

MEETING	Decision Making Meeting
DATE	15 July 2021
TITLE OF REPORT	Proposed OPCC application to Home Office Safer Streets 3 Fund
SUBMITTED BY	James Coady, Policy and Partnerships Manager
PURPOSE OF REPORT	To summarise the proposed OPCC bid to the Home Office
DECISION(S) REQUIRED	To comment on and approve the proposed OPCC application, for submission to the Home Office by midnight on 15 July 2021
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	If successful, OPCC staff time will be required for project delivery and support, overall governance of the project, and provision of legal advice. The delivery window is September 2021 to March 2022. The cost of OPCC staff time is estimated to be £24,254.
RISK IMPLICATIONS	By not taking a decision, the funding round deadline will be missed.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	N/A
EQUALITIES IMPACTS	None identified
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION EXEMPTION SECTION IF APPLICABLE	Not exempt

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 In response to the murder of Sarah Everard earlier this year, the Home Office launched a third round of Safer Streets funding in June 2021 focused on improving safety in public spaces and addressing VAWG (violence against women and girls)-related crime. The funding pot totals £25m and PCCs (and Local Authorities) are able to submit up to three bids totalling up to £550,000.

1.2 The Home Office anticipates announcing successful bids at the end of August 2021. Funds will be released to PCCs/Local Authorities in September 2021. All proposals must be delivered by the end of the funded period, which is the end of March 2022.

2 DEVELOPING THE OPCC APPLICATION

2.1 In writing the draft application, the OPCC faced two challenges in particular: a short timetable (the Home Office bidding window is six weeks); and a poor evidence base

relating to VAWG-related crime. On the latter challenge, the Home Office recognises the patchy nature of the VAWG evidence base and has therefore relaxed the bidding criteria: there is no crime threshold that must be reached, and the Home Office will accept statistical and anecdotal evidence that demonstrates public perceptions of insecurity in public spaces, in addition to police crime data.

- 2.2 To build our empirical evidence base and gain greater insights, we undertook a range of public surveys, one countywide and another with the student population of the University of Hertfordshire. The responses demonstrated that pedestrian underpasses are the most common generic public space in which Hertfordshire residents feel unsafe. Given the large student population in Hatfield, its preponderance of underpasses and the constraints of the short bidding window, the logical choice was to focus our bid on Hatfield's underpass network.
- 2.3 Environmental visual audits (EVAs) were consequently undertaken by Constabulary crime prevention officers at five underpass locations in Hatfield. Those EVAs indicated that all underpasses suffer from a lack of footfall, no CCTV coverage, damaged lighting, short sightlines, and signs of persistent vandalism.
- 2.4 The proposed bid focuses on physical crime prevention measures that will address the problems identified by the EVAs. Those interventions will be complemented by a set of communications and training activities with University students and the wider Hatfield population, including: an 8-week CrimeStoppers-led communications campaign designed to improve reporting of VAWG crimes; and a bystander intervention programme with University students that will teach students how to intervene in VAWG-related incidents through practical training focused on behavioural change.
- 2.5 The overarching hypothesis of the proposal is that offenders are exploiting the anonymity afforded by the Hatfield underpasses to conduct VAWG-related crimes. Our proposed physical interventions will increase footfall in the underpasses, which will in turn further improve public perceptions of safety and increase opportunities for informal surveillance. These changes will benefit the wider population too, and help to decrease secondary associated crime, nuisance and disorder; most notably ASB, drug use, street drinking and intimidation.

3. DECISION REQUIRED

- 3.1 To provide comments on and approve the OPCC's draft proposal to the Home Office with a view to its submission by midnight on 15 July 2021.