8.10 Community Safety

Director Community & Wellbeing: Cath Harrod

Linkage to Council Plan

Direction 2: An inclusive and healthy community
2.2 Diverse, inclusive and safe

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on Community Safety initiatives within the municipality following the Strategic Councillor Briefing on Saturday 8 February 2025 and in response to the item of urgent business tabled at the Council Meeting on Monday 10 February 2025.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***NOTES the current and future initiatives underway in response to the item of urgent business tabled at the Council Meeting on Monday 10 February 2025, will be reflected in the Draft 2025/26 budget.***
2. ***ENDORSES the advocacy letter to relevant Victorian and Commonwealth Government Ministers, requesting a meeting to discuss the key concerns regarding community safety issues across the municipality (Attachment 1).***
3. ***NOTES that advocacy activities are in development with participating municipalities.***

Executive Summary

1. Criminal incidents in Stonnington rose 19.8% in the year ending December 2024, increasing from a total of 8,630 incidents in 2023 to 10,341 in 2024. Crime data supports and is reflective of community concerns regarding antisocial behaviour, theft, home invasions, public intoxication, drug use, vandalism, youth and knife crime, family violence, and homelessness.
2. The community is witnessing an increase in daytime and brazen crime, and the impacts of opportunistic and organised crime are impacting both the nighttime and daytime economies, across the municipality.
3. Council delivers a range of programs to support community safety and short term, and long-term initiatives have been identified to further support community safety, both real and perceived.
4. Advocacy is a key platform for change. Advocacy opportunities discussed at the recent Roundtable (27 March) include State Government investment in Safe City CCTV networks, consistent funding for Zero Homelessness projects across the metropolitan area, increased investment in policing to boost frontline resources and raising awareness of the unintended consequences of policy and legislative reforms such as public intoxication. This advocacy agenda is still evolving as further discussions will continue with partnering municipalities.

Background

5. Councillors were provided an overview of community safety within the municipality at the Strategic Councillor Briefing on Saturday 8 February 2025.

6. An item of urgent business tabled at the Council Meeting on Monday 10 February 2025 requested a report that outlines the resources required to implement the agreed community safety initiatives, including exploring alternative funding models for the Chapel Street precinct.

7. Council delivers several key programs and practices that contribute to a safer, more vibrant city, including but not limited to:

    a. Salvation Army Street Team and Pink Car

    b. Stonnington Zero

    a. Stonnington Liquor Forum

    c. Community safety campaigns and education programs (9PM routine, Community Safety Month, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, Voices of the South Vaping Project)

    d. Collaborative networks (Community Safety Committee, Victoria Police Neighbourhood Policing Committee, Stonnington Health and Wellbeing Reference Group and Stonnington Zero Executive, Service Coordination and Hot Spots)

    e. Police Engagement Activities (Coffee with a Cop)

    f. Targeted joint patrols involving Local Laws and Victoria Police to hot spots including Prahran Square and Chapel Street)

Key Issues and Discussion

8. The City of Stonnington has long recognised that community safety is a shared responsibility; all levels of government as well as community service organisations, have a role to play.

9. With that being said, the primary responsibility for law enforcement and legislative reform rests with Victoria Police and the State Government.

10. Council's role is varied and includes crime prevention and awareness raising activities, delivering safe spaces and advocating for resources and legislative changes that improve local safety.

Recent Activities

11. Since the item of urgent business on 10 February Council has:

    a. Conducted the first of six Community Safety Committee meetings of 2025, involving local police and providing an opportunity to review crime statistics, discuss police operations, community and council concerns and possible responses.

    b. Conducted the Health and Wellbeing Reference Group to inform the development of the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 priorities.

    c. Work is underway to set the strategic direction of the Liquor Forum to address alcohol-related harm, responsible service of alcohol, safety and security in and around licensed premises, standards of patron behaviour, venue management practices, and other topical issues that affect licensed premises.

d. Delivered the *Safer Stonnington* marquee at Pets in the Park (23 March) in partnership with Victoria Police and Crime Stoppers to provide the community with the opportunity to speak about their concerns and obtain tips and information about prevention and crime reporting.

e. Launched a new *Doggie Door* safety campaign raising awareness of the dangers of unlocked doors as an access point for intruders. Signage has been installed at 26 Off Leash dog parks across the municipality and the campaign released on social media and promoted on electronic notice boards in Service Centres and Libraries and via direct mail to vets and pet shops across the municipality.

f. Participated in a safety roundtable at the City of Glen Eira on Thursday 27 March, attended by the Mayor and CEO, with representatives from Port Phillip, Boroondara, Kingston, Monash and Bayside, to discuss common challenges and collaboration opportunities. Following the roundtable discussion a joint advocacy letter to the Minister for Police and Minister for Community Safety The Hon Anthony Carbines MP is being considered relating to police resourcing and improving community safety.

g. Reinstated regular joint patrols with police and Local Laws to monitor antisocial hot spots in Chapel Street precinct, including Prahran Square.

12. In addition, the State Government announced Bail Reforms aimed at addressing community concerns regarding an increase in youth crime and recidivist offending.

Future Initiatives

13. A variety of other short and longer-term actions to address community safety concerns are underway, and include:

a. Developing a draft 12-month safety calendar (2025-26) of events and activities to raise awareness, build community capacity and support safety (**Attachment 2**)

b. Developing a position description and approval to engage a Community Safety Officer four days a week to drive community safety initiatives and strengthen partnerships, deliver consultative forums and events, monitor current and emerging issues, including statistics and social research, to inform advocacy, program and infrastructure design.

c. Engaging a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) specialist to deliver a four-day training course to upskill 20 staff from across the organisation in the theory and principles, application, practice and designing safer spaces for women and girls. The course will be delivered between 28 April and 2 May and will involve putting the learnings into practice by assessing local areas.

d. Developing the new Health and Wellbeing Plan (2025-29) including programs and initiatives to support safety and encourage social cohesion and wellbeing.

e. Expressing interest in partnering with the South East Public Health Unit and local services in establishing a Stonnington and surrounds Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) to help support alcohol and other drug related prevention and harm reduction.

f. Exploring implementation of the VicHealth Local Government Partnership Module Increasing *alcohol harm prevention at a local level*, in partnership with the Active Communities team. Recent discussions with Victoria Police on 22 April 2024 indicate the Police will be refining the existing Victoria Police Neighbourhood Policing Committee (Attachment 3). The Inspector will work with Council to reflect the model including expanding current membership to fulfill the role of the proposed Community Safety Taskforce, including elected representatives, community support agencies and community representatives.

g. Meeting with community services providers with a focus on gender equity and community safety for co-location opportunities.

h. Delivering the Good Night Out pilot project which aims to enhance night-time safety within the Chapel Street precinct. This initiative will focus on promoting zero-tolerance towards sexual harassment and assault, as well as encouraging active bystander behaviours within the community. Components will include a poster campaign, free training for venue staff and optional venue accreditation.

i. Developing a Liquor Forum Portal via the Connect Stonnington platform to centralise information and resources to assist licensed premises.

j. Recent discussions with Victoria Police on 22 April 2024 indicate the Police will be refining the existing Victoria Police Neighbourhood Policing Committee (**Attachment 3**). The Inspector will work with Council to reflect the model including expanding current membership to fulfill the role of the proposed Community Safety Taskforce, including elected representatives, community support agencies and community representatives.

k. Deliver bi-annual community safety roundtable, a facilitated community consultation event using the world café or similar engagement methodology to host a conversation around community safety issues. Feedback will inform a range of actions, advocacy and referrals to response agencies.

l. Deliver a Community Safety Expo, an opportunity for community members to meet local emergency services and to learn how to keep themselves and their families safe. Invitations for ‘stalls’ to be made to Police, State Emergency Service, St John Ambulance, Crime Stoppers, Triple Zero, Fire Rescue Victoria. Speaker and / or panel presentation invitations to groups such as Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, Kidsafe Victoria and Life Saving Victoria.

m. Promoting the Victoria Police Neighbourhood Policing Forum, tentatively scheduled for December 2025, that follows their initial forum held in February this year at Prahran Town Hall. The forum will provide an opportunity for community to explore topics including current crime trends and crime prevention; family violence; young people; road policing; drugs and drug related crime and for audience members to ask questions directly of Victoria Police.

n. Advocating for resources and policy and legislative changes that support community safety. For example, raising concerns regarding the weakening of licensed premises planning controls as outlined in Victoria: Open for Business.

Governance Compliance

Policy Implications

14. This report and the actions relate to a variety of Council policies including the Council Plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan and Safer Stonnington Community Safety Plan.

Financial and Resource Implications

15. The proposed additional initiatives have a financial and resource implications of $70,000.00 for the 25/26 budget.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure

16. No Council officer and/or contractors who have provided advice in relation to this report have declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter under consideration.

Decision Making Connection Disclosure

17. There are no decision-making connection disclosures relevant to this report.

Legal / Risk Implications

18. There are no legal / risk implications relevant to this report.

Environmental Implications

19. There are no environmental implications relevant to this report.

Community Consultation

20. This report is a direct response to community sentiment and feedback regarding community safety issues. There will also be community consultation on individual projects.

Human Rights Consideration

21. Complies with the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006.

Attachments

1. DRAFT Community Safety Advocacy Letter [**8.10.1** - 2 pages]
2. Safety Calendar 2025 26 V1 1 [**8.10.2** - 2 pages]
3. Neighbourhood Policing Model [**8.10.3** - 1 page]

Dear Minister

RE: Community safety – City of Stonnington

I write on behalf of the Council of the City of Stonnington to request an urgent meeting to discuss community safety, with a particular focus on the Chapel Street precinct, which is Council's first and most important major item of business in 2025.

Criminal incidents in Stonnington rose 19.8% in 2024 as compared to 2023, and our community is deeply concerned about antisocial behaviour including theft and home invasions, public intoxication and drug use, vandalism, youth and knife crime, family violence, and homelessness. There is an increase in daytime and brazen crime, and the impacts of opportunistic and organised crime are impacting both the nighttime and daytime economies of the Chapel St precinct.

Stonnington has long recognised that community safety is a shared responsibility; all levels of government as well as community service organisations, have a role to play.

Having said this though, the primary responsibility for law enforcement and legislative reform rests with Victoria Police and the State Government, hence we are seeking to discuss the following urgent priorities:

- Legislative reform to address anti-social behaviour

Stonnington welcomes recent changes to bail and knife crime laws, and the focus on community safety in considering bail decisions and bringing remand up the hierarchy of options to respond to violent crime. In other jurisdictions, including overseas, interventions found to be most effective for knife and other violent crime, particularly committed by youth offenders, included a public health approach with a focus on building community capacity and addressing the drivers. Stonnington would welcome both immediate and strict enforcement of these new laws, but also partnership on evidence-based early interventions to ensure a joined up and impactful approach to reducing ant-social behaviour.

- Improved police and Liquor Control Victoria presence in the Chapel Street precinct

Increased police presence in Chapel Street will improve both perceived and actual safety. Joint patrols between police, Liquor Control Victoria and -Council officers have proven a successful and impactful way to manage behaviour and adherence to laws by both patrons and businesses. More police being available at the Prahran and Malvern stations is critical to support this effort, as well as options to station police resources at Prahran Square. Noting that Malvern Police Station is no longer 24 hours, with the reception being available from 10am-6pm. Council has previously had success with the stationing of a police van in the Prahran Square precinct, making the community feel safer and deterring crime. Stonnington advocates strongly for improved police resourcing and funding to support a visible presence in the municipality, specifically in known hot-spots around the Chapel St precinct.

- Expanding the availability of CCTV mobile trailers and real-time monitoring of CCTV camera data, and contributing to funding of CCTV monitoring, particularly in the Chapel Street precinct.

CCTV acts as a proven deterrent for crime and plays a critical role in solving crimes. Council requires both funding and operational assistance to ensure appropriate, real-time monitoring to keep the community safe.

Stonnington would welcome contribution to the operation ongoing costs of approximately $80,000+ per annum to maintain the existing CCTV system around the Chapel St precinct.

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The system is several years old and further capital investment is also required as equipment is approaching end of life and failure rates are increasing.

Council currently has one mobile CCTV trailer that Victroia Police use however the trailer is damaged and it has been off the road for 12+ months due to an accident. Stonnington has been advocating in the context of the federal election for commitments to purchase a new trailer or trailers, and for other fixed CCTV cameras which cost approximately $30,000 per new location. Any investment from State Government in these initiatives would be very welcomed.

- Funding for community health programs, including local family violence services and mental health support systems.

Proactive evidence-based approaches lead to lower crime rates and stronger perceptions of safety. Safety is not experienced equally by all members of the community - some groups are at greater risk or feel less safe due to their individual experiences or circumstances. These include older people, people with disability, young people, LGBTIQA+ people, women, and girls; and people experiencing homelessness, mental ill health, gambling harms and family violence. Community health programs can help to build social cohesion which is critical to the resilience, wellbeing, and safety of communities. It fosters a sense of belonging, participation, and connection, contributing to healthier, more resilient communities with lower crime rates. Funding for proven and successful programs such as 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, Advance to Zero homelessness By Name List, Salvation Army Street Team – late night outreach and Better Health Network will support our most vulnerable communities and amplify council outreach.

I look forward to hearing from you – community safety is complex and requires all levels of government to come together and develop meaningful solutions for the people of Stonnington. We look forward to a meaningful discussion at your earliest convenience.

Regards

Cr Melina Sehr

Mayor

City of Stonnington

Copies to:

Jacinta Allan - Premier

Sonya Kilkenny – Attorney-General

Enver Erdogan – Minister for Corrections and Youth Justice

Rachel Westaway – Member for Prahran

Michael O'Brien – Member for Malvern

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JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Coffee with Cop **Bi Annual Community Safety Roundtable** **Homelessness** Awareness session for businesses and residents (CHP Peer Education Support Program)	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Fortify Your Fortress** Promote the Crime Stoppers campaign - Smart locks - Unbreachable windows - Dogs - Cameras ***Community Safety Committee meeting***	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Home CCTV** Promote Victoria Police crime prevention and CCTV installation tips **Begging** Awareness and alternative support available **Community Safety Expo**	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Community Safety Month** Safety event with emergency services, bike engraving, anti-theft number plate screws, self-defence workshop. **Gambling Awareness Week** Messaging & supports **Seniors Week** Related safety messages. **Children's Week** car seat fitting ***Community Safety Committee***	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Personal Safety** Protecting belongings in public drink spiking ATM safety Safe exchange (online purchasing) Staying safe as a school leaver (inc. sexual assault, drinking safety, illicit drugs and reporting) **16 Days of Activism campaign** (25 Nov - 10 Dec)	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Summer safety** Securing your home when on holidays Water safety Party safe (getting home) Heat health including hot vehicles **International Day for People with Disability** Messaging including how to report crime / Communication assistance. **Victoria Police Neighbourhood Policing Forum** (Malvern) ***Community Safety Committee***
JANUARY	**FEBUARY**	**MARCH**	**APRIL**	**MAY**	**JUNE**
Coffee with a Cop **Home safety** Promote the 9PM Campaign and reinforce messaging from the Crime Stoppers Fortify your Fortress campaign **Back to School** 40km zones Walking and cycling safety Stranger danger	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Safety review** Liaise with VicPol to understand arising themes and link with a campaign / education. ***Community Safety Committee***	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Home and property** Bike thefts Number plate theft Delivery and mail security Theft from storage cages etc. **Gender based safety** Messaging tied to International Women's Day	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Cyber Safety** Fraud | scams Workshops (may run earlier and later) **Bi-annual Community Safety Roundtable** ***Community Safety Committee***	***Coffee with a Cop*** **Graffiti Awareness** Graffiti removal kits **General home security** Lighting, dog doors, alarms, CCTV etc. **Road Safety Week** Speed Distractions (phones) Alcohol & drugs Fatigue **Safety tips** for walking and running	***Coffee with Cop*** **Winter safety** Hazards – heaters, electric blankets, hot water bottles, outdoor gas heaters etc. **Flooding** Safety messaging ***Community Safety Committee***

Annual Safety Calendar Notes

Coffee with a Cop (conducted by Police – program as of April 2025)

- Pran Central - last Wednesday of month @10am
- Malvern Central - first Tuesday of month @11am

Bi-Annual Community Safety Roundtable (conducted by Council)

- A facilitated community consultation event using the world café or similar engagement methodology to host a conversation around community safety issues. Feedback will inform a range of actions, advocacy and referrals to response agencies.

Community Safety Expo

- An opportunity for community members to meet local emergency services and to learn how to keep themselves and their families safe. Invitations for 'stalls' to be made to Police, State Emergency Service, St John Ambulance, Crime Stoppers, Triple Zero, Fire Rescue Victoria. Speaker and / or panel presentation invitations to groups such as Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, Kidsafe Victoria and Life Saving Victoria

Activities not included (dates to be determined and inserted)

- Liquor Forum - Members include licensed premises, City of Stonnington, Victoria Police and Liquor Control Victoria. Members collaborate to address alcohol-related harm, responsible service of alcohol, safety and security in and around licensed premises, standards of patron behaviour, venue management practices, and other topical issues that affect licensed premises.
- Neighbourhood (Local) Policing Committee – potential representatives include Police (Local Area Commander), Council (Executive), elected representatives (Fed, State, Local), local support agencies (mental health, homelessness, community housing, outreach etc.), government departments (health, housing, justice, education etc.), faith leaders, trader associations, sporting etc
- Neighbourhood Policing Forum – an annual community engagement forum led by Police that is held in each municipality. Stonnington had its first forum in Prahran in 2025, with the second scheduled to be held in Malvern in December 2025.
- Community Views Survey – a survey undertaken by Council every 2 years

Neighbourhood Policing Model

