each ward had been provided at a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner event held at Latton Bush Centre. The details would be provided to committee members.

The Chair expressed his disappointment that the visual presentation of activity presented by the Police to the Committee at the March meeting still had not been forwarded by the Police to members of the Committee as promised.

5. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

6. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

7. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED** that the following response was noted.

- a) Response of the Cabinet to Accept the Recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee from the Review of Policing and Community Safety

8. **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23**

- a) Discussion with the Leader

The Leader outlined the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy. In response to questions he said that the Corporate Strategy would be reviewed in Autumn, and that the Administration was aiming to achieve all short term aims set out in the Strategy by the end of the calendar year.

The Chair thanked the Leader for attending and said the Committee would consider areas it felt value could be added through the scrutiny process.

- b) Agreement of Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan for the 2022/23 municipal year.

**RESOLVED** that the work plan was agreed as appended to the minutes.

9. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22**

The Committee received the annual scrutiny report for 2021/22.

**RESOLVED** that the report was recommended to Full Council that the report be noted.

10. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

11. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

## Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022/23

Work	Tuesday 12 July 2022	Tuesday 30 August 2022	Wednesday 16 November 2022	Tuesday 7 February 2023	Tuesday 14 March 2023
Policing and Community Safety Annual Review				Agreement of questions	Q&A with Police
Housing and Accommodation Requirements for Adults with a Moderate /Severe Learning Disability		Update on implementation of recommendations			
Allotments					
Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment					
Online Gambling	Review Submission Form				
Implementation of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Review Submission Form			Report	
Council Home Working	Review Submission Form	Report			
GP Practices	Review Submission Form				
Parking Permits	Review Submission Form				
Hate Crime	Review Submission				

	Form				
Notice Boards	Review Submission Form		Report		
Veolia Contract	Review Submission Form				
Garage E Charging	Review Submission Form				
Climate Change Strategy		Pre-scrutiny			
Health and Wellbeing Strategy			Pre-scrutiny		
Economic Development Strategy					Pre-scrutiny
Community Safety Strategy		Pre-scrutiny			

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 30 AUGUST 2022

**TITLE:** HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULTS WITH A MODERATE/SEVERE LEARNING DISABILITY – UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**LEAD OFFICERS:** JAMES GARDNER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR REGENERATION, (01279) 446449

CARA STEVENS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HOUSING OPERATIONS (01279) 446490

**CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS:** SUZANNA WOOD, HOUSING REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER] (01279) 446448

LISA WHITING, HOUSING OPTIONS AND ADVICE MANAGER (01279) 446371

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Opportunities are explored to meet the needs of those living in the District with a moderate/severe learning disability as detailed in the ECC Needs Assessment.
- B** Scrutiny Committee to receive a further report to review progress in 12 months' time.

**BACKGROUND**

1. The Committee carried out a review on housing and accommodation requirements for adults with a moderate/severe learning disability a year ago.
2. The review showed 11 Supported Living schemes with 47 places in total and 4 Residential Care homes with 99 beds in total (Liveability Keefield (10 beds) Liveability Nettleswell Rectory (9 beds) Tye Green Lodge (61 beds) and Livingstone House (19 beds)) in the District.
3. The Essex County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2019) estimated that 291 people aged between 18-64 and 38 people over 65 have a moderate or severe learning disability. It was agreed that further needs assessment data was required as part of the review.
4. A total of six recommendations were suggested in the consultant's report (attached as Appendix A to this report) including a level of unmet need for adults

with a moderate/severe learning disability in the District. Officers were asked to progress these recommendations and report back within 12 months.

## ISSUES/PROPOSALS

5. **Recommendation 1 - Harlow Council should work closely with Essex County Council in the completion of any needs assessment work and commit to a strategy to meet the identified need** – A needs assessment has been produced by Essex County Council (attached as Appendix B to this report). This showed a need across West Essex (Harlow, Epping and Uttlesford Districts) for 9 placements for complex needs and 10 placements for supported living. A series of meetings have been set up to discuss how this need can be met whether using Council owned land, Essex County Council land or secured through the private sector. This work will continue as the joint ECC/Essex Housing/HDC team work to find suitable sites.
6. **Recommendation 2 - Regularly attend the Supported Housing Partnership Board, working with the County to identify accommodation opportunities** – This Board hasn't met for a number of months due to staff changes within the County. A Council representative will attend when the Board is reinstated.
7. **Recommendation 3 - Engage in conversations with Essex County Council to better understand the need and explore opportunities as detailed above** – As per update in point 4.
8. **Recommendation 4 - Introduce a question on the Housing Register application form to identify if applicants have a learning disability or autism.** The Housing Allocations Scheme (Allocations policy) will be reviewed in 2023/24, as part of the review the online form will be updated with the specific question asking if the applicant has a learning disability or autism. **Ensure that an alternative number or email address is available for those who are unable to complete the online form.** A phone number has been added. **Update information on joining the Housing Register to create an accessible format.** This has been completed.
  - users can change colours, contrast levels and font
  - zoom in up to 300% without the text spilling off the screen
  - navigate most of the website using just a keyboard
  - navigate most of the website using speech recognition software
  - listen to most of the website using a screen reader (including the most recent versions of JAWS, NVDA and VoiceOver)
9. **Recommendation 5 - To consider the use of move on accommodation from supported housing (quota system) within the existing Allocations Policy to support move on from learning disability provision.** As part of the review of the Housing Allocations Scheme (Allocations policy) in 2023/24 the quota numbers for move on accommodation will be assessed ensuring fair distribution and efficient use of supported housing schemes in Harlow. **Ensure that clients with learning disabilities who are in housing need are**

**prioritised appropriately in line with the medical and social criteria. Work with the County to develop individual housing plans for those in inappropriate accommodation.** Medical/Social Needs continue to be assessed for applicants with learning disabilities in accordance with the current policy and prioritised accordingly

- 10. Recommendation 6 - Officers to meet with Essex County Council to explore the opportunities detailed within this report. Scrutiny Committee to review progress in 12 months' time** – Opportunities being explored to meet the needs of those living in the District, as detailed in the ECC Needs Assessment with Essex County Council and Essex Housing, their development company.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

The ongoing dialogue with Essex County Council will be important to establish specific housing needs and in due course this may influence the Council's Housebuilding Programme.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

### **Finance**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

### **Housing**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing**

### **Communities and Environment**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment**

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Consultants recommendations

Appendix B – Essex County Council Needs Assessment

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None

## Appendix A

### Recommendation 1

Harlow Council should work closely with Essex County Council in the completion of any needs assessment work and commit to a strategy to meet the identified need.

### Recommendation 2

Regularly attend the Supported Housing Partnership Board, working with the County to identify accommodation opportunities.

### Recommendation 3

Engage in conversations with Essex County Council to better understand the need and explore opportunities as detailed above.

Ensure that the new Housing Strategy reflects any identified need and the new approach.

### Recommendation 4

Introduce a question on the Housing Register application form to identify if applicants have a learning disability or autism.

Update information on joining the Housing Register to create an accessible format.

Ensure that an alternative number or email address is available for those who are unable to complete the online form.

### Recommendation 5

To consider the use of move on accommodation from supported housing (quota system) within the existing Allocations Policy to support move on from learning disability provision.

Ensure that clients with learning disabilities who are in housing need are prioritised appropriately in line with the medical and social criteria.

Work with the County to develop individual housing plans for those in inappropriate accommodation.

### Recommendation 6

Officers to meet with Essex County Council to explore the opportunities detailed within this report.

Scrutiny Committee to review progress against the recommendations in 12 months time.

# Specialist Accommodation in Harlow

Johnathon Cuthbertson  
Development Operations Manager

20<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report highlights Essex County Councils (ECC) level of demand for specialist accommodation in Harlow and seeks to provide the basis for further discussion on suitable opportunity sites in the District..

## **2. Summary of issue**

- 2.1. Essex Housing is wholly owned development arm of Essex County Council. A core function of Essex Housing's work is to deliver specialist accommodation that responds to identified need across Essex. This specialist accommodation primarily falls within two groups; Older Persons Accommodation (ILOP) and Accommodation for Adults with Disabilities (AWD) within which there are varying levels of complexity / need.

### **2.2. Independent Living for Older People (ILOP)**

- 2.2.1. ILOP schemes (more commonly referred to as 'Extra Care') are for adults over 55 with no or very low care needs. ECC is the provider of social care in Harlow. ECC's approach to Independent Living encourages the provision of specialist accommodation across Essex as a means by which older people can continue to live healthy and active lives within existing communities whilst enabling older people to remain as independent as possible with the most appropriate housing and support for their needs. ECC have worked with developers / providers to identify the most efficient scheme model which has resulted in 60-unit schemes developed on sites of approximately 1.5 acres.

### **2.3. Adults with Disabilities (AWD)**

- 2.3.1. Complex Needs Accommodation is intended for adults with learning disabilities / autism who require specialist care and support. Essex Housing (on behalf of ECC) have developed 'template' schemes typically comprising of six to eight units requiring upwards of 0.4 acres of land. These schemes will generally be self-contained with an ambition for a site serving demand in West Essex.

- 2.3.2. Supported Living accommodation refers to Adults over the age of 18 who have varying care and support needs however who benefit from additional support to lead independent lives. There is no set typology or design for these schemes and generally the expectation is this accommodation could be designed as part of a general needs housing development on larger sites as seen at Essex Housing schemes already completed at Goldlay Gardens and Moulsham Lodge both of which are in Chelmsford. Essex Housing has however also developed stand alone schemes on smaller sites such as the Norton Road development (a converted residential dwelling) completed in Ingatestone.

- 2.4. Essex Housing is aware that delivery of Specialist Housing is a priority for Harlow District Council. Essex Housing are successfully delivering or have achieved planning for similar schemes across the County and believe that through cooperation could deliver similar in Harlow District, supporting the achievement of both organisations aims.

### 3. Demand

- 3.1. ECC collates demand and needs information for each service user group and summarises this through regular bulletins as well as engagement with Local Authorities. Below is a summary of the demand for West Essex and Harlow District.
- 3.2. **Independent Living for Older People (ILOP):** Harlow has an ageing population which has clear implications for the future delivery of housing. For Harlow the Housing LIN @SHOP tool predicts a need for 104 units of Extra Care (whole market demand) in addition to the current Extra Care provision in the district. This provision is in addition to the requirement for other specialist accommodation such as sheltered housing. It is ECC's intention to facilitate the development of at least one 60-unit Extra Care scheme in the next five years in Harlow to meet Adult Social Care demand in the district.
- 3.3. **Complex Needs:** There are insufficient in-county complex needs facilities to meet both current and projected demand. It is anticipated that on average Essex has a requirement for 12 and 15 new placements each year, derived from both newly identified service users and those currently in other residential settings. The specific needs of the individuals in complex-needs accommodation mean they are likely to remain in an accommodation setting for long-periods and so new demand must largely be met by an uplift in capacity. ECC has recently approved business cases to bring forward schemes in South and North Essex. In West Essex there is High demand for Complex Needs service provision and nine placements currently requesting but awaiting accommodation however no site currently identified.
- 3.4. **Supported Living:** West Essex has moderate demand for Supported Living accommodation with a waiting list of approximately 10 requests for placement however this number fluctuates and is dependant on a number of factors. In February 2022 Harlow District was requested by five adults. No site is currently identified for this accommodation type in Harlow.

### 4. Next steps (Harlow District)

- 4.1. Essex Housing have been working to bring forward an ILOP scheme on the site of the former Westfield Primary School in Harlow. The scheme design is largely complete however agreement regarding issues around massing and relationship to the neighbouring 'Green Wedge' is needed prior to progression of the scheme.
- 4.2. We are aware HDC have identified delivery of specialist housing is a priority for the authority and have identified potential sites for development. We believe there is an opportunity for Essex Housing to deliver further Complex Needs and Supported Living schemes in Harlow to meet this demand.
  - 4.2.1. ECC has an approved business case for further Complex Needs developments which will enable a scheme to be brought forward in West Essex however no site is currently identified - this is a priority for progression by Essex Housing.
  - 4.2.2. Given the varying size of sites that might be suitable for supported living accommodation we would welcome the opportunity for a more detailed discussion on potential opportunities and potential progression of schemes.

(Add image)

**Harlow Council**  
**Community Safety Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25**

(Add logo)

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## **Foreword from Councillor Joel Charles, Portfolio Holder for Business and Community Resilience**

One of the council's priorities is to ensure that people feel safe in their community.

The council works closely with Essex Police, the office for Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and relevant criminal justice partners to address concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour locally.

There is never any complacency about the challenge. The town centre has had to bear witness to criminal activity and violent incidents that require a continued zero-tolerance approach, tackling domestic violence remains a key priority, fear of crime in underpasses is being addressed, reducing hate crime matters, and the impact of county lines gangs is an issue the council continues to confront head on as a community leader.

Through the council's community safety team and Safer Harlow Partnership, much progress has been achieved to raise awareness and deliver a co-ordinated approach, but there is an acknowledgment that more can be done to deliver targeted action that reduces incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

This strategy refreshes the council's community safety priorities and reasserts its commitment to work with residents across the town to provide reassurance that crime and anti-social behaviour will not be allowed to go unnoticed and will be dealt with in a timely, effective and appropriate manner.

I know that residents also want to see greater transparency when it comes to working with the council to address anti-social behaviour. At the point when a resident reports an incident of anti-social behaviour, that individual should always feel their concerns are being taken seriously. The council wants to be more responsive to anti-social behaviour and implementation of this strategy will help us to deliver on that ambition.

Visibility is important too. The council will look at new ways to improve its community safety presence, so that residents can visibly see a more proactive response on the ground. One way to deliver greater visibility and closer working is to bring all the relevant policing and criminal justice partners together as part of a community safety hub. The council is working to make this a reality because better collaboration will enable a more focused approach and the smarter deployment of resources to take swifter action.

Action that helps those who have committed crime in the past to understand the consequences of their actions is important too. The council will support the work of criminal justice partners as they help individuals progress on their rehabilitation journey. This work is a key part of community-led crime prevention.

By working in partnership, better transparency, improved visibility and a zero-tolerance approach, the council is confident that more residents will feel a renewed sense of confidence that Harlow is a place where people can live, work and bring up a family without the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## 1. Introduction

Section 6 of The Crime and Disorder Act 1988 requires a group of statutory agencies, known as 'responsible authorities' to come together to work collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to: identify local community safety issues; formulate and implement strategies to address such matters; and then take forward operational activity to tackle crime and disorder in the area.

CSPs are a statutory function requiring responsible authorities to work together to address community safety issues in a local area, this work is underpinned by key legislation and guidance as outlined in Appendix 1 of this document.

Harlow Council leads the town's CSP, which is known locally as the Safer Harlow Partnership (SHP) and will be referred to as such throughout this document.

Harlow is part of the West Essex Local Policing Area, along with Epping Forest, Brentwood and Thurrock.

### **Harlow's responsible authorities are:**

- Essex County Council
- Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
- Essex Police
- Harlow Council
- Probation Service
- Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership

### **SHP statutory responsibilities include:**

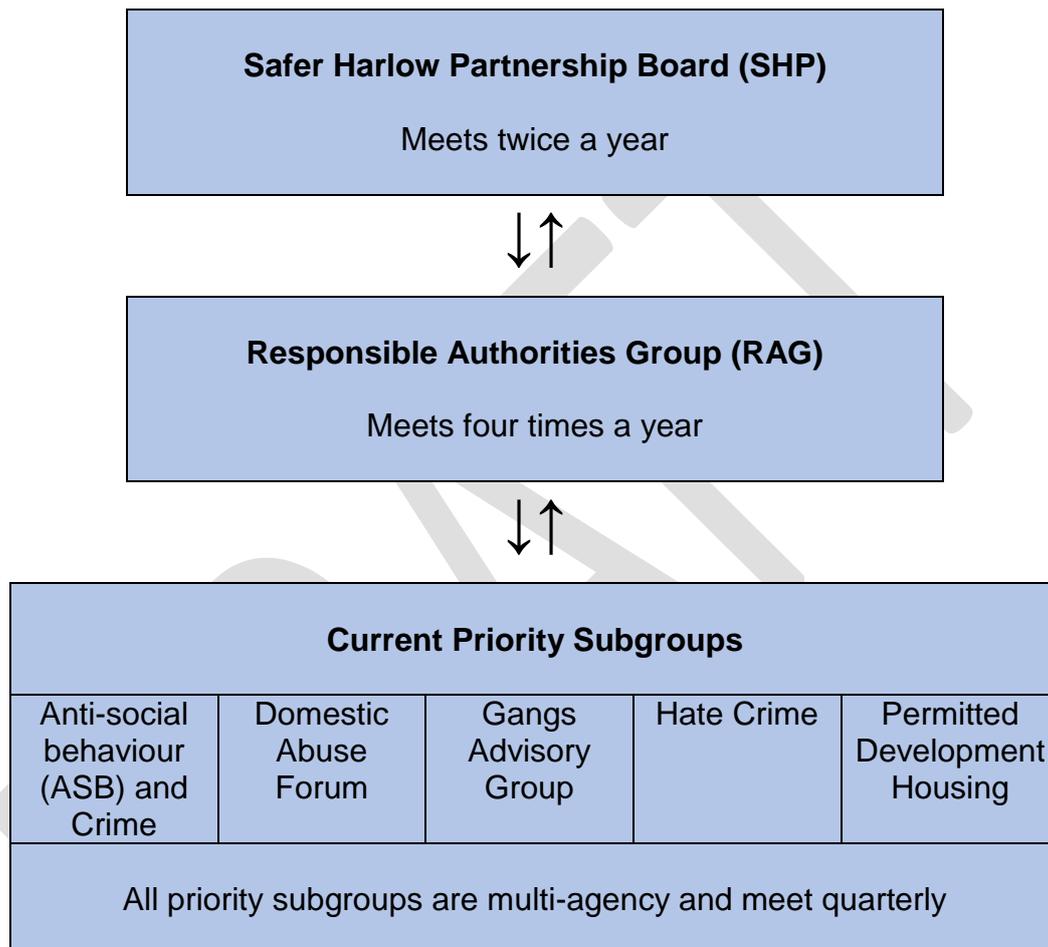
- Providing a framework for sharing information to support local problem solving.
- Producing strategic assessments of need which inform the work of the SHP.
- Reducing re-offending.
- Commissioning domestic homicide reviews.

The Chair of the SHP Board is the Chief Executive of Harlow Council and the Chair of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) is the Director of Communities and Environment at Harlow Council.

The SHP is supported by a wide range of local private, community and voluntary organisations that make a valuable contribution to identifying and tackling anti-social behaviour and crime in our town. These agencies and groups include Victim Support, Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens Advice Harlow, Changing Pathways, a number of social housing providers and a range of community support services. A full list of current SHP member agencies can be seen under Appendix 2 of this document.

The overarching aim of the SHP is to reduce and prevent crime and disorder and improve the lives of all local people. The partnership ensures a particular focus on supporting and protecting individuals and groups that are identified as vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented.

The work of the SHP is supported by themed priority subgroups. These subgroups are usually, but not always, chaired by a senior member of staff from one of the responsible authority agencies and supported by a lead officer from Harlow Council; they are multi agency groups and are established with the sole purpose of working to tackle SHP identified priorities. Each subgroup has its own operational action plan detailing what work will be undertaken to help achieve the objectives of the Partnership.



Each year the SHP produces a Strategic Assessment to assist Harlow Council and its partners in understanding crime, disorder, ASB and other community safety issues that are affecting our town. The Strategic Assessment also enables us to identify and determine strategic priorities for the coming year.

Harlow Council is committed to keeping its residents, businesses and environment safe and free from ASB and crime and employs a dedicated team of staff to deliver educational, preventative and enforcement activity to help achieve that specific goal. More information about the council’s Community Safety Team can be seen in section three of this document.

This strategy is driven by three overarching objectives that act as the foundation statements upon which efforts will be made to build and strengthen the work the council undertakes with partner agencies and the local community to achieve its community safety objectives. These are:

1. **Strengthening our engagement with residents.** This will allow us to better understand what matters to local people and how their lives are affected by crime and ASB so that we can respond appropriately and effectively. Where possible and appropriate, this work will involve working together with local people to identify and deliver community-led solutions.
2. **Implementing a renewed and more proactive approach to community safety.** This will include an early identification and intervention approach to help prevent crime before it happens; reduce the likelihood of issues escalating; ensure increased presence and visibility of officers in the community; and promote appropriate support for victims of crime. This work will also have a focus on protecting those that are most vulnerable to crime, ASB, violence in all forms, abuse and exploitation.
3. **Adopting a zero-tolerance approach to crime and ASB.** This will involve working even more closely with police and criminal justice partners as well as a broader range of agencies to ensure that community safety issues are identified and tackled swiftly. Perpetrators will be dealt with appropriately too, through supporting work to ensure they face up to the consequences of their actions. A key part of this work will be to raise awareness of how members of the public can and should report crime responsibly.

This document outlines the way in which Harlow Council works with partners to deliver its organisational aims and that of the SHP. It sets out how we will identify and tackle current and emerging community safety issues and overcome challenges. It also sets out our future plans to improve partnership working with the responsible authorities, other agencies and local people to reduce crime and improve community safety. We will do this by creating and maintaining a safe environment in which people from all backgrounds can live safely and happily alongside one another; a place where people will want to come to work and enjoy visiting; and a place where businesses will locate, thrive and prosper.

**Note:** For the purpose of this strategy 'local people' are defined as people likely to be affected by, or particularly interested in, a particular function or issue. As well as residents of Harlow, included in this definition are people who work or study in the town; visitors to our community; service users; third sector groups; and businesses operating in the district. The term 'resident' incorporates all tenures, including council and private tenants, leaseholders and people living in privately owned properties.

## 2. Impact and Vision

Community safety is not just an issue for police and fire and rescue services. The council, private companies, community and voluntary groups and individuals can all contribute in a variety of ways. Everyone has a part to play in building safe, strong, and more resilient communities.

Community safety is about feeling safe, whether that is at home, in the community or at work. Whether people feel and are safe or not can contribute hugely to the overall quality of life, physical and mental health, and wellbeing. It can also have a bearing on the ability to make the most of social, domestic and economic opportunities available to individuals, without fear or hindrance of crime and disorder or ASB.

Crime and ASB can have a hugely detrimental effect on individuals, families, businesses and communities. Living in unsafe neighbourhoods can also cause anxiety, depression, stress, economic decline and an increase in community tensions. That is why we are committed to identifying and tackling community safety issues that affect our residents, our communities and our town.

Harlow Council works proactively with responsible authorities and other partners to ensure there is sufficient access to information and the data needed to help identify key issues and prioritise where resources are deployed. Priorities will be reviewed regularly to ensure action can be taken to react quickly to changing trends and emerging issues and each SHP priority subgroup will produce an action plan setting out how to tackle and reduce crime, ASB, violence in all forms, abuse and exploitation.

### Our Vision:

*We want Harlow to be a place where residents know their safety is important to us and have confidence in the way in which the council, police and other agencies respond to their issues and concerns.*

*We will create a safer Harlow by working collaboratively to identify and tackle the impact of crime, alcohol, drugs, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. By addressing abuse and exploitation, wherever it surfaces, we can help to protect the most vulnerable in our town too.*

*We will ensure that our officers are more present and visible in the community; that community safety concerns are taken seriously; appropriate action is taken to deal with offenders; victims have the right access to support; and work to improve trust and confidence in services.*

To help achieve our vision, the council continuously reviews the way in which it receives and responds to reports of crime and ASB and how we assist residents to access helpful advice and support when they have been a victim of crime.

We will work hard to identify new and emerging trends and, by adopting an early identification and intervention approach, will take action to help prevent residents becoming victims in the first place.

By working with our SHP partners, we will raise awareness of all crime types, ensure residents know how to report ASB and crime responsibly, and work with the Probation Service to reduce re-offending and support the rehabilitation of offenders.

### **3. Community Safety Team**

The council takes its legislative responsibilities seriously and employs a team of professionals, who are police accredited, to deliver the council's community safety agenda. The team works proactively alongside Essex Police, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership, the Probation Service and a range of community and voluntary groups to tackle and reduce all forms of ASB and crime across all areas of the town.

Our Community Safety Team supports Essex Police tasking meetings, educational, preventative and enforcement activity and the execution of targeted operations such as, amongst others, Operation Henderson, which aims to raise awareness of child exploitation on public transport. The team also supports Operation Sceptre, which helps tackle knife crime.

The team consists of:

- A Manager for Strategy and Policy;
- Two Community Safety Team Leaders;
- Four Community Safety Officers;
- Three Community Rangers;
- A CCTV Technical Officer; and
- An Events and Emergency Planning Officer.

Working collaboratively with a range of statutory and non-statutory partners, the team actively works to reduce ASB, crime and disorder through targeted patrols and engagement across all areas of the town, but focuses its efforts and resources on areas identified as 'hotspots' through local police data, and intelligence and reports made by the public through the council's Contact Harlow service.

The work of the team includes: assisting Essex Police to identify and target County Lines and gang related activity; supporting victims of crime such as those being 'Cuckooed' for the purposes of exploitation; assisting targeted patrols; and offering technical support.

Our Community Safety Team will play an instrumental role in working alongside partners to deliver the priorities set out in Section 4 of this strategy and in addition will focus their work on the following activity in 2022/23:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) to help reduce ASB in the Town Centre and taking swift remedial action if issues continue or new problems arise. This work will include developing a

better understanding of the nature and extent of problems caused by the use of e-scooters.

- Explore opportunities to increase presence and visibility in the community and strengthen proactive early intervention and prevention work alongside the need to be reactive to immediate demand.
- Strengthen community engagement around Hate Crime in line with the new Essex Police Hate Crime reduction initiative.
- Increase engagement with children and young people through the team's school's education programme to help raise awareness of the impact of crime and ASB. The principal aim will be to reduce ASB and youth crime in the community.
- Support delivery of Crucial Crew to all Year 6 pupils attending Harlow primary schools to raise awareness of: personal and community safety issues; promote healthy relationships and lifestyle; and support children's transition to secondary school.
- Continue to extend and improve CCTV provision across all areas of the town to assist identification of perpetrators of crime and increase the number of successful prosecutions through the criminal justice system. The use of CCTV has contributed to a reduction in ASB and crime and supported successful arrests by the police.

The council's Community Safety Team has installed forty-nine CCTV cameras in various locations across the town.

The purpose of these cameras is to deter crime and disorder, and provide evidential quality images and footage to assist investigations that bring perpetrators to justice.

CCTV coverage can help reduce incidences of ASB, crime and serious violence by: assisting the police and other enforcement agencies to identify suspects; monitoring the activity of individuals and groups; and deter people from using certain areas for criminal and anti-social activities.

In July 2022, four incidents occurred in Harlow underpasses which were recorded on CCTV cameras, thus supporting police investigations, these included:

- Violence with injury (stabbing)
- Sexual Assault & Robbery
- Criminal Damage & Theft

The use of a static CCTV camera enabled the identification of a sex offender who was arrested, taken to court and convicted. The perpetrator is now serving a custodial sentence.

The Community Safety Team also has access to a drone and has trained team members to become fully qualified drone pilots. The use of the drone has assisted with the identification of illegal encampments, land encroachments and building surveys.

Our experienced drone pilots can also utilise the equipment to help identify, provide support and advice to rough sleepers in hard-to-reach areas such as secluded spaces and woodlands. The drone has also proved invaluable in identifying areas which may become fire hazardous during particularly hot, dry weather spells.

The team has recently supported the Metropolitan Police to carry out targeted work leading to the arrest of five individuals working as part of an organised crime group in Harlow. These arrests removed dangerous criminals from the streets of Harlow and restored peace and a sense of safety and security for residents in areas affected by the group's criminal activity.

The council is proud of the work its Community Safety Team undertakes and its contribution to help make Harlow a safe place to live, work and visit.

#### **4. Current priorities**

Each year, in its role as the lead agency for the SHP, the council works with partners to identify current priorities and allocate its own dedicated resources and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) annual community safety grant to meet identified need. Our action plans must be focused on identified priorities yet fluid enough to be responsive to changing local need, to be able to confront new and emerging trends and be aware of the changing demographics in the town.

Where possible and relevant the council's community safety priorities and action plans are aligned to the Essex Police and Crime Plan, and are informed by the annual Strategic Assessment, local policing data and the views and opinions of our partners and residents.

The council's community safety priorities for 2022/23 to 2024/25 will include a strong and consistent focus on the six areas of work listed in the tables below. We will work closely with our partners and residents to ensure that we are aware of any new or emerging trends that negatively impact, or have the potential to negatively impact, our communities.

We will continue to work closely with Essex Police to identify and better understand the nature and extent of organised crime, serious violence and violence against

women and girls, and will work with our partners to address identified issues targeting our resources where they are most needed and will have the most impact.

Our priorities and action plans will be regularly reviewed and amended to ensure we can respond to changing need in a timely, appropriate and effective way. In addition, the SHP will introduce its own high level strategic action plan, overseen by the RAG, incorporating all elements of SHP priority subgroup activity to ensure partnership objectives are being met. An annual SHP achievements report will be published so that residents can see the difference that the PFCC annual community safety grant and effective partnership working has made to tackle ASB and crime.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ASB and Crime</b></p> <p>Tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in all its different forms across all wards of the town.</p> <p>Identify current issues and emerging trends and hotspots, and direct resources appropriately to tackle these issues and prevent escalation.</p> <p>Improving CCTV coverage and monitoring to assist detection of perpetrators and increase the number of successful prosecutions.</p> <p>Promote reporting pathways and responsible reporting to help protect individuals, groups and communities from the impact of ASB and crime.</p> <p>Work with the business community through the Harlow Chamber of Commerce and Business Forum to tackle business crime, fraud, scams and other community safety issues that affect the opportunity for them to thrive, grow and be prosperous.</p> <p>Identify and tackle issues caused by the increase in use of e-scooters.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Domestic Abuse</b></p> <p>Raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and the devastating impact it can have on individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>Help to ensure that professionals are trained appropriately to be able to recognise signs and signpost victims to effective support services.</p> <p>Encourage and support access to perpetrator behaviour change programmes to reduce reoffending and protect children and families.</p> <p>Promote The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law) to increase awareness and opportunity to exercise the ‘Right to Ask’ to support victims or potential victims.</p> <p>Promote the J9 Domestic Abuse Awareness initiative and support local and national Domestic Abuse campaigns and educational programmes.</p>
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<b>Priority 3</b>	<b>Priority 4</b>
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<b>Gangs and County Lines</b>	<b>Hate Crime</b>
<p>Identify, tackle and reduce gang crime by raising awareness and understanding of gangs and the links to knife crime, drugs and serious youth violence.</p> <p>Support the detection and disruption of County Lines activity.</p> <p>Identify and tackle the exploitation of children and young people through gangs and organised crime groups.</p> <p>Ensure that professionals are trained appropriately to be able to recognise signs of exploitation and signpost victims or potential victims of exploitation to appropriate support services.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of Hate Crime and the impact it can have on individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>Promote established Hate Crime reporting pathways.</p> <p>Actively encourage responsible reporting and, by raising greater public awareness and understanding, seek to reduce the number of people affected by this type of crime.</p> <p>Support and promote the Essex Police Hate Crime Reduction Initiative.</p> <p>Deliver a programme of Hate Crime Ambassador training.</p>

<b>Priority 5</b>	<b>Priority 6</b>
<p><b>Permitted Development Housing</b></p> <p>Through proactive engagement work, increase agencies understanding of the issues faced by residents living in this type of accommodation.</p> <p>Work with partners to ensure appropriate support is provided to vulnerable residents where possible.</p> <p>Address issues of loneliness and isolation affecting people living in remote permitted development housing schemes by positively encouraging and supporting social integration and cohesion.</p> <p>Deal effectively with crime, ASB and Domestic Abuse taking place in permitted development housing sites.</p> <p>Develop mutually effective working relationships and an information exchange with landlords and partner</p>	<p><b>Protecting vulnerable people</b></p> <p>This priority is ever present in everything we do and takes into account the importance of safeguarding and protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities.</p> <p>We will work in partnership to:</p> <p>Support children and adults with mental health, alcohol and drug misuse issues by making appropriate and timely referrals.</p> <p>Recognise and understand the importance of early intervention and prevention to stop issues escalating.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and staff know how to use them.</p> <p>Assist in tackling perpetrators who groom individuals or groups for the</p>

<p>agencies.</p> <p>Work closely with Essex County Council, other councils and the Local Government Association to develop and implement protocols to ease, and eventually stop, the flow of vulnerable people into this type of accommodation.</p>	<p>purposes of abuse or exploitation – particularly vulnerable adults, children and young people.</p> <p>Ensure professionals are appropriately trained and know how to spot the signs of abuse or exploitation and how to report concerns.</p> <p>Respond to the needs of individuals and local communities who are vulnerable to specific crime types such as hate crime, elder abuse, harassment, human trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and honour-based abuse (HBA).</p>
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## 5. Key Challenges

At the time of writing this strategy, Essex Police rolling crime data for reported incidences in Harlow for the 12-month period to June 2022 indicates the following:

- The number of ASB incidents has reduced by 2091 (56.7%).
- Victim based crimes have risen by 1353, from 8155 to 9508 (16.6%) but solved outcomes have also risen by 274 (29.5%).
- Violence without injury has risen from 1883 to 2156, an increase of 273 incidences (14.5%).
- Robbery of business property has risen by 120% but the number of incidences is low – a rise from 5 in June 2021 to 11 in June 2022.
- Robbery of personal property has increased by one incidence – from 77 in June 2021 to 78 in June 2022.
- Burglary from residential properties has risen 18.3% from 279 incidences to 330.
- Burglary from businesses and the community is up from 78 incidences in June 2021 to 88 incidences in June 2022 – an increase of 12.8%.
- Theft of pedal cycles has reduced from 131 incidences to 93 – a 29% reduction.

- Criminal damage has seen an increase by 147 incidences from 792 to 939 (18.6%).
- Arson is down by 24% – a reduction from 100 incidences to 76.
- Domestic Abuse has seen increases across High, Medium and Standard risk categories.
- Stalking and Harassment has increased by 147 incidences, from 1636 in June 2021 to 1783 in June 2022.

The council, along with statutory and non-statutory agencies, businesses and community and voluntary sector partners will work proactively with Essex Police to continue to identify, tackle and drive down ASB and crime. This will be achieved through the work of SHP multi-agency priority subgroups, joint campaigns and operations, existing and new initiatives and by working with the community to strengthen our understanding of how, why and when local people are affected by crime and ASB.

Crime and ASB is unfortunately present in all wards across Harlow, but some wards are more affected than others. We will always be led by local data and changing need to ensure our resources are targeted where they are most needed and will have the most community benefit.

In addition to the priority actions listed on pages 11 to 13 of this document, the council will continue to focus its efforts and resources to address the following key challenges:

- **National increase in violence against women and girls (VAWG).** We will work with Essex Police to identify the nature and extent of violence against women and girls in Harlow and undertake activity to help ensure that women and girls of all ages feel safe at home and whilst out in the community. This work has already begun and the town's CCTV provision has been extended and improved to provide reassurance that secluded areas, often crime and ASB hotspots, have adequate camera coverage.
- **Serious organised crime.** We will work with our partners to develop a better understanding of the nature and extent of serious organised crime in Harlow and how partners can work better together to support the police to: detect; disrupt; and bring perpetrators of this type of criminal activity to justice. Working with Essex Police we will set up a local working group to identify ways to progress this area of work alongside developing our approach to VAWG.
- **Education and awareness raising.** We will strengthen the council's work with schools, children and families to raise awareness of the signs of child

abuse and crimes against vulnerable adults to reduce online, sexual, financial and criminal exploitation.

- **Tackle Domestic Abuse.** Partners report seeing an increase in the number and severity of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment incidences. Through the work of the Harlow Domestic Abuse Forum, we will continue to raise awareness and understanding and promote opportunities for victims to get the help and support that they need in a timely manner. We will also support and promote opportunities for perpetrators to access behaviour change programmes to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and break the cycle of domestic abuse that can occur through generations if not addressed.
- **Gangs and County Lines.** Harlow currently has the highest number of County Lines in Essex. We will support the police to detect, deter, disrupt and close down these lines and bring perpetrators to justice. Through the Harlow Gangs Advisory Group, we will lead on projects and new initiatives to raise children, young people and parent's awareness of the dangers of becoming involved with gangs and County Lines groups. This will be achieved through promoting opportunities to seek help and support if they are concerned about this type of crime.
- **Supporting victims of crime.** Through the SHP we will strengthen our work with Victim Support and Neighbourhood Watch to ensure that victims of crime get the help, advice and support they need.
- **Community Cohesion.** Harlow has a growing population and this brings greater diversity within our wider community. We feel it is important for people to have a strong sense of identity and belonging in and around Harlow. Through our community engagement work, we will undertake activity to bring local people together to celebrate difference, identify common purpose and help build strong, connected communities where people from all backgrounds can live happily and safely alongside each other. Through the Harlow Hate Crime Panel, we will raise awareness and understanding of the impact of Hate Crime on individuals, families and communities, and train local people to become Hate Crime Ambassadors to help promote safe, responsible reporting pathways and opportunities for victims to access appropriate support.

The table on page 16 sets out the full Essex Police data for the rolling 12-month period from June 2021 to June 2022.

Top Level		Offences				Solved Outcomes				Solved Rates %		
Crime Type	% DA 2022	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	% pt. diff.
Anti-Social Behaviour (incidents)	-	3689	1598	-2091	-56.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All Crime (excl. Action (NFIB) Fraud)	19.0	10019	11515	1496	14.9	1618	1941	323	20.0	16.1	16.9	0.7
- State Based Crime	6.4	1864	2007	143	7.7	689	738	49	7.1	37.0	36.8	-0.2
- Victim Based Crime	21.6	8155	9508	1353	16.6	929	1203	274	29.5	11.4	12.7	1.3
Victim Based Crime		Offences				Solved Outcomes				Solved Rates %		
Crime Type	% DA 2022	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	% pt. diff.
Violence Against the Person	35.0	4468	5009	541	12.1	567	646	79	13.9	12.7	12.9	0.2
- Homicide	33.3	2	3	1	50.0	1	3	2	200.0	50.0	100.0	50.0
- Violence with Injury	40.2	947	1065	118	12.5	178	199	21	11.8	18.8	18.7	-0.1
- Death or Serious Injury caused	0.0	0	2	2	-	1	2	1	100.0	-	100.0	-
- Violence without Injury	36.8	1883	2156	273	14.5	293	327	34	11.6	15.6	15.2	-0.4
- Stalking and Harassment	29.7	1636	1783	147	9.0	94	115	21	22.3	5.7	6.4	0.7
Sexual Offences	26.3	355	380	25	7.0	27	55	28	103.7	7.6	14.5	6.9
- Rape	42.2	147	166	19	12.9	1	5	4	400.0	0.7	3.0	2.3
- Rape - Under 16 yrs	4.4	39	45	6	15.4	1	5	4	400.0	2.6	11.1	8.5
- Rape - Over 16 yrs	56.2	108	121	13	12.0	0	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	0.0
- Other Sexual Offences	14.0	208	214	6	2.9	26	50	24	92.3	12.5	23.4	10.9
Robbery	3.4	82	89	7	8.5	8	9	1	12.5	9.8	10.1	0.4
- Robbery of business property	0.0	5	11	6	120.0	1	1	0	0.0	20.0	9.1	-10.9
- Robbery of Personal Property	3.8	77	78	1	1.3	7	8	1	14.3	9.1	10.3	1.2
Theft Offences	2.5	2358	3015	657	27.9	228	354	126	55.3	9.7	11.7	2.1
- Burglary	3.6	357	418	61	17.1	16	36	20	125.0	4.5	8.6	4.1
- Burglary Residential	4.5	279	330	51	18.3	13	21	8	61.5	4.7	6.4	1.7
- Burglary Business & Community	0.0	78	88	10	12.8	3	15	12	400.0	3.8	17.0	13.2
- Burglary Dwelling (pre-Apr 17)	6.1	184	247	63	34.2	12	20	8	66.7	6.5	8.1	1.6
- Burglary Other (pre-Apr 17 de)	0.0	173	171	-2	-1.2	4	16	12	300.0	2.3	9.4	7.0
- Vehicle Offences (incl. Interfer)	1.3	658	794	136	20.7	37	43	6	16.2	5.6	5.4	-0.2
- Theft from a Vehicle	0.0	379	383	4	1.1	14	16	2	14.3	3.7	4.2	0.5
- Theft of a Vehicle	3.5	187	284	97	51.9	10	13	3	30.0	5.3	4.6	-0.8
- Vehicle Interference	0.0	92	127	35	38.0	13	14	1	7.7	14.1	11.0	-3.1
- Theft	2.8	1343	1803	460	34.3	175	275	100	57.1	13.0	15.3	2.2
- Theft from the Person	1.8	80	110	30	37.5	2	2	0	0.0	2.5	1.8	-0.7
- Theft of Pedal Cycle	0.0	131	93	-38	-29.0	5	1	-4	-80.0	3.8	1.1	-2.7
- Shoplifting	0.0	511	795	284	55.6	141	240	99	70.2	27.6	30.2	2.6
- Other Theft	6.1	621	805	184	29.6	27	32	5	18.5	4.3	4.0	-0.4
Criminal Damage inc. Arson	12.2	892	1015	123	13.8	99	139	40	40.4	11.1	13.7	2.6
- Criminal Damage	12.9	792	939	147	18.6	92	136	44	47.8	11.6	14.5	2.9
- Arson	3.9	100	76	-24	-24.0	7	3	-4	-57.1	7.0	3.9	-3.1
Racial/Religiously Aggravated Offence	2.7	144	183	39	27.1	28	34	6	21.4	19.4	18.6	-0.9
Hate Crime HO Definition	3.6	292	335	43	14.7	38	40	2	5.3	13.0	11.9	-1.1
Domestic Abuse	####	1867	2183	316	16.9	205	277	72	35.1	11.0	12.7	1.7
- High Risk Domestic Abuse	####	134	212	78	58.2	32	70	38	118.8	23.9	33.0	9.1
- Medium Risk Domestic Abuse	####	174	257	83	47.7	51	49	-2	-3.9	29.3	19.1	-10.2
- Standard Risk Domestic Abuse	####	1466	1635	169	11.5	110	150	40	36.4	7.5	9.2	1.7
- No Risk Assessment	####	93	79	-14	-15.1	12	8	-4	-33.3	12.9	10.1	-2.8
State Based Crime		Offences				Solved Outcomes				Solved Rates %		
Crime Type	% DA 2022	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	# diff.	% diff.	2021	2022	% pt. diff.
Drug Offences	0.0	445	428	-17	-3.8	416	380	-36	-8.7	93.5	88.8	-4.7
- Trafficking of Drugs	0.0	79	102	23	29.1	77	69	-8	-10.4	97.5	67.6	-29.8
- Possession of Drugs	0.0	366	326	-40	-10.9	339	311	-28	-8.3	92.6	95.4	2.8
Possession of Weapons	1.6	91	125	34	37.4	54	84	30	55.6	59.3	67.2	7.9
Public Order	7.6	1143	1240	97	8.5	190	208	18	9.5	16.6	16.8	0.2
Miscellaneous Crimes against Society	15.0	185	214	29	15.7	29	66	37	127.6	15.7	30.8	15.2

## 6. Partnership working

A strong multi-agency partnership approach to tackling community safety issues can foster a collective sense of purpose as well as providing opportunities to reduce duplication and reduce costs by pooling and sharing resources, skills, experience and good practice. A partnership approach allows agencies to 'get to know each other' and develop better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in order to: tackle community safety issues; improve opportunities for information sharing; and most importantly acknowledge that no single agency can deal with, or be responsible for dealing with, complex community safety and crime issues. In addition, by sharing and combining information, agencies can gain a much better picture of local issues and the specific needs of the community.

In recent years other Essex CSPs have been successful in setting up 'Community Safety Hubs' bringing together a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies to work collaboratively alongside one another in a designated space. These Hubs foster: closer more effective working relationships; better information sharing opportunities; pooling and sharing of resources; opportunities for joint campaigns and operations; and a better understanding and appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of involved agencies. The council is leading discussions with responsible authorities to identify opportunities to set up a Community Safety Hub in Harlow and, when established, this will support us to achieve our aim of delivering a more collaborative and proactive approach to community safety as well as increasing agencies presence and visibility in the community.

Through the SHP we will work to strengthen partnership working with the Probation Service to help reduce reoffending and support the work of Integrated Offender Management (IOM), which aims to help improve the quality of life in communities by: reducing the negative impact of crime and reoffending; reducing the number of people who become victims of crime; and helping to improve the public's confidence in the criminal justice system.

In the current climate, where demand for services is rising, local need is ever changing and agencies resources and capacity are limited, there has never been a better time to focus on building more and better opportunities for partnership working across all sectors.

*"Harlow is a growing town, with a bright future, which is why it's even more important that the council, police and partners continue to strengthen their relationship in the area of community safety".*

*"Much has already been achieved in some key areas. Such as: extra CCTV provision to make our underpasses and open spaces safer for all to enjoy; and joint operations and collaborative working in areas such as permitted developments where increased co-operation has led to vulnerable residents being safeguarded and supported. Progress has been made to address crime and anti-social behaviour where co-operation in a number of areas such as suppression of violence has led to our streets being safer".*

*“The work continues to evolve and grow, as we look towards the next 12-months I am confident that even more joint working will be achieved in areas that are important to local residents, which will make Harlow a safer place to live and work”.*

Chief Inspector Paul Austin  
Harlow District Commander - West LPA

## **7. Community Engagement and Communication**

Harlow Council and the SHP use a range of different engagement tools and opportunities to ensure the views and opinions of residents, businesses and partner agencies are heard. This type of approach is important because those views are taken into consideration when making decisions about how to address community safety issues, and how local resources are utilised to ensure maximum benefit to the community.

These opportunities include:

- PFCC public meetings.
- Community engagement events, information stalls and drop-in events.
- The use of popular social media platforms.
- Surveys, questionnaires and consultations.
- Tenant and leaseholder groups and forums.
- Residents' Associations.
- Newsletters, leaflets, posters etc.
- Close working with Essex Police Community Engagement Officers.

We recognise that there is a lot that can be learnt about local community safety issues from people that are either directly or indirectly affected. As such, we aim to improve the way in which we engage with local people to ensure we better understand what matters most to them and what their main concerns are about community safety issues. A key part of this work will be to look at ways in which we can improve transparency by keeping local people more informed about what the council will do to address their concerns.

Strengthening our engagement with residents is one of our main objectives going forward as it will contribute to our understanding of the causes and impact of crime and help us work with communities to tackle the underlying causes. Through this work, we also hope to provide reassurance about the council's determination to reduce crime and improve the quality of life for residents.

Improving communication with local people will help us to ensure that:

- Local people’s views and opinions are sought, heard and taken into consideration when decisions about community safety priorities are made and resources are allocated;
- Solutions to community safety issues are effective and sustainable;
- Local people are involved in designing and delivering the solutions; and
- Local people have increased confidence that agencies are working together to create a safer Harlow.

We will strive to continuously learn from evidenced-based best practice elsewhere and continuously seek new and innovative ways to better understand local people’s views on community safety issues.

A key action for the council in 2022/23 will be to undertake a Crime Perception Survey to help us better understand:

- The things that local people are concerned about that affect them either directly or indirectly;
- What helps people feel safe in their own homes and in the wider community; and
- How we can all work together to address identified issues.

## **8. Links to other Strategies, Partnerships and Agencies**

This document is separate but inextricably linked to the following:

Harlow Council Community Engagement Strategy

Harlow Council Community Resilience Strategy

Harlow Council Strategic Plan

Police and Crime Plan (Essex) 2021 – 2024

### Community Safety Partnership Legislative Responsibilities

#### Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Crime and Disorder Act places a statutory duty on responsible authorities to formulate a strategy to work together to reduce crime and disorder, combat substance misuse and reduce reoffending in the local area.

Section 17 of the Act places a duty on local authorities to:

*“Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed upon it, it shall be the duty of each authority to exercise its various functions with due regards to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment) and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area”*

Section 115 makes provision for the sharing of information between agencies to reduce crime and disorder.

#### Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Anti-Social Behaviour often has a debilitating impact on victims and local communities. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced a range of tools and powers for agencies to utilise in order to address incidents effectively and proportionately, whilst ensuring a greater focus on victims and their needs.

#### Modern Slavery

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking is a complex, organised and often hidden crime. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 identified Community Safety Partnerships as having a key role in identifying and supporting victims from the range of crimes that it encompasses such as county lines, child exploitation, gangs, violent crime, drugs and begging amongst others. The role of CSPs is to ensure that information sharing is effectively embedded to allow effective disruption activities and enforcement.

#### Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)

A DHR will be established in the event that a domestic homicide occurs in Harlow in accordance with Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. The SHP contributes financially to the delivery of a centralised DHR service delivered by the Southend Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) and through its Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) annual community safety grant.

#### PREVENT

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on certain bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have “*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*”, known as the ‘Prevent Duty’. The duty

requires identified statutory agencies to consider the need to safeguard people most at risk of radicalisation through identification, early intervention and support. The Prevent Lead will receive and review the area Counter Terrorism Local Profile on a quarterly basis.

### **Safeguarding Legislation**

The Partnership will be mindful of the statutory duty on all agencies outlined in the Children's Act 1989 and 2004 and the Care Act 2014 to safeguard children, young people and adults with care and support needs from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Harlow Council has its own Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy in place and, as the lead agency for the SHP, expects all member agencies to have appropriate child and adult safeguarding arrangements in place.

### **Other Legislation**

The SHP will pay due regard to legislative implications as necessary.

DRAFT

**SHP member agencies, including priority subgroups:**

Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service (ADAS)

Barnardos

Caridon Property

Change Project

Changing Pathways

Children's Society

Citizens Advice Harlow

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Essex County Council

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

Essex Police

Harlow Council

Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella (HEMU)

Harlow schools (various)

Harlow Trades Council (HTS)

HCRG Care Group

Home Group

Integration Support Services (ISS)

MIND in West Essex

Moat

NHS

Open Road

Peabody

Probation Service

Rainbow Services

Re-think Mental Illness

Safer Places

Streets2Homes

Victim Support

West Essex Can (WeCan)

DRAFT

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 30 AUGUST 2022

**TITLE:** REVIEW OF COUNCIL STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

**LEAD OFFICER(S):** SIMON HILL, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE (01279) 446099

**CONTRIBUTING OFFICER(S):** NATASHA TERRELL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GOVERNANCE, HR & Legal (01279) 446022

REBECCA FARRANT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICE (01279) 446811

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Committee notes the practices and changes implemented to enhance service delivery and effects on staff from introduction of homeworking during the pandemic and beyond
- B** Committee advises any further information required to review this matter in full

**BACKGROUND**

1. This report is made at the request of the Committee following the submission of a review request for its annual programme. The scrutiny review seeks:
  - a) To identify current home/office working patterns at the Council;
  - b) To identify what changes the Council has made to its processes to enable effective home working, and what is planned;
  - c) To understand whether the shift from home/hybrid working has had a positive or negative impact on:
    - i) Productivity
    - ii) Staff morale
    - iii) Residents' experience
  - d) To establish, where issues have arisen, what can be done.
2. In March 2019 and in direct response to the pandemic, the Council moved a significant proportion of its employees to work from home in line with government guidelines. The transition, like most organisations, happened

quickly and operated on a “just in time” principle to get the workforce operational from home as quickly as possible. Some teams such as the Customer Contact Centre have remained in the offices throughout the pandemic owing to the setup of their ways of working at that time not least of which included a significant proportion of customer facing activities.

3. Service delivery during the two-year covid pandemic period was monitored centrally by an internal recovery group of Officers and services were adapted to meet emerging requirements and run as close to normal where restrictions in place nationally allowed.
4. As restrictions have eased the Council has adopted a phased approach to returning to the office based on staff safety and evidenced increased productivity in some areas of the Council achieved through remote working practices. In May 2021, Council buildings began reopening in line with national guidance with several staff in each team returning to offices on a rostered basis in line with health and safety risk assessments; this created an informal trial of hybrid working.
5. From 4 April 2022 hybrid working was introduced for all staff whose roles allowed it, with working patterns introduced on a team-by-team basis to match business needs. This practice was reviewed during July 2022 after initial three-month period had completed.
6. A topic review submission for Council Staff Working from Home was approved by Scrutiny Committee on 12 July 2022. A review of Council performance data, complaints data and staff survey has been carried out to understand the impact home/hybrid working has had on the provision of council services.
7. Where issues have been identified these have been incorporated into relevant existing areas of work to resolve and improve upon processes in place.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Working patterns**

8. A baseline hybrid working pattern of a 60/40 home/office split was set by the senior management board based on staff feedback and review of patterns used elsewhere via engagement with the East of England Local Government Association. Individual working patterns were set for 4 April onwards on a role-by-role basis, linked to business needs for the activities carried out. Many staff work on the 60/40 split but there are many teams who work 100 percent of the time on site, including facilities and customer services teams and peripatetic staff who may only spend 20 percent of their time office working owing to the inclusion of site work alongside home working. Some teams work on a rota basis meaning their patterns change each week to ensure contact with other team members across each month whilst maintaining continuity of service.

9. A review of these patterns was carried out in July 2022, with Assistant Directors reporting that patterns were working well and flexibility to change where workloads or priorities require it was used where required without issue.

### **Changes to processes**

10. The work of the coronavirus internal recovery Officer group to implement changes to processes following national working from home directives during covid pandemic have been cemented and built on during the past 6 months as more staff have returned to operational buildings for part of their working week. Several processes were digitised via online forms rather than as paper-based processes, including Housing Applications, and the Council's payroll and other processes, such as planning applications, were delivered through digital platforms remotely without impacting performance.
11. Usage statistics from the Council's customer relationship management system and website show that unique online transactions per day have increased by 50 percent since pre-pandemic levels as residents are now able to access more services online or via telephone than ever before. Take up of the Council's digital tenancy portal for housing tenants, and self-service for all residents has also increased.

### **Impact on Staff Morale**

12. An independent and confidential employee feedback survey was carried out as part of the Council's Accommodation review (the Accommodation Review was commenced in 2019 and has been adapted to include changes to ways of working following covid pandemic). The survey was distributed to the workforce including those absent from work. In the results of this survey employees reported significant sustained benefits when working at home, including work life balance and less distraction throughout the working day.
13. Work Life Balance was reported to have been impacted positively with many reporting increased mental wellbeing because of less stress, more quality time with family with parents at home when children return home from school and the ability to be able to prepare home cooked meals. Many employees reported that on balance working from home had a significant increase in how happy they have been throughout the period of the pandemic despite the uncertainty that surrounded them. Other benefits include more flexibility to the working day, more autonomy over workload, less absence from work either because from home they feel well enough to continue to work or as a direct result of not being in an office with germs circulating freely. Some reported enjoyment through embracing new process and technologies and the increased opportunity for online learning.
14. Several covid related support mechanisms were put in place for staff whilst working remotely and to ensure the return to the office was a positive experience, especially for staff who had been classified as vulnerable:
  - a) Those employees who received letters from the Government advising that they were considered as 'Clinically extremely vulnerable' and

advised to stay at home and 'shield' or 'self-isolate'; whilst some other employees were considered as vulnerable. When the lockdown eased and employees were able to return to the office, Human Resources referred over 80 employees to Harlow Occupational Health Service (HOHS) to seek advice and guidance about a return to the workplace including supporting those who needed to work safely out in the community. HOHS provided individual advice dependent on the employee's health and any medical conditions.

- b) When a return to the workplace was advised, the employee's reporting manager undertook a Coronavirus risk assessment based on the HOHS advice which was reviewed and updated as and when required. Human Resources constantly review sickness absence across the Council with line management to ensure the correct support is provided and referrals to HOHS are arranged where appropriate.
- c) Stress Assessments are also arranged with Health and Safety via Human Resources with support mechanisms in place.
- d) Health and Safety updated the required Display Screen Assessment (DSE) online assessment to enable employees to carry out the self-assessment either within the office or working from home, or for many employees both assessments were carried out. If required, Health and Safety followed these up with individuals.
- e) Weekly briefings and bulletins referred employees to support for mental health 'Every Mind Matters' campaign signposting employees to Every Mind Matter website and the NHS approved Mind Plan and in addition included information on Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The contract for EAP was rescoped in October 2021 and now offers free advice and support on numerous topics including stress and anxiety. Provided via Reward Gateway it has a Wellbeing Centre access which has information on Move – get active, Munch – healthy eating, Money – financial wellbeing and Mind – mental health. There are videos to explore within the platform.
- f) HR works with the Council's Public Health Improvement Practitioner to produce the 'Your Health & Wellbeing' newsletter produced by internal Communications. These newsletters give employees a wealth of information with regards wellbeing including to online courses, campaigns, challenges, free health checks, Mindfulness drop-in sessions, activities in Essex, healthy eating, and nutrition, raising awareness of issues etc.
- g) HR are currently arranging Well-being events for all employees at the Civic Centre in September and then the Latton Bush Centre in October/November. The aim being to ensure all employees have access to pop into one of the events. These events will give employees the opportunity to talk to experts from the NHS and Essex Wellbeing

Service for health checks and take part in bite size activities whilst also connecting with colleagues.

### **Impact on productivity**

15. The staff survey found that 61 percent of those who had worked remotely felt more productive during that time and 31 percent reported to have similar levels of productivity to working in the office. This is supported by the Coronavirus Internal Recovery Action Plans which show services continued to run, where restrictions allowed, without any negative impact despite majority of staff fully remote working.
16. Staff have also been supported remotely by changes to IT provisions which have been rolled out and support agile working, these include a new Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system, Zoom meetings and latterly Microsoft Teams video functionality to maintain good contacts with staff and the introduction of Office 365 and other internal IT infrastructure that will support the aspirations for future working practices.
17. Analysis of Performance Indicators (PIs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Council services since remote working was introduced due to covid pandemic show no negative impact on performance levels for teams where remote or hybrid working was in place. Performance in areas of both customer services for call waiting times and revenues and benefits teams was impacted by the increased demand on services due to the covid pandemic, by quarter 4 of 2021/22 the impact on KPIs for revenue and benefits services had improved to pre-pandemic levels of service. KPIs related to complaint response times were also impacted during covid pandemic and performance levels have not yet returned to target levels. This is due to increased numbers of complaints in relation to services not delivered via remote working.
18. Internal operational monitoring of team productivity supports an increase in productivity for day-to-day tasks, specifically reported within the Planning services
19. During the Coronavirus lockdown sickness absence decreased, working from home may have attributed to this decrease due to employees staying at home and feeling able to continue working and the fact that employees were working in isolation meant there was less chance of infections spreading as would be the case within an office environment. The year-on-year reports for sickness absence at Quarter 4 including short- and long-term absence per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) were 11.42 days (2019/20) prior to lockdown, reducing to 5.03 days (2020/21) with a slight increase up to 6.97 days (2021/22) with the hybrid return to work demonstrating that working from home has resulted in a 37 percent reduction, mostly on short term sickness absence levels when comparing 19/20 to 21/22.

## **Impact on Residents Experience**

20. Statistics show that the majority of resident contact to the Council via Customer Services teams is for Housing or Revenue and Benefits services. Analysis of customer enquiries and complaints received over the past two years shows that no specific complaints or enquiries have been received in relation to staff working patterns impacting residents experience of service delivery, nor has there been a significant impact in performance which would demonstrate an impact on resident experience of receiving services differently to previous working practices.

## **Conclusions/next steps**

21. The Council recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximize their performance and productivity to deliver the Council Plan, whilst maintaining a good work-life balance. In addition, modern technologies are making it easy to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations, whilst promoting a more joined up service. Hybrid working builds upon previous flexible working policies and supports a culture of working wherever, whenever, and however is most appropriate to get the work done.
22. The Council will continue to build on good practice and address issues that have arisen through introduction of hybrid working practices through several existing work streams. Our approach to this newer way of hybrid working links to the Council's vision to address the climate emergency, placing emphasis on the importance of sustainability and the health and wellbeing of both staff and the community. The benefits of improved work life balance, employee engagement and reduced travel make a direct contribution to this strategic priority.
23. Following the success of digitising process and interactions with residents the Council plans to convert further processes online using web-based forms which integrate with the Council's IT systems so that data can be taken from the forms directly into systems creating efficiencies in these processes and increasing turnaround times for some service delivery. This is currently being explored for licencing teams and will be addressed for all teams through a new Customer Services Strategy and Action Plan.
24. The Council's Tenant Engagement Strategy will be renewed in the Autumn of 2022; this will include a review of current processes to establish opportunities to build upon increased use of online channels for tenant engagement to streamline processes, whilst maintaining engagement and always mindful of the accessibility of digital channels to the demographic being served.
25. Staff wellbeing will continue to be prioritised by the Council and a programme of events to complement the monthly wellbeing newsletter for all staff and members will be developed. In the Autumn two Wellbeing days are planned for all staff, focussing on both health, physical and mental wellbeing.
26. The staff survey highlighted that IT issues were the most common challenge at the start of the covid pandemic for staff working remotely and work to improve

and enhance the changes made over the past two years will be further addressed through a new IT Strategy which will look at increasing IT resilience and increasing its use as a tool to work more flexibly and efficiently.

27. Although the nature of a substantial number of the roles within the Council cannot be classed as agile, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of hybrid working recognising that all decisions regarding hybrid working will start from what provides the best possible outcomes and services for our residents, service users, customers, and stakeholders.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)**

None specific.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

### **Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)**

None specific.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

### **Housing**

As contained in the report

**Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support**

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

DSE – Display Screen Assessment

EAP – Employee Assistance Programme

FTE – Full Time Equivalent

HOHS – Harlow Occupational Health Service

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

PI – Performance Indicator

VOIP – Voice Over Internet Protocol

## Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022/23

Work	Tuesday 12 July 2022	Tuesday 30 August 2022	Wednesday 16 November 2022	Tuesday 7 February 2023	Tuesday 14 March 2023
Policing and Community Safety Annual Review				Agreement of questions	Q&A with Police
Housing and Accommodation Requirements for Adults with a Moderate /Severe Learning Disability		Update on implementation of recommendations			
Allotments					
Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment					
Online Gambling	Review Submission Form				
Implementation of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Review Submission Form			Report	
Council Home Working	Review Submission Form	Report			
GP Practices	Review Submission Form				
Parking Permits	Review Submission Form				
Hate Crime	Review Submission				

	Form				
Notice Boards	Review Submission Form		Report		
Veolia Contract	Review Submission Form				
Garage E Charging	Review Submission Form				
Climate Change Strategy		Pre-scrutiny			
Health and Wellbeing Strategy			Pre-scrutiny		
Economic Development Strategy					Pre-scrutiny
Community Safety Strategy		Pre-scrutiny			