

# Briefing Note

Committee name: Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

Date: 27 November 2017

Responsible officer: Sarah Clark

## Solace

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

### 1. Background

- 1.1. In April 2017, an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group about 'street people' made four recommendations, one of which was: **The adoption of a Project SOLACE model or a similar approach in Cheltenham**. NB – 'street people' can include rough sleepers (who can be homeless or housed); begging and public drinking. The STG recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2014: [https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s22439/2017\\_07\\_11\\_CAB\\_Street\\_People\\_Covering\\_Report.pdf](https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s22439/2017_07_11_CAB_Street_People_Covering_Report.pdf)
- 1.2. Solace is a partnership between Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire Constabulary, aimed at addressing high and medium risk antisocial behaviour (ASB). On 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Cabinet recommended the implementation of Solace in Cheltenham: <https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=11828>
- 1.3. The information and intelligence the council has about Cheltenham street people indicates a significant number would meet the threshold for Solace action (based on risk and/or vulnerability).
- 1.4. However, due to prioritisation of resource at the highest risk cases, Solace will not be working with 'new' street people or those whose behaviour is not antisocial (or at least not to threshold where Solace would intervene). Therefore the council and its partners need to ensure that preventative work, engagement and support, and early interventions are suitably resourced and prioritised to avoid matter escalating into higher level crime and ASB that have a greater detrimental impact on communities and services. Please see para 3.6 for more information.

### 2. Solace implementation

- 2.1. A Solace team leader was recruited in the summer that will be shared between CBC, Gloucester City Council and the police. The successful candidate was CBC's Louise Boyle.
- 2.2. There have been significant delays in vetting the team leader due to lack of police vetting resource, but the team leader has now passed vetting and the ASB caseworkers will be next to be vetted. Individuals are not permitted access to police systems or information until such time as they pass vetting, so this has been a major constraint with implementation.

- 2.3. Louise Boyle resigned from her CBC post on 6<sup>th</sup> November and is on a three month notice period with managerial discretion to release her early. She is working part of her week at Gloucester City Council to prepare for the Cheltenham implementation and these 'banked hours' will be used to train her replacement at CBC if and when her current post is advertised.
- 2.4. CBC and police ICT officers continue to work together regarding police access to council Wi-Fi so Solace can operate from the municipal offices as an integrated team. The police cannot access their secure systems through CBC guest Wi-Fi but once an ICT solution is found, the physical arrangements and equipping of desks in CBC's agile space will be quick. A police ICT officer met some of the senior Solace team on 13<sup>th</sup> November to progress this, and options will be presented back to the Solace decision making forum.
- 2.5. It is anticipated that Solace will 'go live' in February 2017. Councillor Andrew McKinlay will be kept updated as the relevant Cabinet Member.

### **3. Current work with street people**

- 3.1. The street people working group continues to meet on a monthly basis. Partners ensure street people are engaged through outreach work and supported if they have vulnerabilities. In particular support is given in accessing services such as housing, drug & alcohol treatment, financial, and physical and mental health. Where there is evidence of ASB/crime and/or where the individual refuses to engage with help and support, the council and police agree the use of formal enforcement powers.
- 3.2. The group, which is led by CBC, have so far achieved the following outcomes:
  - 34 referrals to Streetlink (homeless outreach service)
  - 22 Letters of concern issued including signposting to support
  - 3 Final warnings issued
  - 3 Civil injunctions served and another 3 pending.
- 3.3. Work is also underway to build an intranet knowledge base accompanied by training sessions, so that CBC Members and officers can raise their awareness of place-based ASB and low level crime, and know how to report it. This will include how to notify the council's outreach contractor about someone who is potentially homeless. The Public Protection team have recently been equipped with Iphones through the agile working project and will trial using these to report ASB so that safeguarding can occur faster; opportunities are seized to prevent ASB and crime happening or escalating; and to expedite evidence gathering where formal enforcement is necessary to protect Cheltenham's people and places.
- 3.4. Process flows for reports/complaints of rough sleeping and begging have been designed/refreshed and are included as appendices 1 and 2 respectively to provide assurance of the work being undertaken in this area. These process flows are continually improved so are subject to change.
- 3.5. Ideally, this work will be supported through online reporting forms available as mobile apps that create a back office service record or job. In order to be truly effective, the council and partners need to work with street people a considerable time before they approach the threshold for Solace intervention due to increased risk and/or vulnerability. Paragraph 6.3 describes an emerging project with this aim – subject to funding applications which will be determined by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. A full update will be provided through a Cabinet report by the Director of Environment (CBC's Enforcement Lead) later this winter.

#### **4. Town centre enforcement trial ( working name MEET: Multi-agency Engagement & Enforcement Team)**

4.1. A project proposal has just been signed off by CBC's Executive Board which will focus on town centre engagement and enforcement, including street people activities (subject to funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheltenham Business Improvement District and the Late Night Levy Fund). The proposal is to co-locate three town centre Police Community Support Officers with a dedicated council enforcement officer in the council's new agile working space, where knowledge and data can be shared for a more effective and coordinated response to lower level ASB and crime. The agile working space will in effect become a town centre hub developing the Engage – Support – Enforce model that has been tested through the Street People working group of partners.

4.2. If funding is not secured, the project will be limited to encouraging CBC's own staff to increase ASB reporting by emailing or phoning in incidents, but there is a risk regarding the lack of resource available to receive these reports and coordinate a response. The funding priorities include a coordinator role and an online forms package.

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#### **Background documents:**

1. Street People STG report approved by Cabinet on 14.07.11:  
[https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s22439/2017\\_07\\_11\\_CAB\\_Street\\_People\\_Covering\\_Report.pdf](https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s22439/2017_07_11_CAB_Street_People_Covering_Report.pdf)
2. Solace report approved by Cabinet on 11.04.17:  
<https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=11828>

#### **Appendices:**

- Appendix 1: Rough Sleeper engage-support-enforce procedure
- Appendix 2: Begging engage-support-enforce procedure