

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Act Strategy</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Housing Neighbourhoods and Communities</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Jo Player</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 292488</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act), which received Royal Assent in April 2021, places a range of statutory duties on Local Authorities. The Government has provided £125 million nationally to support the new requirements. The grant amount for Brighton and Hove is £606,000 for the year 2021/22 to provide support for survivors and children in safe accommodation and whilst not yet confirmed, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has indicated it is likely to continue at similar levels for at least the next three years.
- 1.2 Under the Act, all local authorities are required to prepare a needs assessment and publish a draft local strategy on the support needs of all people who have experienced domestic abuse and are residing in safe accommodation by 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Local authorities must publish a final strategy by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The Pan Sussex Partnership project team have undertaken the needs assessment and have written the strategy attached at Appendix 1, on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) and East and West Sussex Councils. (ESCC and WSCC)
- 1.3 As many people experiencing domestic abuse receive supported accommodation outside of the local authority area they normally reside in, it was felt that to ensure consistency in the services offered that a Pan Sussex approach and strategy was the most appropriate route to take.
- 1.4 In November 2021, the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee (TECC) considered the draft strategy which was then out to consultation. That consultation finished on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021. This report highlights the results of that consultation and seeks approval for the amended strategy.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Committee approves the strategy attached at Appendix 1.

## 3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Strategy

- 3.1 The Act places a requirement on local authorities to develop a local Domestic Abuse Strategy for the provision of accommodation-based support in its area. The development of the draft Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 was led by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and has identified strategic priorities and commitments for all TIER 1 local authorities in Sussex.
- 3.2 The draft Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 is being consulted on and has **6 strategic priorities**:
- **Consistent and Collaborative**- providing multi agency and partnership commissioning and working to ensure a consistent offer across Sussex
  - **Diverse and Appropriate** – providing a wide range of appropriate and safe accommodation and support options
  - **Accessible and Inclusive** – Ensuring all services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with a full range of protected characteristics
  - **Responsive to Multiple Disadvantage**- Establishing specialist provision to support victims/survivors with Multiple Complex Needs
  - **Victim Centered**- Empowering victims/survivors to remain in their own home through choice
  - **Trauma Informed** – Embedding trauma informed practice in practice in service and practice through training and specialist knowledge
- 3.3 These strategic priorities underpin the **Sussex Local Authorities’ commitments** which are as follows:
- Reporting to H-Clic (statutory homelessness data reporting system) must be improved in order to create a more consistent picture of the demand on Sussex housing authorities.
  - Reporting functions will be improved to enable future needs assessments to analyse out-of-area referral data in more detail.
  - Sussex authorities will provide more domestic abuse accommodation spaces for women and their children, in accordance with the Council of Europe’s minimum standards.
  - A broader menu of domestic abuse safe accommodation options will be developed in Sussex to better meet the needs of victims/survivors for whom traditional refuge is not appropriate or suitable.
  - A ‘Whole Housing Approach’ will be adopted when commissioning new forms of domestic abuse safe accommodation options in Sussex. This will include provision for:
    - Dispersed, self-contained safe accommodation
    - Specialist safe accommodation
    - Short-term and respite accommodation
    - Sanctuary Schemes

- Move-on accommodation
  - Second-stage accommodation
  - Better private rental sector options
  - Appropriate and accredited accommodation options
  - Flexible funding
  - All accommodation units will be appropriate and quality assured.
  - Funding for this expanded offer will be sustainable and independent from funding for existing services.
- 3.4 Statutory Guidance issued under the Domestic Abuse Act requires Tier one authorities to prepare and publish a local domestic abuse support in safe accommodation strategy based on a robust needs assessment. The guidance says it should be published in draft for consultation by 26 October 2021 with a final version to be published before 5 January 2022 as set out in the Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021. Due to the timeframes demanded by DLUHC, the draft strategy was published as a consultation draft and comments invited.
- 3.5 The Council informed DLUHC that it would miss the deadline of the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 due to the committee timetable and the difficulty of establishing a special committee between the 19 December (when the consultation ended) and the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- 3.6 The Committee is now asked to approve the final version of the strategy. This is necessary to avoid breaching the regulations. The strategy attached at Appendix 1 has not changed significantly from the draft strategy presented to this committee in November following the outcome of the consultation. Key changes in the strategy reflect the need for co-production of service offers with victims/survivors and a better and consistent training offer for front line officers and commissioners. Attached at Appendix 2 is an overview of the changes to the draft strategy.
- 3.7 There were 98 responses to the consultation received via the consultation portal. Of those that responded 61% lived or worked in Brighton or Hove. The largest single group of those that responded were survivors of domestic abuse, (37). Family members of survivors accounted for 24 responses. Responses from outside of Brighton and Hove account for 37% of all consultation responses. A further two responses were received from Rise Up and the Brighton Women’s Liberation Group (BWLG).
- 3.8 Rise Up disagreed with the priorities and have stated three priorities which slightly deviate from the wording of the priorities in the strategy. These include more accommodation spaces for women and children according to the Council of Europe’s minimum standards, all women in safe accommodation in Sussex should receive a minimum standard of care and support to include keywork and move on support and that Sussex local authorities will investigate specialist safe accommodation options for victims/survivors from marginalised groups. BWLG did not respond directly to the consultation but provided some useful feedback following a survey they undertook with victims/survivors setting out what domestic abuse services should look like.

- 3.9 52% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the six priority areas identified with 27% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the priority areas. Of the six priority areas, diverse and appropriate services was the first choice priority for the majority of respondents, especially around accommodation for women with children. Accessible and inclusive services also scored highly with respondents wanting a more diverse range of accommodation options especially for those from marginalized groups.
- 3.10 Comments received also highlighted the need for sustainable funding and the need for women only services. Attached at Appendix 3 are the consultation responses.
- 3.11 DLUHC allocated £606,000 to Brighton & Hove for 2021/22 to support those in safe accommodation. TECC has agreed to the spend most of this money. £8,038 remains available. There is also £241,000 of re-purposed funding to be spent which can be carried forward to the next financial year to allow for more time to consider the results of the consultation and to develop proposals based on the Strategy for the consideration of committee. A further report is anticipated in March.

### **ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The strategy must be published in line with the Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1.1 The draft **Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support Strategy 2021-2024** has been consulted on and the results are contained within the body of the report and at Appendix 3. The needs assessment process engaged with a range of organisations. The needs assessment has identified gaps in service provision and where the money should be spent to ensure that BHCC meets its duties under the new Act. The project team engaged with people with lived experience as part of the work to complete the needs assessment.

### **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This report is to provide information regarding the new requirement to publish a domestic abuse and accommodation and support strategy by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

### **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

#### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The council has received £0.606m for 2021/22 to support those in safe accommodation. TECC Committee agreed a report at the last meeting in November, to allocate £0.598m of this funding which included £0.241m for the current refuge service thereby allowing this core budget to be re-purposed. The report proposes that this be carried forward to 2022/23. This carry forward is subject to P&R Committee approval in early 2022/23 as part of the council's Targeted Budget Management (TBM) Provisional Outturn report.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 21/12/21*

Legal Implications:

The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland*

*Date: 14/12/21*

Equalities Implications:

It is recognised that Domestic Abuse disproportionately affects women and women with children. The findings of the needs assessment has informed the findings of Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 which highlights equalities considerations for the region including those with other protected characteristics. A full equalities impact assessment has been completed following the end of the consultation and prior to the publication of the final version of the strategy.

Sustainability Implications:

None

