1. **SUMMARY**

This paper updates on the progress of the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and proposes next steps for its development. These include:

- Governance arrangements for the programme
- Operationalising the pledges and the plans for the work of each VRP domain
- Description of the project management requirements and resources
- Outline of violence reduction month activities
- An approach to demonstrating impact of the VRP and supporting metrics
- Links to Mayors Office and national violence reduction initiatives

It concludes by considering risks and barriers to success.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1.1 Note the progress and risks to success.
3. PROPOSALS

Context

3.1 The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) has been established in response to the recent increase in youth violence, with a simple ambition: to reduce violence across the borough.

3.2 At the November 2018 violence reduction summit it was agreed that the VRP would pursue a public health approach to violence reduction – i.e. one that tackles violent acts and the causes of violence, including through resilience building within the local community. Our public health model divides the work of the VRP into four domains, reflecting different stages of intervention:

- **Curtail** violent acts at source, pursuing perpetrators and enforcing action
- **Treat** those who have been exposed to violence to control the spread
- **Support** those susceptible to violence due to their exposure to risk factors
- **Strengthen** community resilience through universal approaches

![Our public health approach targets interventions at different stages, from curtailing violence as it occurs, through to strengthening community resilience.](chart)

3.3 To update on progress over recent months:

3.3.1 Working groups have been set up to oversee delivery on each of these domains - each group met once in February / March and developed a set of pledges and accompanying actions which are appended to this report.

3.3.2 Young people are represented on all the four workstream groups, but to ensure we fully consider the views of young people, and to give them a space to debate and air their views, a separate Young People’s VRP group has also been established; our approach to violence reduction must be rooted in the experience and captures the voice of those most affected.

3.3.3 The VRP process has aligned with the work of the Waltham Forest Citizens Youth Commission, with a strong overlap in representation and themes to take forward into action –
including encouraging residents to become mentors, building positive relationships between the police and young people, and looking to reduce persistent absence from school. In bringing this work together the VRP has an opportunity to build on the energy and commitment of civil society organisations and their members and to ensure our approach to violence reduction is built upon community action.

3.3.4 There is clear synergy between the Violence Reduction Partnership and our work through the Connecting Communities programme, in particular how we are building the collective power of Waltham Forest which will be key to delivering the ‘Strengthen’ domain, but also how we are working to empower local groups that could support the ‘curtail’, ‘treat’ and ‘support’ domains.

3.3.5 The working groups came together for the plenary VRP summit on 25th April 2019 where they articulated their organisational pledges and collective commitment to address the problem of rising violence in Waltham Forest. The Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Lead Members committed to ensure that the work of the VRP translates into tangible actions that make a difference to residents.

Governance

3.4 The VRP is yet to be formally incorporated into Waltham Forest strategic governance arrangements. If it is to become established as an ongoing programme of activity, with high expectations of what it will achieve within the borough, then formal reporting and accountability needs to be established within the strategic partnership arrangements.

3.5 The VRP will report directly into the Think Family Strategy Board which will act as the formal governance authority. In addition, all of the WF Strategic Partnership Boards will need to be kept updated about the work of the VRP and, conversely, VRP groups will want assurance that Boards are taking forward work relevant to the group’s domain pledges and actions.

3.6 Formal incorporation into the accountability and planning of the Think Family Strategy Board will ensure that the whole system oversight and expertise of the Strategic Partnerships Team is brought to bear on the work of the VRP. The senior responsible officer will remain the Director for Well-Being and Independence reporting into the Deputy Chief Executive and Lead Member for Community Safety.

Operationalising the Workstream Plans and Pledges

3.7 Each of the working groups has identified themes against which they made pledges with corresponding actions. Many of these actions align or extend work which has already been agreed within one of the strategic partnership board’s work plans. Work has started to map
across VRP actions onto partnership plans. In each domain there is some new activity which it is proposed that the VRP work groups lead on, while for other activities the groups should be holding strategic boards to account for their actions to further the aims of the VRP.

3.8 By way of illustration, the ‘Support’ domain has a pledge to ‘build resilience in primary school children’ with a corresponding action to ‘deploy the Botvin Life Skills programme to 10,000 children in the next three years’. This is an existing action for the Think Family Strategy Board, and so in this case the ‘Support’ working group are only responsible for ensuring progress of the programme roll out.

3.9 Conversely the pledge to ‘ensure a consistent safety and well-being curriculum within trauma-informed educational settings’ will need dedicated focus from the ‘Support’ group to draw together work with the councils and education leaders to deliver this commitment.

3.10 Over the coming weeks, each group will meet again at set out their plans for progressing their pledges, and delivery alongside the strategic partnership, with specific focus on who owns which VRP actions so that they can be discharged effectively.

**Resourcing the Violence Reduction Partnership**

3.11 There has to date been no substantive resourcing for the VRP, with activity supported through additions to existing officer roles, and the support of an external consultant for approximately one day per week.

3.12 With incorporation into the strategic partnership programme there will need to be agreement about what support is provided through the partnership team, and what will need to be additional through dedicated officer time on the VRP.

3.13 As there is still work to do to understand the requirements of the VRP, particularly what needs to sit outside or is on top of the normal business of services and the strategic partnership team, arrangements will be put in place for the next six months to test and review effectiveness before a longer-term solution is proposed. These short-term arrangements will see:

3.13.1 A dedicated project officer co-ordinating the work of the VRP groups, providing a conduit to the strategic partnerships team and other council and partner services, tracking actions and fulfilling reporting and accountability requirements. This position will be filled from July for eight months, though we will review effectiveness after six.

3.13.2 Additional strategic input as from the existing external consultant who has worked on the VRP project up until now, and some support during the transition to the project officer, especially give additional demands in embedding the VRP work and preparing for violence reduction month.
3.13.3 Consideration of additional support through the graduate scheme or an apprenticeship placement to build resilience and capability across the programme.

Violence Reduction Month

3.14 A key pledge from the VRP groups is a shared commitment to undertake a focused month of campaigning and public activity to promote violence reduction. This will utilise opportunities to build upon existing plans and campaigns to promote safety in the borough.

3.15 The first Violence Reduction Month commenced on June 17th with the BBC London News highlighting the work of our Streetbase “peer to peer” outreach service.

3.16 The month’s calendar of activities contains a total of 103 Violence Reduction partnership activities across a five-week period, demonstrating work across the four domains and creating multiple opportunities to communicate the key messages to our residents about the Violence Reduction Partnership. The impact of the month (which will finish on the 19th July) will be evaluated by the Council’s communication’s team.

Demonstrating Impact

3.17 Public health approaches are not quick or easy as they are designed to get to the root of complex problems. The Mayor has talked about a ten-year timeline to turn around the rise in violence in the capital.

3.18 While violence reduction will require a long-term programme and consistent effort, there are indicators which will demonstrate that we are moving in the right direction, which taken together can provide assurance that the strategy is working and that the ultimate objective of sustained violence reduction will be achieved.

3.19 Caveats are needed before outlining these indicators:

3.19.1 Some of the potential measures of success are short-term and may be counter-productive to the VRP’s long-term aims: e.g. knife crime prevention orders are widely viewed as counter-productive to young people’s desistance.

3.19.2 Some activity may delay or displace violence but simply move the problem to another neighbourhood or a later time; an example might be curtailing drug-dealing / closing premises without addressing those who are buying the drugs.

3.19.3 It also needs to be recognised that action in one domain can have an adverse impact in another; the sea—saw relationship between stop and search and community confidence, legitimacy and trust is an obvious example.

3.19.4 It is therefore important that any action in one domain is agreed across the partnership and can be shown to be part of
a coherent public health approach. Similarly the measures of success must coalesce to a coherent suite of indicators.

3.20 For the reasons outlined above the indicators of success for the first year of the VRP are deliberately and primarily qualitative and output driven. The first questions to answer will be, “are we doing the right things in each domain?” , “do they hang together as a coherent set of activities?” and once underway “did we do what we said we were going to do?”

3.21 Beyond this starting frame there are a set of proxy indicators which can provide a degree of assurance that the programme is moving in the right direction to achieve its goals. These indicators are:

3.21.1 Curtail:
- Resident surveys of confidence, satisfaction, safety – particularly in hotspot areas
- % of successful stop and searches for weapon carrying
- Number of police officers upskilled in engaging young people by young people
- Reduction in rates of ASB through the implementation of Operation Bicorne in “hot spot” areas
- Satisfaction with ASB case outcome (Housemar definition as specified in the Housing/ Social Landlord Compact)

3.21.2 Treat:
- Number / experience of young people accessing new trauma pathway through the Youth and Family Resilience Service
- Number accessing VAWG services through children and family centres
- Enhanced safeguarding pathway implemented by police, health, council for children arrested with drugs/weapons/money
- Review of Operation Encompass and enhanced model implemented to incorporate wider violence related concerns and to include colleges

3.21.3 Support:
- Number of primary children accessing Botvin Life Skills intervention
- Reduction in persistent absence and exclusions from WF schools (and / or exclusions?)
- Number of apprenticeships offered by partners to those in vulnerable groups
- Implementation of consistent safety and well-being offer in all WF schools
- Number of children and young people accessing Kooth and monitoring the impact of the Whole School Approach scheme to address violence against women and girls

3.21.4 Strengthen
- Number of mentors trained and number of young people accessing a mentor
- 60 (+) Ask Me violence reduction ambassadors trained and active
- Number of young people engaged and supported through Street Base young advisers
- Establishment of four Neighbourhood Networks with violence reduction and social exclusion in work plans

3.22 It is recommended that these indicators will be reported through Community Safety PLM and into the Think Family Strategy Board. In addition, it is recommended that a twice yearly report be presented on the progress against the actions agreed.

3.23 Waltham Forest has a track-record of pursuing evidence-based interventions and has been supported to develop a sophisticated understanding of the local context through research partnerships with the University of Bedfordshire and South Bank University. In view of the significance of the issue and the complexity in measuring impact it is recommended that a further long-term research partnership with an academic institution is explored in order to support what is a leading edge and developmental approach to a complex social issue. This piece of work is not yet scoped out or costed and will be managed within the programme’s governance structures.

3.24 A further consideration for support in developing the VRP will be through relationships with regional and national partners. Continuing to build upon the links to the Mayor’s Office and the developing work of the Violence Reduction Unit is likely to provide important support and challenge to the VRP and potentially additional resource. Similarly the Home Office and Youth Justice Board are looking to support local innovation in violence reduction and will be interested in the work in Waltham Forest. Finally, violence is ignorant of borough boundaries, so we will work with neighbouring authorities to ensure effective join-up to help ensure strong action in Waltham Forest is not undermined by activity in adjacent areas.

Risks / Barriers to Success

3.25 Michael Moore’s strategic triangle provides a useful frame for assessing the likely success of any major public change project. The three points of the triangle are: public value / support (is it the right thing to do?), authorising environment (does it have sufficient support from key decision-makers and bodies?): operational capacity (is it possible to do with the resources available?).

3.26 In terms of public value the outcome of reduced violence and the evidenced-based public health approach to achieving this are undoubtedly valuable and have wide-ranging support.

3.27 As for the authorising environment there is clearly high-level support within the council for the VRP as evidenced by both summits and the ongoing interest of senior politicians and officers. The concern in relation to the authorising environment is the extent to which senior officers in partner organisations have engaged with the VRP and the pledges made which will require change by their agencies. Tying-in
senior partner support through the four Strategic partnership boards appears an important next step before moving to operationalise the VRP pledges and actions. Agreeing a shared, long-term partnership vision and strategy for achieving violence reduction is the biggest predictor of success of the VRP; without it partners will peel away as the pressure to turn to easy answers and single agency solutions becomes overwhelming.

The third point of the triangle, resource requirements and organisational capacity, has been addressed above, with temporary arrangements in place to understand long-term needs. The Council have successfully appointed a VRP programme lead for the next eight months, and will consider supporting resource through a graduate or apprentice. In December 2019 a review of the impact of this post will be undertaken to assess whether this is representing best value and impact.

4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.1 We considered a council-only approach to tackling violence that was focussed on the council’s remit, rather than a partnership approach. However, this would have severely constrained the effectiveness of the approach given that a large number of the points of intervention are in the control of our strategic partners.

4.2 The creation and implementation VRP is not a statutory obligation and was instead borne out of the Council Leader’s call to action to all statutory and non-statutory partners to collaborate and work to deliver a public health approach to violence. The commitments and pledges within the partnership are a live document and will evolve through the life of the programme.

5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

5.1 The Violence Reduction Partnership will support the council’s commitment to tackle inequality and boost life chances for all residents. It will contribute to our ambition to build strong, resilient communities as set out in our Connecting Communities Strategy, where residents feel included, supported and safe. The development of the Partnership will be fully cognisant of the Mayor of London’s work to tackle violence across London, including his Violent Crime Taskforce and the Violence Reduction Unit set up to join up efforts in the capital.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Formal statutory consultation was not necessary for the development of the VRP. However, as outlined above, extensive engagement with our statutory and non-statutory partners and with our young people was undertaken in the development of the commitments and pledges.
The on-going engagement with young people will form a central element of the programme going forward. In addition, the Communities Scrutiny Committee has been considering a public health approach to violence reduction with support from Council officers and partners. The committee has made a number of recommendations which, if accepted by Cabinet will be integrated into the work programme of the VRP.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1 Implementation of the Violence Reduction Partnership will be funded from current service budgets.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 There are no legal implications identified.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

7.3.1 The Violence Reduction Partnership will have a positive impact on equality and diversity, seeking to boost the life chances for those involved in or affected by violence, which are more likely to be minority groups.

7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

7.4.1 The Violence Reduction Partnership’s focus on reducing violence in the borough will have a positive impact on crime, health and well-being.

7.4.2 There are no climate implications.

7.5 Council Infrastructure

7.5.1 Violence Reduction Partnership will utilise existing council infrastructure.

7.6 Brexit

7.6.1 There are no specific known implications regarding the impact of Brexit on the Violence Reduction Partnership, though we are mindful of (a) potential increases in hate crime as a result of the tensions arising from the continued uncertainty as to the nature and timing of our exit from the EU, and (b) the impact of Brexit on the capacity of our partnership organisations to deliver.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.
Appendix 1

Violence Reduction Partnership – Pledges and Actions

Strengthen

Pledges

- Earlier identification and pathways to support in community and faith organisations
- Work to improve the relationship between young people and the police
- Mobilise the community to reduce violence supported through ongoing work of the four new Neighbourhood Networks

Actions

- Street Base detached peer support / sign-posting
- Youth VRP group to support work to improve the relationship between young people and the police
- Community capacity building through the Ask Me ambassadors programme. 60 ambassadors supporting violence reduction / gangs prevention
- New mentoring offer supported by faith and community organisations
Support

Pledges

- Build resilience in primary school children and support transition to secondary through universal and targeted interventions
- Consistent safety and well-being curriculum and trauma-informed practice across WF schools and colleges for students, staff and parents
- Real opportunities for quality work, education and training for those at risk

Actions

- Remodelling of Alternative Provision in the borough
- Life Skills resilience programme to be rolled out to 10,000 primary school children 2019 – 22
- Enhanced support for those identified as vulnerable in primary school and in transition to secondary
- Promote ‘Kooth’ support for young people’s mental health
- VRP Support Group to lead on safety and well-being curriculum and trauma-informed practice in WF
- Life Chances Strategy to ensure real opportunities for quality work and study for those at risk including more work experience and apprenticeships
Pledges

- Develop trauma recovery pathway through CAMHS commissioning and development of the Youth and Family Resilience Service
- Every partner organisation to embed trauma informed practice across WF
- Enhance safeguarding pathway for children involved in criminal exploitation

Actions

- CAMHS joint work with Youth and Family Resilience Service to provide pathways to therapeutic interventions for those exposed to violent trauma
- One stop shop Violence Against Women and Girls service within Children and Family Centres
- Treat Group to lead on embedding trauma informed practice across WF organisations
- Review and enhance safeguarding pathway for children involved in criminal exploitation
- Enhance Op Encompass info sharing with schools
Curtail

Pledges

- Target crime hotspot to create safer neighbours by disrupting anti-social behaviour and drug dealing through joined up police, council, HA action
- Build new multi-agency model of intervention in crime hotspots engaging schools, colleges, community organisations and residents for sustainable violence reduction
- Undertake work to improve the relationship between police and young people particularly around the skills to support more effective stop and search

Actions

- Learn from successful St James’ St pilot in other hotspots
- Greater presence of Police and ASB staff on streets
- Joint planning of operations and evaluation of impact between police, council, community partners
- Resident views and evidence gathering through street patrols and door knocking
- Rapid use of legal powers to target local nuisance issues
- Evaluation monitoring and training to improve stop and search supported by young people’s VRP group