

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	4 January 2023
Subject:	Pilot of Solace Partnership
Report of:	Environmental Health Manager
Head of Service/Director:	Head of Community Services
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

In 2021/22 the Council received 265 service requests for anti-social behaviour.

Solace is a currently a partnership between Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire Police. The partnership deals with high level and persistent anti-social behaviour. This report sets out a proposal for the Council to join Solace together with an outline of the potential benefits that this may bring to the Council.

The three other rural districts (Cotswolds, Forest of Dean and Stroud) are all in the process of preparing to join Solace.

Recommendation:

- 1. That a pilot of Solace be APPROVED for 12 months.**
- 2. That authority be DELEGATED to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment and the Director of One Legal to enter into necessary agreements between the Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary and other Solace authorities.**

Financial Implications:

There is no impact on the Council's finances as a result of this pilot.

Legal Implications:

The Council has a statutory duty to address and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. An agreement between the Council, the Police and the other solace councils will be required which One Legal can assist with. One Legal should also review the terms of the grant from the Police.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

Any expenditure related to this pilot will be met from a grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire.

Safeguarding Implications:

By the nature of its work Solace may from time to time encounter vulnerable individuals. Any concerns of a safeguarding nature will be reported to the Safeguarding Officer in the usual way.

Impact on the Customer:

Customers should see little or no change to the current arrangements other than seeing the Council and Gloucestershire Constabulary working more closely together.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Solace is currently a partnership between Gloucestershire Police, Gloucester City Council and Cheltenham Borough Council, which focuses on anti-social behaviour (ASB). The overriding aim of the partnership is to “*reduce repeat incidents and victims of anti-social behaviour by providing a consistent partnership approach between the Constabulary, CBC and GCC, to tackling anti-social behaviour*”. The specific objectives of the partnership are as follows:

- Reduce repeat victims of ASB.
- Provide a holistic approach to resolving ASB.
- Increase public confidence.
- Provide sustainable long-standing solutions to resolving ASB.

1.2 The partnership agreement requires each local authority to provide an ASB caseworker from their existing establishment staff. In addition to this, the authority is also expected to make an annual contribution towards the costs of the Project Manager and the IT case management system. Gloucestershire Police will then provide either a Constable or a Police Community Support Office (PCSO).

1.3 If agreed, it is proposed to pilot this approach in Tewkesbury Borough. The full costs of the pilot will be funded through grant funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL FOR TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

2.1 It is proposed for Tewkesbury Borough Council’s Community Safety Team to join Solace. This is to be undertaken as a trial to allow senior officers and Councillors to ascertain whether there is a case for joining on a more permanent basis.

2.2 One of the Council’s two Community Safety Officers will be incorporated into the Solace team and will be directly managed by the Project Solace Manager. The officers will work alongside a dedicated PC / PCSO to provide ASB complaint investigation, resolution and support services to owner occupiers and private residents throughout Tewkesbury Borough. This service will also be provided to tenants of social and supported housing providing that the landlord has met their duties first. In addition to front line ASB investigation work, the Solace Team will also undertake performance management and reporting as required.

2.3 The title of the officer will change to “Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworker”. In accordance with the service level agreement the service will generally operate Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and during this time officers will be available to respond to complaints. Outside of these hours, customers will be advised to contact 101 or 999 if necessary. The Council may exit the project at any time by providing 4 months’ notice. The detail of the staffing arrangements will be worked through in conjunction with human resources prior to the start of the pilot. It is not expected that any formal secondment arrangements are required as the member of staff involved remains an employee of the Council. One of the two current ASB officers has expressed an interest in being involved in the Solace pilot.

2.4 As Solace predominantly deals with high-level and persistent anti-social behaviour there will still be some residual work that will be retained in the community safety team and the remaining officer will deal with these and also undertake some proactive community safety work, something that there is currently no resource to undertake.

3.0 BENEFITS TO THE COUNCIL

3.1 Membership of Solace is likely to result in a number of benefits to the Council. This may include:

- Clear synergies in terms of operational efficiency resulting from shared knowledge, intelligence, training, and operational procedures.
- Better support in dealing with cross border inter-authority ASB cases.
- Reassurance that the team has the day-to-day guidance and support of a dedicated and experienced manager.
- Readily available support from experienced colleagues to assist with complex cases and formal enforcement if required. For example, officers from Solace played a significant role in advising and assisting the police and the Council in a recent, high profile ASB case.
- Access to a bespoke ASB ICT system which will allow for better record keeping and case management. This in turn should bring substantial improvements in terms of performance monitoring, case reviews, responding to FOI requests and community triggers.

3.2 Membership of Solace could offer the Council substantial benefits in terms of operational resilience, ASB case management and sharing of knowledge with both the Police and neighbouring local authorities. This increases the prospect of the Council being able to demonstrate that ASB complaints have been thoroughly investigated and that adequate communication channels are in place with partner agencies.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 Detail of the staffing arrangements have been discussed with HR and for the period of the pilot a member of staff from the community safety team will have their day-to-day line management moved to the Solace supervisor, whilst all formal management e.g. signing off expenses, dealing with performance issues etc will remain with the Environmental Health Manager. If the pilot is successful and members wish to join Solace longer term, then more permanent arrangements will be put into place.

4.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

4.1 There are no significant risks arising from running this pilot.

5.0 MONITORING

5.1 An evaluation report will be brought back to this Committee following the trial.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Promote a healthy and flourishing environment in the borough.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: None.