

<b>Cabinet</b>	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
19 December 2018	
<b>Report of:</b> Denise Radley, Corporate Director Health, Adults & Community	<b>Classification:</b> [Unrestricted]
<b>Operation Continuum</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor A Begum Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Equalities</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Ann Corbett, Divisional Director, Community Safety
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>Shadwell, Stepney, Bow, Whitechapel, St Peters/Weavers</b>
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	N/A
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	N/A
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and ASB is tackled

### Executive Summary

Operation Continuum was established in November 2017 in response to reports from residents that business as usual law enforcement activity was not having the desired impact on drug dealing and associated criminality. Helping people to feel safe in their neighbourhoods is a strategic priority for the Council and the Executive Mayor acted to convene key agencies from across the Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership to facilitate the development of an enhanced package of collaborative action, against the crime, disorder and violence linked to the street based drug markets in the borough.

The initial Operation Continuum was launched in December 2017 and focused on Shadwell. Since then, there have been subsequent operations targeted in Stepney, Bow, Whitechapel and St Peters/Weavers wards. The partnership approach utilised in Operation Continuum has enabled partnership activity to become more holistic, allowing the Council to use its local knowledge, experience and resources to support the Police to disrupt and enforce against the drugs market. As a result, a broader range of powers and interventions have been brought to bear against the perpetrators of crime and the anti-social behaviour (ASB) linked to the drugs markets. To date, Operation Continuum activity has resulted in:

- 100 warrants executed/properties raided
- 191 total arrests for drug offences and drug supply
- 88 people charged
- 31 men sentenced to a combined total of more than 100 years' imprisonment

- Large quantities of Class A drugs and Cannabis seized
- £167k in cash seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act
- 164 drugs stop and searches conducted
- 399 ASB Warnings issued
- 25 weapon sweeps conducted
- 33 weapons recovered from weapon sweeps including knives and other offensive weapons
- 93 people arrested, assessed and referred in to drug treatment.

Operation Continuum closely aligns to the strategic goals of the Council and Partnership as set out in the following documents:

- The Community Safety Partnership Plan (2017-2021) has identified tackling drugs, alcohol and the associated ASB as one of its four strategic priority areas;
- The Council's own Strategic Plan (2018-19) prioritises making people feel safer in their neighbourhoods and tackling ASB, as well ensuring children and young people are protected so they get the best start in life;
- The ASB Blueprint, agreed by the Mayor in Cabinet in June 2017, sets out a commitment to an improved, victim focused response to ASB, to better use of all available powers and to improve the understanding of its impact and reduce its damaging effects.

This report highlights the results of those operations and recommends their continuation in 2019 with the full support of all council and partner resources.

### **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to

1. Note this report and the progress of Operation Continuum since its implementation in December 2017 to date.
2. Support the continuation of targeted geographic operations to disrupt drug markets in addition to business as usual law enforcement and robust policing.
3. Commend our local Borough Commander, her police officers, those in the Council funded Partnership Task Force and wider partners for their focus to date on this issue and encourage the Metropolitan Police to maintain their corporate commitment to tackling drugs with the full support of all council resources.
4. Endorse the partnership approach and ensure that we continue to build our understanding of drug markets in order to disrupt, dismantle and

safeguard our communities and young people from harm.

5. Ensure robust enforcement initiatives like Continuum and targeted communications are incorporated in the future approach to tackling substance misuse problems, crime and offending.

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 Not applicable

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 No applicable

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **3.1 The challenge**

In the 2018 Annual Resident Survey, 60% of residents identified tackling drug dealing and drug use as a top priority. The Police Public Attitude Survey (PAS) also highlights that 86% of residents surveyed in Tower Hamlets said drug use and drug dealing was their main concern, in comparison with 60% for the rest of London. Approximately 80% of all resident complaints to the Council about ASB relate to drug dealing and drug use and in the period Nov 2016 to Oct 2017 our residents made over 4,900 calls to the Police about drug dealing.

Understandably residents draw no meaningful distinction between crime and ASB, or between the differing duties of the public agencies responsible for tackling them. For most members of the public, crime and ASB exist on the same spectrum of bad or very bad behaviour and a perceived lack of action against them can negatively impact on the confidence in the Council and the Police. Anecdotally, these issues have grown and evolved in intensity and impact in recent years, with significantly negative effects on the quality of life for some of our residents.

Resident experience accurately describes the significant challenges facing the borough in respect of the drugs market. Tower Hamlets is estimated to have one of the highest prevalence of opiate and crack users in London at a rate of 13.2 opiate and crack users per 1000 population, 91% of whom are using both. Crack cocaine markets have strong links to violence and national evidence suggests crack use is rising in England and Wales. Between 2014/15 and 2016/17 homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%. A fact acknowledged in the Government's recent Serious Violence Strategy.

Tower Hamlets faces high levels of crime, in particular knife crime. One of the main drivers of this violence is believed to be the supply of Class A and Class

B drugs. The drug supply ranges from ASB to more serious crime, and poses safeguarding risks linked to the criminal exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults.

### **3.2 The response**

Tackling the drugs market places a significant demand on the Council, policing and public health resources, as it requires a multi-faceted response to address the supply and demand sides of the market.

Despite these challenges, the Council and the wider Community Safety Partnership are taking robust action to disrupt and dismantle the drugs market and proactively intervene to enforce against perpetrators and prevent, safeguard and support victims.

The Tower Hamlets Substance Misuse Strategy 2016-2019 outlines the partnership ambition to achieve this, and comprises a three pronged approach:

- Prevention and behaviour change to limit growth in future demand
- Treatment to support recovery
- Enforcement and regulation to tackle the crime and anti-social behaviour linked to drugs and alcohol.

The Exploitation Team in our children's service is an excellent example of multi-agency working between council and police to safeguard young people from criminal and sexual exploitation as a result of the risks posed by these issues.

Our treatment services provide a recovery focused integrated drug and alcohol response to people's different needs and are accessible to all in the community.

The Substance Misuse Strategy commits to making full use of all enforcement and regulatory powers to target criminals who profit from activities associated with substance misuse.

### **3.3 Operation Continuum**

Operation Continuum is our collective partnership response to the crime, ASB and violence associated with local drug markets. It represents an enhanced package of measures that complements robust policing business as usual activity in the fight against crime and ASB. Working together in this way allows community safety partners to make a bigger and more sustainable difference for our residents.

Operation Continuum involves adopting 'Achilles Heel' tactics, which involve exploiting all available legislation to disrupt and deter criminal behaviour when appropriate and proportionate. For example, using Housing Act legislation and ASB Crime & Policing Act legislation (such as civil injunctions, premises

closure notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders) to address the most high risk and entrenched offending.

Commencing in November 2017 the initial Operation Continuum focused on Shadwell, an area identified by residents, through intelligence and information to be one of the most problematic for drug dealing. Planning was coordinated by the Council's Community Safety team and the police involving a wide range of partners including Tower Hamlets Homes and other housing providers. The Police targeted dealers and their operations utilising a host of different law enforcement tactics.

Improved information sharing arrangements ensured that appropriate council activity could then be planned in advance to support the Police. The following Council resources were specifically deployed and utilised in the days following the operations to provide support and address any additional issues:

- CCTV
- Clean and Green Team
- Commercial Waste and Enforcement Team
- Street Population Co-ordination
- Trading Standards
- Drug and Alcohol Action Team – to provide outreach and support
- Licensing Officers
- ASB investigation team
- Communications Officers
- Community Safety Staff

On the day of the operation, after the initial Police raids, Council resources were deployed conducting highly visible activity in support of the operation and to provide reassurance to those residents in the area. The Council activity was maintained for a full week with a focus on providing information, outreach and community reassurance. The learning and feedback has informed the subsequent Continuum operations throughout 2018 that have been held in Stepney, Bow, Whitechapel and St Peters/Weavers wards. This included ongoing feedback from residents about the impact in their neighbourhoods.

### **3.4 Future Plans**

It is important that we maintain relentless focus on drugs and not lose the momentum established by Operation Continuum. The new police Partnership Task Force funded by the Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets have robust targets around tackling drug supply and reducing violence. Measures include the number of drug supply and possession arrests, stop and search for drugs and weapons, seizures of drugs and knives, and detections for these offences. New focused tasking and neighbourhood deployment arrangements have been introduced. Led by Community Safety, Police and Council resources are deployed via a weekly tactical tasking meeting, informed by improved intelligence and information from police, partners and the

community, ensuring more responsive, visible and timely action in neighbourhoods impacted on by drug dealing and taking.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Different communities and cohorts of the population experience anti-social behaviour and associated crime differently. Those most vulnerable to becoming both perpetrators and victims of ASB and crime include:

- Young people
- Parents/guardians of children
- Residents from the BAME community
- Residents with a disability

#### **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.

5.2 Problematic drug / alcohol use within the borough contributes significantly to crime and anti-social behaviour. In addition there are significant contextual safeguarding risks and associated hidden harms for young people, vulnerable adults and within families. Treatment interventions are funded on the basis that they prevent further health harm and costs associated with crime. Nationally, it is estimated that every £1 spent on drug treatment saves £4 in health and crime costs. Latest data shows that 15% of referrals into the treatment system are via criminal justice agencies (police, probation, prison). Enforcement is a key priority within our current Substance Misuse Strategy. Operation Continuum forms part of a suite of activity to address criminal activity relating to the sale and supply of drugs and provides beneficial consequences in addressing crime and disorder

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 Annual funding of £1m in years 2018/19 to 2020/21 for the Police Partnership Task Force was agreed at Cabinet in September 2017 to fund additional police officers in the borough, and support the delivery of Operation Continuum.

- 6.2 Other service expenditure incurred to support the delivery of Operation Continuum across the Council has been, and will continue to be, funded through existing resources.
- 6.3 The update on Operation Continuum provided by this report contains no direct financial implications not already built in to existing resource plans.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council is one of the responsible authorities for Tower Hamlets, within the meaning of section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Other responsible authorities for Tower Hamlets include: every provider of probation services in Tower Hamlets; the chief officer of police whose police area lies within Tower Hamlets; and the fire and rescue authority for Tower Hamlets. Together, the responsible authorities for Tower Hamlets are required to formulate and implement strategies for: the reduction of crime and disorder; combating the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances; and the reduction of re-offending.
- 7.2 The work done under Operation Continuum has assisted the Council to comply with its duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 7.3 In considering this report and the work under Operation Continuum, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1. Infographic Operation Continuum
- Appendix 2. Community Safety Partnership Plan Priorities

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- None.

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A