

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CMT

5th MAY 2008

**JOINT REPORT OF HEAD OF
COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND
HEAD OF PERFORMANCE &
PARTNERSHIPS**

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM - UPDATE

SUMMARY

This report outlines the current progress made by the Council and its partners in delivering the Prevent agenda, highlights current key issues and outlines next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CMT is recommended to:

1. Receive this report and note its content

BACKGROUND

1. The risk of terrorism from a variety of sources, is a continuing threat facing the UK. The current threat level is categorised as severe, meaning an attack is highly likely and could happen at any time without warning.
2. To counteract this threat there has been a national Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) in place since 2003 which was subject to its first revision in March this year. CONTEST has four key elements:
 - Pursue – to stop terrorist attacks
 - Prevent – to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism
 - Protect – to strengthen our protection against terrorist attacks
 - Prepare – where an attack cannot be stopped – to mitigate its impact
3. Of these four elements, arguably that where the Council can have the most impact is the Prevent agenda. This report updates CMT on progress so far.

The Prevent Agenda

4. Within Stockton-on-Tees, Prevent is being progressed by a Silver Group, chaired by the Head of Community Protection, comprising Council officers and Police Colleagues, including the District Commander. This Silver Group is part of a wider structure across the Cleveland Force Area, with a Gold Group coordinating strategy across the force.
5. To date, Silver Group has met on a number of occasions to agree a way forward for the borough and submit a draft action plan to Government Office North East. The plan outlines how the various elements of Prevent will be taken forward in the borough such as training

officers in how to identify potential threats and continually refreshing our understanding of our communities, but does so in a way which is proportionate for our circumstances.

6. The Prevent agenda has been enshrined within the National Indicator Set as NI35 “Building Resilience to Violent Extremism” with Silver Group having coordinated, on behalf of Renaissance, the first self-assessment of progress against this indicator and uploaded the data on the national data hub.

Current Issues

7. CONTEST and the Prevent agenda are particularly delicate areas of work with potential to impact detrimentally on Community Cohesion if not taken forward sensitively and appropriately. As such, it is necessary to start dialogue amongst our communities and partnerships about the agenda and what it means for the borough.
8. To this end, Silver Group is coordinating an awareness raising event to be held at Wynyard Rooms on the evening of Wednesday 20th May. Invitations to the event have been delivered to key partnerships and individuals including Renaissance, Safer Stockton Partnership, and the Children’s Trust Board with attendees receiving presentations from key national, regional and local speakers about what Prevent means in practice. In addition, there will be opportunity for delegates to question these speakers as well as contribute to the draft action plan. The emerging Stockton Faith Network have been invited to and consulted in, developing the event.

Next Steps

9. Following the event, a full report will be taken to Renaissance in June, including a strengthened action plan for approval which will include where appropriate, issues raised at the event and as well as addressing GONE comments on the draft.
10. The August Members Policy Seminar will receive a presentation on Preventing Violent Extremism and the role of Members in meeting the agenda.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

11. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Legal

12. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result of the this report at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. This content of this report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. Risk management arrangements for delivering the Prevent Agenda in the borough are to be fully developed. Government guidance on Prevent sometime emphasises the need for locality response to be proportionate to the assessed level of threat. To date no information has been made available to the Council to suggest a threat in Stockton on Tees which is any greater than the national background level.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14. This report is not subject to Equality Impact Assessment at this stage as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change. The draft action plan will be subject to an EIA before being submitted to Renaissance.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

15. The Prevent agenda potentially impacts on all objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy with particular relevance to Safer Communities and Stronger Communities.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. No external consultation has taken place on this report. The Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Access and Communities have been briefed on the Council's approach.

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Background Papers

none

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Preventing Violent Extremism affects all wards in the Borough.

Property

This report has no implications for the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan.