



## Public Services Board Joint Committee - 10 February 2022

### Critical Incident Group- High Street

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide an update on Critical Incident Group - High Street, progress to date and group closure
<b>Link to Well-being Objective:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To make Swansea a great place to live and age well.</li><li>• To build strong communities with a sense of pride and belonging.</li></ul>
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The paper is noted.

#### 1. Introduction

The issues affecting the High Street and surrounding area are not uncommon to those that affect many of our communities.

Established in July 2019 through the Safer Swansea Partnership, four work streams lead on key areas of work. They report quarterly on progress to a Critical Incident Task And Finish Group.

The groups are:

- Criminality and Anti-Social Behaviour – lead SWP
- Substance misuse, drug dealing and County Lines activity – lead BAROD
- Street sex working and exploitation of vulnerable people – lead Women's Aid
- Public realm – Swansea Council

#### 2. Outcomes

To complement activities being undertaken by the Council, Police and partner agencies to tackle antisocial behaviour issues, additional investment has been used to improve lighting, sight lines, and safety around the pedestrian tunnels and raising the standard of the appearance of the area.

Indicative activities include lighting, landscaping, security measures, and assessment and reuse of derelict structures and properties. In particular, the series of properties at the top of High Street, former retail units have been

renovated for constructive medium term meanwhile uses pending further redevelopment of this area in the future. Uses will include:

- to provide a base for outreach work, social enterprises and community engagement work. This would be hugely positive and supported by a number of partners.
- Using the opportunity for attracting project based support and finance from Partners (Safer Swansea Partnership, working with additional partners, are best placed to deliver this project).

There is also the option to pilot activities using one or more of the units as a base.

This will include:

- space for business start ups to go with provision now lined up to provide start up bursary grants (£1k per business, with £5k capital potentially available via regional scheme) – this is a key Covid recovery action point as well as a catalyst to provide alternative lifestyle choices for local residents
- Employability projects could occupy space and contribute
- Pilot subscriptions model for community hubs (variable rates for different sectors for use of generic comfortable Wi-Fi-enabled space)

Op Jaeger which was undertaken during the initial part of the CIG. It was successful in dealing with issues but was stood down due to the changing landscape at the beginning of 2020 with the onset of wider impact of Covid. There was a reassessment of ASB and Criminality in both High Street and the issues moving to St Helens area. The matter was reviewed with a new OSARA problem solving approach being adopted; however, the emphasis remained on signposting sex workers to support services as well as issuing S35s notices and S59s. There was a continued approach which was balanced to offering and signposting support to those who need it as well as enforcement for aggressive begging and clear criminality. Since this time, the report of aggressive begging has decreased and there has been a decrease in criminality and ASB in the area.

The OSARA problem solving model around sex working was reviewed and closed due to a lack of reported activity. The number of incidents being reported to South Wales Police regarding sex working around High Street reduced, this was likely due to COVID and the impact. The issues continued to be reassessed and although there is still sex working activity in the area, the number of reports being received by the Police significantly decreased.

An Operation Perception' survey was carried out by SWP neighbourhood team in Matthew Street in June 21 and then on High Street in October 21.

An overview of this is as follows:

June '21 Survey-Matthew Street.

Residents were asked a number of questions relating to their community, these are as follows:

On a scale of 1-5 how safe do you feel (1 not at all safe and 5 very safe)-

28.8% felt very safe, 25% scored a 4, and then 19.2% indicated that they did not feel at all safe. 80% of the survey scored 3-5 indicating they felt safe, The main issue for the community was drug use, followed by ASB, drug dealing and then homelessness, 65.9% of residents had not reported any issues to police in the last year, 84.4% of those surveyed requested extra police presence and 55.6 % requested extra CCTV.

October '21 Survey-High Street.

The main issue for the community is ASB, drug use and then crime of which theft and criminal damage featured. Of those surveyed only 3.7% indicated that sex working was an issue they were experiencing that affected business or quality of life.

When residents were asked regarding how often did they see sex workers, 80.6 % indicated hardly ever with 6.5% indicating on a daily basis.

Business owners were asked how sex working issues on High Street were affecting their business-74.2% said it did not affect their business as opposed to 16.1% who said it did adversely affect their business.

75.9% of residents had not reported any issues to police in the last year, 89.5% of those surveyed requested extra police presence and 42.1 % requested extra CCTV.

SWP have seen a reduction in reports of crime, ASB and reports of sex working in the High Street area. As a result the OSARA problem solving model that was in place has now been closed down as the objectives were achieved. The situation continues to be monitored for issues but from the Op Perception surveys in the aforementioned paragraphs it can be seen that the acute issues that did present themselves around concerns around public safety, crime, ASB and other incidents to the police which from the surveys the perception is that these have decreased.

Partnership delivery of SWAN evening outreach service – BAROD outreach worker on van once a week, sexual health service once a fortnight and blood borne virus nurse once a month.

Improved partnership delivery of response to women exploited by the sex industry particularly during Covid 19 lockdowns. Access quickly enabled to emergency food supplies, dignity packs, clothing, contraception etc. at different venues across Swansea.

Open discussion on way forward with all agencies involved with sexually exploited women and exploited vulnerable people. Improved relationships

between agencies as working together more closely than previously. A real feel of everyone pulling together to address their needs and overcome any barriers to service access.

Development of rapid access proscriptio services ( RAPS ) service at Dyfodol to enable easier access to scripts for vulnerable people/sexually exploited women.

Facilitation of ongoing working relationships between agencies.

The work stream pulled together all the statutory and third sector agencies pertinent to women exploited by the sex industry and exploited vulnerable people.

We were able to share updates on service offers (particularly pertinent due to Covid) and expertise and knowledge and work out solutions for issues. There would not have been another forum for this.

### **3. Conclusion**

The task and finish group have completed the work and will continue to deliver through business as usual so have agreed to close the work streams and Critical Incident Group

### **4. Next steps/ Actions**

**For the Public Service Board:**

**Report Author: Paul Thomas**

**Organisation: Swansea Council**

**Appendices: None**