

# The 'Clear, Hold, Build' project – update and future plans



<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	24 October 2024
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Joel Charles, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Rebecca Farrant, Assistant Director – Corporate Services (01279) 446811
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Forward Plan number I017575
<b>Call In:</b>	This item is subject to call in procedures
<b>Corporate Mission:</b>	Protecting Our Communities
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Mark Hall

## Executive Summary

- A** The report highlights the concerted effort to tackle serious and organised crime in The Stow area of Harlow, through the implementation of the proven 'Clear, Hold, Build' (CHB) multi-agency tactic, led by Essex Police and supported extensively by public, voluntary and community sector partners.
- B** To deliver the required positive impact, the report recommends an increased focus and coordination within the Council's services as the work develops further into the 'Hold' and 'Build' phases, led by the Public Protection portfolio. Delivery focused functions of the Council will work collaboratively to ensure a set of actions are developed that aim to improve the lives of The Stow's residents and business owners. It further requests a funding allocation of £100,000 to be made available for activity that Harlow Council may be required to undertake to support the Hold and Build phases.
- C** The report recommends that the impact of, and lessons learned from, the specific work in The Stow are considered in relation to other areas of Harlow that might warrant similar intervention.

## **Recommended that Cabinet:**

- A** Endorses the setting up of an internal 'Operations Group' drawn from officers across all Council services to support the CHB multi-agency work, to ensure that all Council owned and led actions are delivered.
- B** Approves an indicative allocation of £100,000 that can be drawn down by the 'Operations Group' in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and the Chief Executive, where there is a business case to fund specific activity in support of current and future CHB initiatives. This is specifically actioned when existing budgets cannot absorb the additional cost.
- C** Delegates to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection the oversight of the Council's programme of work, in order to ensure the Council plays its part effectively in reducing crime and the fear of crime in The Stow.

## **Reason for decision**

- A** Whilst the CHB tactic has been proven nationally to significantly reduce burglary, drug related offences and anti-social behaviour, this is a new approach for Essex Police and its partners, and will require significant effort from the Council to ensure the strategic objectives are achieved.

## **Other Options**

- A** Do nothing. This is clearly not an option – The Stow has been identified as an area that will benefit significantly from a spread of focused and targeted interventions.
- B** Target other geographic areas in Harlow – subject to delivering the programme of work successfully in The Stow, the tactic could be deployed elsewhere.

## **Background**

1. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the council is required to consider the crime and disorder implications of all their day-to-day activities.
2. CHB is a framework/tactic for confronting serious and organised crime threats under the context of existing work carried out by the council's own community safety team and the approach taken by the District Commander to neighbourhood policing. It is an innovative approach, developed by the Home Office, to help police forces tackle serious and organised crime groups (OCGs). It aims to reclaim and rebuild neighbourhoods affected by organised crime, works to make areas safer and focuses on increasing public confidence in the police and partner agencies.

3. CHB was launched in May in Harlow with a focus in The Stow area of the Mark Hall Ward. The CHB logo was created by Sophia, a year six student at Cooks Spinney Primary Academy. Her colourful design and 'Safe to go Stow' slogan won a competition at her school and will now feature on all CHB information.
4. The phases of CHB are as follows:
  - a) **Clear** – create safer spaces to begin restoring community confidence. Initial targeted enforcement activity (arrests and relentless disruption) that target OCG members, their networks, business interests, criminality and spheres of influence.
  - b) **Hold** – stop other OCGs capitalising on the vacuum created. Consolidating and stabilising initial clear phase. Improve community confidence by ensuring spaces remain safe. Visible neighbourhood policing in hot spot areas used to provide continuing reassurance.
  - c) **Build** – a whole system approach, which includes community empowered interventions. Tackling causes of crime, exploitation of vulnerabilities and hotspots. Improved engagement with services, increased community confidence, greater reporting to the police, and an emphasis on building strong and lasting partnerships.

## Issues/ Proposals

5. As we move through the phases of CHB, there is an increasing need for the council to ensure that actions identified by partners and the local community that are within the council's capability and responsibility to resolve, are agreed, resourced and completed in a timely manner. Gaining the community's endorsement of and contribution to the actions being implemented to resolve their concerns will be critical. The council will share and publicise a high-level project plan and progress reports to keep the residents and business owners fully informed. This plan will also require input from professionals such as surveyors, to assess the need to respond to issues regarding the built environment, so that priorities can be considered as part of the council's wider budget setting process.
6. Whilst there is strong governance already in place with partners, there is a need to ensure a strong 'Operations Group' within the council to oversee the delivery of key CHB actions, with an indicative budget at its disposal to draw down funding where there is a business case to fund additional activity not covered by existing service budgets. The key criteria to apply will be:
  - a) Is there evidence that will help quantify the impact the proposed intervention will make?
  - b) Will the proposal make a substantial impact on reducing crime and/or fear of crime?
  - c) Will the proposal improve the public realm and the community's pride in their area?

- d) Does/should the council have the prime responsibility for resolving the action?
- e) Does the proposal have the support of the community and partners?
- f) Are there no existing council or partners' budgets that should be used in preference?

7. Issues identified by partners and raised by the community include:

- a) Gangs/intimidating groups of young people hanging around. Face coverings.
- b) Consumption of alcohol in public spaces/people under the influence of alcohol/noise.
- c) The alleged illegal distribution and use of drugs.
- d) Lack of things for children and young people to do.
- e) Bicycles, mopeds, motorbikes and scooters being ridden in pedestrianised areas.
- f) Damage to property.
- g) General poor upkeep and appearance of the local area, including rubbish and fly-tipping and repair work required to be actioned by the council's Housing Service.
- h) Lack of regular uniformed presence/official presence.

8. Emerging issues for the council's 'Operations Group' to resolve and maximise the council's impact:

- a) Is the activity and action planned sufficiently ambitious?
- b) Should the council be better organised (internally) to manage future CHB requirements?
- c) Are all parts of the council that will contribute to CHB activity clear on roles, responsibilities, priorities and speed of response required, particularly for the 'Build' phase?
- d) Does the council fully understand what evidence-based interventions are most likely to work?
- e) How the council maintains community confidence under the 'Build' phase of the project, by working with partners to continue regular dialogue with residents and business owners in The Stow, so that issues that have previously negatively impacted the community do not resurface.

9. Appendix A shows the overall project governance structure at both an internal Council and wider partnership level. Partners fully engaged in the CHB project include: Essex Police and the Serious Crime Directorate, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, The Safer Harlow Partnership, local NHS senior leaders from the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board, The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex and the Probation Service.

## **Implications**

### **Equalities and Diversity**

An initial screening assessment has been carried out, indicating low impact (Appendix B). As a result a full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out during the implementation of CHB.

### **Climate Change**

No specific issues have been identified.

### **Finance**

An earmarked reserve will be identified of £100,000 to finance the Clear, Hold, Build project, should costs not be absorbed into existing budgets or classified as transformational activity.  
Author: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

### **Governance**

Internal governance arrangements are contained within the report. Appropriate SLAs and MOU agreements to progress with joint working, including lawful data sharing protocols will be required to ensure strong external governance is in place.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – graphic showing the partnership and Harlow District Council project arrangements to oversee action and progress.

Appendix B – Equality Impact screening assessment

### **Background Papers**

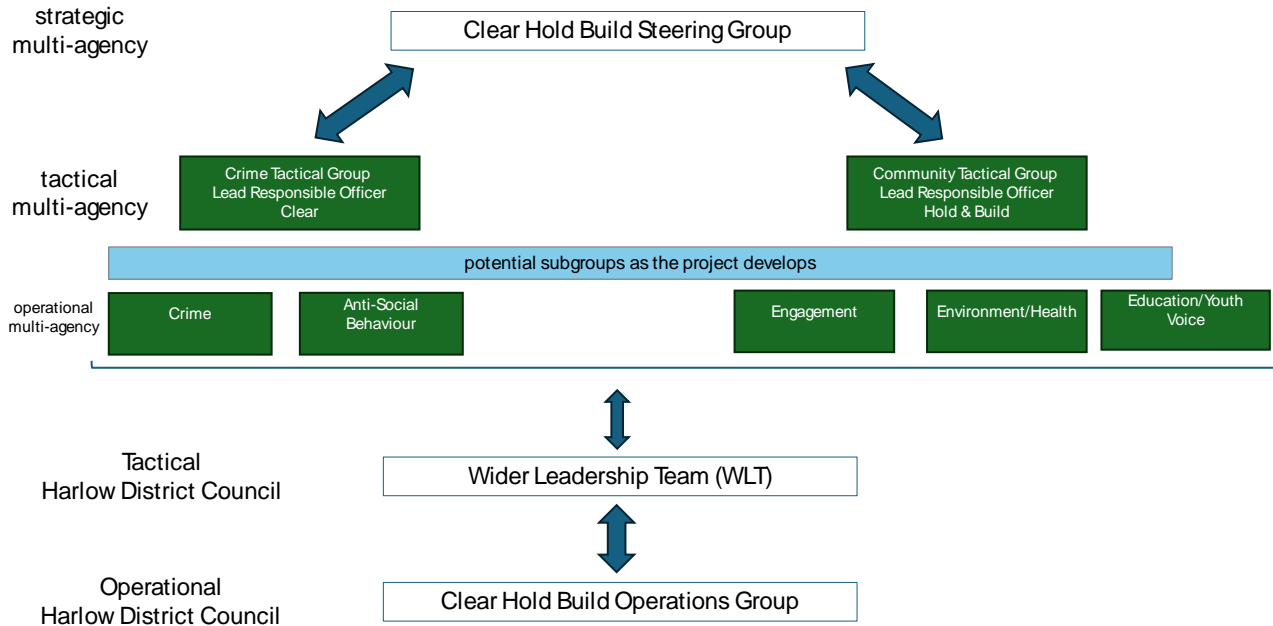
None

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

CHB Clear Hold Build

OCG Organised Crime Group

**Appendix A**  
**graphic showing the partnership and Harlow District Council project arrangements to oversee action and progress.**



The Council's Operations Group will comprise of representatives from the following services / teams:

- Housing
- Community Safety, Youth and Engagement
- Corporate Services
- Communications
- Planning
- Environment
- Environmental Health and Licensing
- Regeneration and Commercial Development
- HTS / Street Scene
- Legal and Procurement

Support from the Finance and HR Services will be provided as required.

**Appendix B**  
**Equality Impact Assessment – Initial Screening**

Questions to be used during the Screening Process	Yes	No
1) Does/will the policy or activity affect the public directly or indirectly?	X	
2) Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		X
3) Does the evidence/data show an existing or likely differential impact for the different strands of diversity? Age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexuality		X
4) Do/will people who belong to the different strands of diversity have different needs, experiences, issues or priorities in relation to this policy or activity (use evidence)	X	
5) Could the policy or activity affect how services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, where and by whom?		X
6) Could the policy or activity affect our workforce or employment practices?		X
7) Have complaints been received from different equality groups about the effect of this policy, proposal or our activities in general (having no complaints does not always mean there is no issue – always advisable to find out)		X
8) Does the policy involve or will it have an impact upon eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between diverse groups	X	
9) Is there likely to be an adverse/negative impact or risks to the organisation, for users, equality groups and staff if the policy or activity is implemented in its current format?		X

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been / will be carried out during the course of the CHB programme of work.