

Item No. 15.	Classification: Open	Date: 12 September 2023	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Review: Violence Against Women and Girls, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councilor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Community Safety	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

I welcome the recommendations made in the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny commission report: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Hate Crime, and Domestic Abuse.

Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls has been a council priority for a number of years. During this period the sector has experienced a number of challenges including the Covid pandemic; and enforced lockdowns making it more difficult for victims of domestic abuse to access help. Women's safety has very much come into the forefront highlighted by a number of high profile tragic incidents whereby women have lost their lives, this includes the murder of Sarah Everard, for which the ramifications were felt locally. We are now living in a cost of living crisis, which is not only impacting our residents; for financial reasons making it more difficult for domestic abuse survivors to leave their abuser and gain financial independence, but also impacting our service providers; with increased utility costs in supported refuge accommodation. For these reasons domestic abuse and VAWG remain a priority for the council with a commitment to deliver improvements as seen in our Council Delivery Plan.

We are currently in the process of reviewing our current domestic abuse and violence against women and girls service offer in line with changing service need, with a view to developing a new transformational service to be in place for August 2024. This work will include a strategic needs assessment and widespread consultation with stakeholders, local VAWG delivery agencies, the local community and service users to ensure that the new service is fit for purpose; accessible to all members of our community. This work will also support our statutory responsibilities in relation to the new Serious Violence duty which requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence including domestic abuse, and develop a local strategy.

I am confident with the priority focus given to VAWG by the council and other statutory partners that we have the tools to really make a change in this area and improve the lives of individuals and the community blighted by this issue. Building

on the strong community foundations that we already have in place. I am confident that together we can make Southwark a safer place for all.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the cabinet notes the response to the VAWG, hate crime, and domestic abuse scrutiny recommendations as set out in Table 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The housing and community safety scrutiny commission report - Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse, was discussed at the cabinet meeting in June 2023 (agenda item 21).
3. Three recommendations were made. This report sets out a response to each recommendation and details whether, when and how the recommendations will be taken forward.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. The review put forward 3 recommendations. These are detailed in Table 1. below with the considered response.
5. Table 1. Response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
<p><i>Recommendation 1</i> - That the Cabinet prioritise the delivery of the Women's Safety Centre, aiming to launch a consultation with relevant voluntary sector organisations in the borough within the year 2023-24.</p>	<p>The council is committed to delivering a ground-breaking women safety provision by 2026. This recommendation is supported.</p> <p>The women's safety centre is an option identified as part of our VAWG transformation work currently taking place. This includes a review of our current services and local needs A key part of this process includes the development of an engagement plan including consulting with stakeholders (including the community and voluntary sector).</p> <p><u>Stakeholders</u> Some initial stakeholder engagement work took place during 2022, on the concept of a Women's Safety Centre. This included speaking with local senior Police colleagues and key VAWG providers from the CVS in the</p>

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<p>borough. This stakeholder engagement work will be extended during 2023.</p> <p>Longer term we will be developing with the CVS an Expert By Experience Panel which will continue to inform and shape the direction of our VAWG work in Southwark.</p> <p><u>Young People</u> As part of the engagement plan we are working with young people and young adults to ensure their voices and views are heard.</p> <p>The responses from our engagement and consultation will feed into the Strategic Needs Assessment, which will help form the strategic transformation governance board procurement decisions and development of new integrated services.</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 2</i> - That the cabinet member for community safety work with the Metropolitan Police, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime and the voluntary sector to establish enhanced collection of data on misogynistic hate crime and non-hate crime incidents, including how this intersects with the other protected characteristics in the borough of Southwark, and that the data from these reports is reviewed annually.</p>	<p><i>Tackling misogyny and violence against women and girls</i> is a priority for the council, included as an objective in the Council Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Misogyny is not currently recognised as a criminal offence, the Metropolitan Police do not respond to misogyny incidents (unless in relation to another offence). Data is not collected and therefore not available to the council to analyse and review.</p> <p>The Law Commission undertook a review of Hate Crime Laws in 2021. This included consideration of whether misogyny should be criminalised and made a hate crime. The Law Commission concluded in its ‘Hate Crime Laws: Final Report (PDF, 3.2MB)’ (published 7 December 2021) “that making misogyny a hate crime would not be an effective solution to the very real problem of violence,</p>

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	<p>abuse and harassment of women and girls in England and Wales, and may in fact be counterproductive in some respects.”</p> <p>Without the legal recognition of misogyny as a hate crime there is no requirement on organisations including the Metropolitan Police Service to respond or collect data in relation to misogyny.</p> <p>The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime in July 2023 recently (July 2023) launched their ‘Say Maaate to a mate’ campaign empowering men to challenge misogyny by saying ‘maaate’ to their mates when they cross the line. This campaign builds on the Mayor’s ‘Have A Word’ campaign, which launched last year, calling on men to “have a word” with themselves and then their friends in order to tackle violence against women and girls.</p> <p>The council has taken steps locally to raise awareness of misogyny; In November 2022 we launched an anti-misogyny campaign ‘Through Her Eyes’ aimed at young males. During 2023 working with the Southwark Young Advisors we will be delivering sessions to youth groups and schools as part of behavioral change programme.</p> <p>In relation to data collections the Council’s Community Safety Team are taking steps to collect local data on misogyny. In 2021 a Women’s Safety Survey was undertaken, to improve our understanding of how safe women feel in the borough; living, working, going to school and travelling in Southwark. The survey will be repeated during late 2023 and then annually, extended to include questions relating to misogyny. This</p>

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	will be collected alongside demographic data, including protected characteristics, to understand how this intersects with experiences of misogyny. The survey will run alongside a number of focus groups with voluntary sector providers enhancing the overall picture for misogyny in the borough.
<p><i>Recommendation 3</i> - That the cabinet member for community safety liaise with the Metropolitan Police, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the voluntary sector to ensure that feedback is routinely collected from victims of domestic and sexual violence about their experiences of the police, in line with the findings of the Baroness Casey Review.</p>	<p><i>Work with the Metropolitan Police to tackle male violence against women, and challenge them to work with women to rebuild their trust and confidence</i> is a council delivery plan commitment. The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member have formally written to the Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley outlining our endorsement of all of the Baroness Casey Review recommendations. This commitment also offers support from the local authority to the MET to deliver action which includes enhanced support for victims of domestic and sexual violence.</p> <p>As part of restoring trust and confidence locally we will be working closely with the local Police Command Unit to ensure that victims feedback is used to shape and drive local standards and improvement. An example of this is through jointly funding a role with police to oversee this work. This recommendation is supported.</p>

Policy framework implications

6. The new Domestic Abuse Act came in to force in 2021. Key measures include:
- A new statutory definition of domestic abuse which includes economic abuse and coercive control and defines children as victims
 - Strengthened responses to perpetrators through the introduction of new civil orders
 - Establishment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner in Law
 - A duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities (the GLA in London) to provide

support to domestic abuse survivors in safe accommodation.

7. In July 2021, the government published The Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy. The strategy reiterated the framework of prevention, provision of services, partnership working and perpetrators as the model to tackle VAWG.
8. In 2018, The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) published its strategic vision in "A Safer City for Woman and Girls". The London Tackling Violence against Woman and Girls Strategy, 2018 – 2021 which detailed a framework for London to be at the global forefront of tackling VAWG. The consultation process for the new Strategy from 2022 onwards is currently underway.
9. Southwark's five year VAWG strategy was approved by cabinet in July 2019. An associated five year delivery plan is being implemented which includes a commitment to review and redesign our local VAWG service offer.
10. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 contains a Serious Violence Duty on public bodies. It requires specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence and domestic abuse, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

11. An equalities analysis was undertaken in January 2022 as part of the developmental work for the recommissioning of VAWG services. The equality analysis demonstrates that the policy shows no potential for discrimination.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

12. Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, due regard has been given to the Council's decision making processes to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct.
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it

13. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The Public Sector Equality Duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in relation to (a) above.
14. Officers have taken steps to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010 as set out in the Community Impact Statement section above in particular:
 - In 2016/17, a Joint Service Needs Assessment (JSNA) was undertaken by Public Health of the wider health needs of victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Needs analysis was also conducted to inform the development of the VAWG Strategy 2019-2024.
 - In the development of a new VAWG service an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was undertaken in January 2022. The recommendations within this report have been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.

Health impact statement

15. Domestic abuse and other VAWG related crimes have an enormous impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of survivors and their children. Both current service provision and future proposals are focused on providing trauma-informed support with the aim of reducing short, medium and long-term harm and aiding long-term recovery.
16. Health impact has been considered and included in the revised EQIA of January 2022.

Climate change implications

17. None applicable

Resource implications

18. There will be additional short-term resource implications in the implementation of some of the recommendations, and these will be costed by the lead organisation/department.
19. Longer term there are plans to develop and procure a new transformational VAWG service to be in place from August 2024 are underway. This will take into consideration the recommendations contained within this report. The new service will be subject to a separate report for consideration by cabinet and any relevant implications will be set out in this report.

Legal implications

20. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Plans to develop and procure a new transformational VAWG service to be in place from August 2024 are underway. This will take into consideration the recommendations

contained within this report. The new service will be subject to a separate report for consideration by cabinet and any relevant implications will be set out in this report.

Financial implications

21. There will be additional short-term financial implications in the implementation of some of the recommendations, and these will be costed by the lead organisation/department.
22. Longer term there are plans to develop and procure a new transformational VAWG service to be in place from 1 July 2024 are underway. This will take into consideration the recommendations contained within this report. The new service will be subject to a separate report for consideration by cabinet and any relevant implications will be set out in this report.

Consultation

23. The Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission in undertaking their review under took widespread consultation and evidence gathering from council services, other statutory services, and community groups.
24. A comprehensive consultation is already underway in relation to developing a new VAWG service.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Head of Procurement

25. Not applicable

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance

26. Not applicable

Strategic Director of Finance

27. Not applicable

Other officers

28. Not applicable

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet agenda 13 June 2023	160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/g7676/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2013-Jun-2023%2011.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Community Safety	
Lead Officer	Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director of Environment, Neighbourhoods, and Growth	
Report Author	Sharon Ogden, Safer Communities Team Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	17 August 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance	No	No
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	17 August 2023	