

Decision Report – Executive Lead Member



Decision Date – 26.02.24

Key Decision – no

Somerset Council Community Safety Accreditation Scheme

Executive Lead Member(s): Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Local Member(s) and Division:

Lead Officer: Rob Semple – Community Safety and resilience Manager

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Summary / Background

1. To seek approval for Somerset Council to sign up to the Avon and Somerset Police Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (the scheme).
2. To delegate to the Service Director of Regulatory and Operational the authority to sign the agreement and authorise appropriate working arrangements and delegations, to ensure that the scheme is implemented suitably and that the appropriate staff are delegated to enforce the additional powers confirmed by the scheme.
3. The Police Reform Act 2002 introduced Community Safety Accreditation Schemes (CSAS) which allow police forces to delegate certain policing powers to accredited non-police staff, to contribute towards community safety and crime reduction.
4. The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) allows organisations and their employees, such as street wardens to be granted targeted police powers. Somerset Council have a team of Town Wardens covering Bridgwater funded through a Town Deal grant until 2026.
5. The scheme extends the police family by allowing ‘Accredited Persons’ to act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the police. This helps to improve issues such as littering, underage drinking and graffiti in the local community and dealing with general incidents of anti-social behaviour, disorder and nuisance.

It is an offence to:

- fail or refuse to provide an Accredited Person with your name and address.
- assault an Accredited Person or person assisting them.
- obstruct an Accredited Person or person assisting them.

6. CSAS Powers we are seeking for authorisation,

- 0) To have access to and share information and intelligence with Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- 2a) Power to require giving of name and address for:
 - b) Offences under S3 and S4 of Vagrancy Act 1824
 - c) An offence causing injury, alarm, distress to any other person or loss of, or any damage to, any other person's property.
- 2b) Power to deal with begging.
- 3) Power to require name and address for anti-social behaviour
- 5) Power to require persons aged under 18 to surrender alcohol
- 6) Power to seize tobacco from a person aged under 16
- 7) Power to remove abandoned vehicles
- 8a) Power to stop cycles if they are suspected of having committed the offence of riding on a footpath.

Recommendations

The Executive Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture agrees:

7. That Somerset Council sign up to the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme.
8. To delegate to the Service Director of Regulatory and Operational the authority to sign the agreement and authorise appropriate working arrangements and delegations, to ensure that the scheme is implemented suitably and that the appropriate staff are delegated to enforce the additional powers confirmed by the scheme.

Reasons for recommendations

9. Delegating authority will allow the application for accreditation to advance in the most efficient way whilst also ensuring there is oversight of the scheme moving forward.

10. Having these powers will improve the service Bridgwater Town Wardens (and other accredited staff) can provide and allow them to deal with issues over which they currently do not have powers. The information sharing agreement will also allow greater sharing between the police and council officers to detect and deter crime and anti-social behaviour.
11. The accreditation would be held by Somerset Council and apply to the entire Somerset Council area. Suitable enforcement officers from various departments may be eligible to become accredited subject to appropriate training and accreditation. Accreditation fees and training would have to be met from individual services although for the first round of officers seeking accreditation training may be able to be provided as part of the Town Wardens training program.

Other options considered

12. Not to sign up to the scheme and therefore lose the ability to enforce the extra powers as detailed above. In this case the officers would continue their current working practices and close working with the police, however the powers under the accreditation give them an opportunity to more effectively investigate and deal with issues of anti-social behaviour within the County.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

13. The Town Wardens help support several of the Councils objectives,
 - Greener, more sustainable Somerset – through engaging, educating and enforcing the Wardens help reduce litter and work with businesses to reduce waste on the streets.
 - A Healthy and Caring Somerset – wardens actively engage with residents and visitors to Bridgwater and work with partners to ensure they can signpost and refer those that need support.
 - A Fairer ambitious Somerset – By being a visual presence on our streets the Wardens can have a positive impact on crime/ASB and perceptions of crime/ASB. By changing habits this can lead to a fairer community as people feel confident to access and engage.

Financial and Risk Implications

14. Somerset Council is the designated accountable body for the Government's Town Deal Fund for the Bridgwater Town Warden Scheme. The Government has awarded a revenue grant of £1,000,000 for this specific scheme to cover a four-year period which started in 2022/23 and ends in 2025/26. The funding was awarded following a successful bid for the funding. The funding is specific and has to be used for this project only.

Detailed budgets for each year of the scheme were drawn up. This includes staffing; supplies and services and support costs. To confirm there is funding to cover the cost of sign up to the Avon and Somerset Police Community Safety Accreditation Scheme. The cost of which is just over £3,000 plus any necessary travel and accommodation costs.

Legal Implications

15. The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) is a program that grants a limited range of police powers to non-police staff of organisations that work in partnership with the police. The scheme was created under section 40 of the Police Reform Act 2002. The aim of the scheme is to provide an additional uniformed presence in communities(and on the rail network) to assist in reducing criminality and anti-social behaviour. CSAS is a voluntary scheme under which chief constables can choose to accredit employed people already working in roles that contribute to maintaining and improving community safety with limited but targeted powers. These roles include neighbourhood wardens, hospital security guards, park wardens, shopping mall guards and train guards.

The scheme creates a framework for public and private bodies to work in partnership with the police, providing additional uniformed presence in communities and capitalising on the skills and information captured by those already engaged with the community. All schemes are managed, monitored and assessed at a local level by the responsible police force. Main benefits of the scheme include:

- increasing uniformed presence on the streets (CSAS accredited persons wear the uniform of their employing organisation, with a identification badge endorsed by the local police force)
- reductions in local issues such as street drinking, begging and dog fouling
- saving valuable police time in community safety to deal with low-level crime and disorder
- promoting greater business involvement with the police, and allowing the police to influence the training of businesses, eg security companies

- promoting partnership working and the 2-way exchange of information and intelligence between agencies

It is lawful (in fact encouraged) for local authorities to seek accreditation for its appropriate employees and for those employees to use these additional powers.

The following have been reviewed by Legal Services and deemed fit for purpose albeit requiring basic, benign and non-controversial insertions of Council's contacts etc before signing:

1. The proposed information sharing agreement between Police and the Council, and
2. The proposed CSAC Joint Operating Protocol between Police and the Council. It should be noted that this is not intended to have legal affect and is more akin to a Memorandum of Understanding.

Both agreements will require managing by relevant officers responsible for deploying CSAS staff and activities.

In the event the Council intends to utilise the grant funding referred to in this non key decision for CSAS activity then accountable officers must ensure the terms of the grant funding are complied with.

HR Implications

16. The new powers are in keeping with the nature of enforcement responsibilities already undertaken by the Town Wardens. However, any concerns raised, either during training, or following use of the new powers in the community should be addressed and measures taken as appropriate.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

17. In order for all groups and residents to understand the changes to powers of officers and the ability to ask for names and addresses for certain behaviours we need to promote this through the press and through specific groups such as SARI, Diverse Communities and Diversity Voice.

All employees will be managed by Somerset Council and will be answerable to the Councils code of conduct and complaint process. The Council agrees to notify the Chief Constable immediately on any matter which may affect:

- The arrangement that the employer has with the Chief Constable; and/or
- The accreditation of an individual

Town wardens operate in pairs for their safety and the public and have body worn cameras to evidence interactions that could cause concern.

All accredited staff will have undertaken sanctioned training to receive the accreditation and will be monitored in the use of powers.

Having increased powers has the potential to make public spaces a fairer space for all. Tackling ASB and other behaviours can increase the perception of a safe space and encourage marginalised groups to feel safer in their community.

Tackling cycles on pavements through a combination of education and enforcement can make those that can be adversely affected by this behaviour such as the aged and visually impaired more confident and safer in the community and reduce falls and injuries.

Community Safety Implications

18. CSAS accreditation will allow for better information sharing and give increased powers to accredited officers. This will potentially have a positive impact on local crime rates and the prevention and detection of crime and ASB.

By increasing the powers of officers and allowing them to tackle issues we are seeing in Somerset we can increase the quality of life for residents and businesses by reducing ASB and encouraging people back into public areas.

19. This decision will help to increase public perception of Somerset's commitment to reducing crime and disorder and Anti-Social behaviour.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

20. This project will have a positive impact for the climate. Wardens are actively dealing with littering on our streets including cigarette ends and are engaging with businesses and their disposal of waste. Through engagement, education and enforcement the aim is to change habits of visitors and businesses in how they deal with waste.

Officers are also looking at the community and will be able to identify if businesses for example are leaving lights and other equipment on overnight. If

they identify areas this is happening, they will engage to understand why and if there is a more efficient way of achieving the target.

The wardens are a resource in Bridgwater and can be used to promote initiatives, sustainability etc. to local businesses if the Council has specific topics they want to promote.

Health and Safety Implications

21. I believe this does not increase risk to staff. Officers that achieve CSAS accreditation are already authorised to enforce fixed penalty notices and these additional power should not bring any additional risk. It also makes it an offence to assault an accredited person.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

22. Additional powers for officers enable greater engagement and enforcement opportunities. This in turn can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. Having a safer more welcoming town centre encourages people to access services and businesses and spend more time in and around the town.

Having greater enforcement powers can enable discussions with those causing issues and give officers the ability to offer support and engagement with other services rather than use enforcement. This can support people in improving their health and wellbeing through engagement with housing, mental health or drugs and alcohol services to name a few.

23. There could be impacts on specific groups such as the homeless and young people through the powers around vagrancy and ASB. These are mitigated through our approach of engagement and education. Enforcement is always the last option, we will never target people for being homeless but we would look at behaviours in the community and if these are unacceptable we can target the specific behaviours.

Social Value

24. This project helps support the following Council social values,
Priority areas: ·

- Improving health and wellbeing, maintaining independence and reducing inequalities of local residents and employees
- Helping build community capacity and playing an active role in the local community, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

25. Not been considered by a scrutiny committee.

Background Papers

26. Set out the details of any reference documents you have used in producing this report. If there are none please state 'none'

Appendices

- **ASC CSAS Organisation Application**
- **Template Information exchange Agreement**
- **Template Joint Operating Protocol**

Report Sign-Off

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	26.02.24
Communications	Peter Elliot	09.02.24

Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	23.02.24
Workforce	Dawn Bettridge	16.02.24
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	07.02.24
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Chris Hall	20.02.24
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	14.02.24
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts	26.02.24
Consulted:		
Local Division Members	Cllr Brian Smedley / Cllr Kathy Pearce	07.02.24
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Andy Dingwall	07.02.24
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gwil Wren	19.02.24