

Report of Director of Environment & Housing

Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)

Date: 9th December 2013

Subject: Tackling Extremism

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. This report aims to set out the main strands of the Governments Counter -Terrorism Strategy, CONTEST, and the work taking place in Leeds under each strand of the strategy to tackle extremist behaviour, improve resilience within our communities, and reduce the risk of terrorist activity.
2. It also provides a brief summary of the partnership approach undertaken in the city, to manage events which seek to promote non-mainstream views.

Recommendations

3. The Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Board are asked to:
 - (a) Note the work that is taking place across the city to tackle extremism
 - (b) Note the approach taken via a range of partners in the city to effectively manage events organised by groups and organisations that support non-mainstream views.
 - (c) Agree the formation of a small Elected Member reference group that will receive updates in relation to the work that partners undertake to make Leeds a safer and stronger community with regards to managing the issues outlined in this report (subject to appropriate security vetting).
 - (d) Subject to recommendation C above being agreed, for scrutiny to consider the elected members who might be asked to attend the reference group meeting, in relation to the relevance of the CONTEST strategy and the communities/portfolio's that they represent.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To inform scrutiny of the activity that takes place across various agencies to combat extremism and terrorist activity under the Governments CONTEST Strategy.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 CONTEST (an abbreviation of **COUNTER TERRORIST STRATEGY**) is the Governments strategy to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism to that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. CONTEST is grounded in a set of core or shared values: human rights, the rule of law, democracy, justice, freedom, tolerance and opportunity for all and aims to protect, respect and promote these values at home and abroad.
- 2.2 Between 11 September 2001 and 31 March 2013, 330 individuals have been convicted of terrorism-related offences, including murder, illegal possession of firearms and explosives offences. Andrew Parker, the director general of MI5, recently disclosed that 34 terrorist plots against the UK had been foiled since the July 7 outrage in 2005 but there were “several thousand” extremists still in the UK.
- 2.3 The **CONTEST** strategy is organised around four workstreams: **PURSUE**, **PREVENT**, **PROTECT**, and **PREPARE**.
- 2.4 The **PURSUE** workstream aims to stop terrorist attacks. It is the Governments most immediate counter-terrorism priority. Terrorists operate in secret. Intelligence is therefore essential to stop attacks so there has been a significant increase in resources in this area in the last few years.
- 2.5 The **PREVENT** workstream aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It aims to do this by working in partnership with statutory partners and communities to challenge the ideology of violent extremism, disrupt those who promote it, and protect and support vulnerable individuals from radicalisers using the greater understanding gained into how individuals become radicalised
- 2.6 The **PROTECT** workstream aims to strengthen our physical protection against a terrorist attack. Terrorists want to cause maximum impact with their attacks, whether that is through mass casualties or damage to the essential services that keep the UK running - crowded public places and our national infrastructure are therefore targets. The Government is working in partnership with industry to both reduce the risk to existing places and to make new developments more resilient to terrorist attacks. Making our borders more secure is a key element of Protect work and the Government is introducing new technologies and systems to deliver effective border controls.
- 2.7 The **PREPARE** workstream aims to mitigate the impact of an attack where it cannot be stopped. The Government works with the emergency services, the security and intelligence services and the Armed Forces to maintain and regularly exercise their response capabilities to ensure they are ready and appropriately

equipped to deal with a terrorist attack. The **PREPARE** strand also includes training and awareness raising for Businesses, to ensure that they have adequate plans in place to mitigate risks and prepare them should an terrorist incident occur.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Prevent – The Prevent strategy is the most challenging workstream of the CONTEST strategy as all the work takes place within the pre-criminal space before any illegal activity has taken place. Our work on Prevent in Leeds dates back to 2007 when the local authority was selected as a pilot area for the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Programme.
- 3.2 A national response to stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism will only go part way to addressing this complex issue – on its own, a security and enforcement response, although vital, will not be enough. A sustained partnership approach, building resilience in our local communities, and supporting individuals who may be vulnerable to extremist voices and messages are therefore a key priority at a local level.
- 3.3 Our work on Prevent is guided by the 3 national objectives of the strategy:
- § To respond to the **ideological challenge** of terrorism and of those extremist views conducive to it. At one end of the spectrum that means taking action against people who have broken the law. It means excluding people who wish to come to this country to promote violence or extremist views. But it also means ensuring that people engaged in radicalisation do not take advantage of public spaces – libraries, education, prisons to name just three - and that their activities are restricted.
 - § To **protect vulnerable people** from being drawn into terrorism by developing and expanding programmes to identify who they are and then to provide them with support. This objective will build on Channel, the existing multi-agency programme.
 - § To do much more to support the wide range of **sectors and institutions** where the ideology, the ideologues and vulnerable people come together and where there are either risks of radicalisation or opportunities to prevent it – or both. That means education, health, faith, charities, prisons and probation, and of course the particular and vital issue of the internet
- 3.4 To date, we have established the Gold, Silver, and Channel partnership groups to share information between organisations and develop a coordinated approach and response to the threats associated with the Prevent agenda. We are using these groups to ensure that we undertake a holistic approach to supporting vulnerable individuals, addressing the grievances of communities and individuals, and to tackle the drivers of extremism. Partners involved include the Police, Children Services, Probation, Health, FE/HE sector, and the Youth Offending Service. We are committed to continue work with a wide range of

partners from across a variety of sectors to ensure that we develop and deliver a co-ordinated response.

- 3.5 The Gold Group provides a strategic steer for the delivery of the four CONTEST workstreams, based on the current and emerging terrorism risk to the Leeds area. The group is responsible for oversight of the action plan for Leeds and briefings are provided on issues including mapping of risks and heat spots, and the impact of global conflicts within local communities. The group meets on a quarterly basis and involves senior officers from the Council, Police, CTU and Probation.
- 3.6 The Silver Group's main objective is to identify and manage the terrorism risk to the city through a range of activities involving both statutory and VCF partners and in the form of a comprehensive Prevent Action Plan. Representatives for this group have been drawn from Safer Leeds, Children's Services, FE and HE partners, Emergency Planning, Probation, Police and CTU. The Silver Group also meets on a quarterly basis.
- 3.7 The Channel Group meets every 6 weeks and includes representatives from the Police, Safer Leeds, Youth Offending Service, FE sector, and health professionals. The group has a specific remit to consider cases that have been referred to the group due to their susceptibility to extremist rhetoric, and develop packages of support and intervention for the individual so that they are drawn away from this kind of behavior and groups.
- 3.8 We continue to encourage communities to be at the heart of this agenda and to take a proactive approach in developing and delivering a response to it. This type of collaborative work sends out a united response and undermines the messages of isolation and conflict that is so often used by those who wish to divide communities.

We seek to engage with local communities through a variety of ways. This includes:

- active engagement with local communities through local forums and events;
- visits to faith groups and networks;
- building the capacity of community and faith organisations to reject extremist voices;
- develop strong leadership within local communities to provide them with a voice;
- support to schools to enable them to understand the role they have to play within the Prevent agenda and how we can assist them in this area of work; and
- development of projects such as development of materials and literature that refute extremist narratives, engagement with young people involved with gangs that could be particularly susceptible to extremist messages, and training and support for staff and students at colleges and schools.

3.9 Work to safeguard children and adults, providing early intervention to protect and divert people away from being drawn into extremist activity, is a key objective within the Prevent strategy. This work in Leeds is supported through the Channel programme. Channel is a core component of Prevent and is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation. Within Leeds, Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children's and youth services and offender management services), the police and the local community to:

- identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;
- assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Leeds has a varied cohort of referrals to the Channel programme, from across the broad spectrum of extremist ideologies.

3.10 The Leeds Prevent Programme has the support of many communities in Leeds and this can be attributed to our personalised approach to the agenda where we have been very honest and open with communities about the Prevent agenda, what it aims to achieve, and what our approach in Leeds will be. This has been embraced by the communities we hope to work with and is already providing real benefits to the city.

3.11 For example, the Prevent partnership, which includes LCC Officers, Neighbourhood Policing Teams and other statutory partners, have played a crucial role in managing community tensions arising due to the EDL protest in October 2009 and subsequent EDL protests following the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich this year, which resulted in minimal disturbances in the city. Prevent also played a substantial role in liaising and working with communities following the disturbances in Chapeltown in 2011.

3.12 It is clear that this is a hugely important agenda that is impacted upon daily through national and international events and conflicts. Moving forward, it is our intention to continue to support local communities and individuals that can be affected, and influenced, by extremist groups and narratives to ensure they are less vulnerable to those elements that seek to divide our communities.

3.13 Protect & Prepare - Protect focuses on the reduction in our vulnerability to terrorist attack within four areas; critical national infrastructure, crowded places, transport systems and UK borders. Each of these is managed within Leeds through a variety of partnerships and work programmes. Prepare focuses on minimising the impact of a terrorist attack through an effective response and recovery process. This strand of CONTEST is also managed through a variety of partnerships and work programmes.

3.14 The two strands are highly inter-connected, just as all four strands contribute to CONTEST. These resilience based activities form a part of individual organisational work programmes, however as far as is reasonably practicable, collaboration at a local level joins up agencies such as Leeds City Council, North East Counter-Terrorist Unit, NaCTSO, Home Office, West Yorkshire Police and

other agencies. Public and private sector engagement takes two approaches. One approach is in relation to identified key sites that have been assessed as being at a level of risk where specific vulnerabilities require addressing and preparedness arrangements are necessary. The other approach is training and education to sites that fall below this risk threshold. This year in Leeds we have trained approximately 1500 key personnel from some of the major employers. This then initiates further internal work for that organisation.

- 3.15 The two strands are approached as one in Leeds as it is efficient to tackle both aspects when we are working with the business sector. We help them build organisational resilience whilst at the same time sharing initiatives including City Centre Evacuation, Leeds Alert and detailing some of the city wide capabilities.
- 3.16 There is a strong ongoing relationship with many of the Home Office 'key sites' however there are barriers to some vulnerabilities being addressed due to cost factors associated with infrastructure improvement.
- 3.17 In relation to 'Prepare' capabilities, Leeds is one of only a few national cities to have advanced and embedded plans for both CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear) and MTFAs (Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks). This year both capabilities have been tested through live deployment exercises. There are broader capabilities to manage other terrorist based scenarios. These same capabilities apply to conventional risks such as flooding or severe weather and include things like humanitarian assistance, warning / informing, evacuation, command and control.
- 3.18 Pursue – activity delivered locally under this strand of the CONTEST strategy is not within the public domain. The Pursue strand of the strategy deals with how new resources and techniques are used to disrupt terrorist operations in the UK and overseas and prosecute those responsible.
- 3.19 New objectives for Pursue over the next three years include: an increase in detection and investigation capability and capacity; an increase in the effectiveness of the prosecution process, from evidential collection to post-prison supervision; to develop more effective non-prosecution actions; and to improve capacity to disrupt terrorist activities overseas (*CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, July 2011 - Home Office website*)

4.0 Managing events organised by groups or organisations that support non-mainstream views (which may be political, culturally or ideologically inspired)

- 4.1 The number of events organised in Leeds and West Yorkshire by organisations that promote non-mainstream views, has proved a challenge for partners such as Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police. The potential of these events to divide our communities and increase tensions is present and requires careful management. Such events are costly to manage and come with a great deal of uncertainty around numbers attending and intent of the crowds on the day. We operate within a very controlled legal environment where a fine balance is required between enabling freedom of speech and stopping hate.

- 4.2 Leeds has a strong track record of successfully managing these types of events using existing capabilities and skills within both our resilience function (Peace & Emergency Planning) and through Community Safety networks and partnerships. At present a more formal documentation of these command and control arrangements are being developed which will clearly set out defined roles and responsibilities when such events are scheduled. This would also apply to wide-spread disorder and public protest.
- 4.3 Tactics applied by Police Forces across the country to manage these types of events, are guided by relevant reports and guidance such as Adapting to Protest (2009) and the manual of guidance on Keeping the Peace and Policing Public Order (2011).

5.0 Corporate Considerations

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.1.1 It is proposed that a small working group of elected members is formed that will receive updates on the progress of work under the CONTEST Strategy on a 6 monthly basis. This will allow elected members to seek reassurances on how local tensions and risks are being managed and minimised, which in turn will assist in supporting and reassuring local communities. It will also provide a forum to share information on emerging risks and threats that elected members need to be made aware of and indeed contribute towards reducing.
- 5.1.2 If supported, discussion will be required with WYP to establish the security vetting requirements for members, so that they are able to access relevant information which may not be in the wider public domain. Elected Members who agree to become Members of the working group
- 5.1.2 CONTEST is the Government's national policy to reduce the risk to the UK and its interest overseas from the risk of terrorism. At a local level, we have consulted widely with local communities about our approach and work on the Prevent agenda, and highlighted the importance of developing the capacity and confidence of communities to tackle extremist ideology and groups, and provide support to vulnerable individuals.
- 5.1.3 We have been open and honest with local communities about the aim of the Prevent agenda and how it is being delivered. We have actively sought their input into the commissioning of activities and continue to work with local people to up skill them to be able to support vulnerable individuals. Our approach over the years has included regular meetings and briefings with community and faith leaders and the delivery of training and grassroots initiatives. This has won the support of many diverse communities, including migrant communities, that has led to the development of many new important relationships with communities in Leeds.

5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 5.2.1 The events of the July 2005 bombings have had a significant impact on Leeds and have demonstrated that there is a real need to deliver Prevent in the city. In addition, global events and conflicts are playing an ever increasing role within local communities. These can sometimes lead to community tensions, fuel suspicion, and create divisions between people from different cultures, faiths, and backgrounds.
- 5.2.2 We are encountering a range of threats, nationally and locally, that have the potential to divide communities in Leeds leading to unrest, anxieties, and local grievances. The importance of managing such issues, especially during times of austerity, cannot be overstated.

5.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 5.3.1 Effectively tackling extremist behaviour forms a key strand of the Safer Leeds Plan 2011-2015 that aspires to create safer and stronger communities. Building cohesion and integration includes promoting a shared sense of belonging and ensuring that we can build better relationships between people from different cultures and backgrounds. Extremist messages can stem from some of the most cohesive communities which is why we need to undertake a more targeted approach to tackling extremism and building the resilience of individuals and communities. A sustained partnership approach, building resilience in our local communities, and supporting individuals who may be vulnerable to extremist voices and messages are a key priority at a local level.

5.4 Resources and value for money

- 5.4.1 As a priority area for delivery of Prevent (there are currently 30 priority areas in the country) Leeds City Council receives funding for a Prevent coordinator up to Government 'Grade 7' equivalent salary. Programme funds are also available for the delivery of targeted projects and activity. However, before any programme funds are approved, any proposed Prevent project is rigorously assessed against its ability to and likelihood to deliver against the new Prevent objectives by Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, and a clear agreement between the local authority and OSCT is required.

5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 5.5.1 This report is not subject to call in.

5.6 Risk Management

- 5.6.1 It is imperative that the city has robust plans in place to mitigate against all risks, known and/or potential, in relation to the city being involved in, or subject to a terrorist attack.
- 5.6.2 The work undertaken within the pre-crime environment via the Prevent programme, seeks to safeguard individuals and groups, who may be vulnerable to extremist narrative from a range of sources. The programme aims to support

such people to move away from activities that could be potentially harmful to themselves or other people.

- 5.6.3 Leeds City Council works in partnership with West Yorkshire Police and other key partners, to ensure that action plans are in place to deal with threats, and regularly undertakes simulations of potential critical incidents to ensure that our plans to deal with such incidents are fit for purpose.
- 5.6.4 The Gold Contest partnership group, is responsible for reviewing risk and agreeing actions to mitigate potential problems. The establishment of a Contest Members group, will help to strengthen this further, particularly in relation to managing community tensions which can arise from time to time in connection with this agenda.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board are asked to:
- (a) Note the work that is taking place across the city to tackle extremism
 - (b) Note the approach taken via a range of partners in the city to effectively manage events organised by groups and organisations that support non-mainstream views.
 - (c) Agree the formation of a small Elected Member reference group that will receive updates in relation to the work that partners undertake to make Leeds a safer and stronger community with regards to managing the issues outlined in this report (subject to appropriate security vetting).
 - (d) Subject to recommendation C above being agreed, for scrutiny to consider the elected members who might be asked to attend the reference group meeting, in relation to the relevance of the CONTEST strategy and the communities/portfolio's that they represent.

7.0 Background documents¹

None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.