

## SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

THURSDAY, 15TH JULY, 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, A Blackburn,  
K Brooks, R Charlwood, D Collins,  
M Dobson, A Gabriel, P Grahame,  
C Howley, M Midgley, D Ragan, K Ritchie  
and T Smith

### 10 **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No interests were made at the meeting.

### 11 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor R Finnigan.

### 12 **Notes**

**RECOMMENDED** – That the minutes of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 be noted.

#### Matters Arising

Minute 4 – Performance Update:

- Information regarding Housing Benefit expenditure, to differentiate between council house and private claims had been received. It was reported that the average cost for Council tenant (and others) is £3746, whereas private is £6242 in 2021;
- A member queried the availability of a briefing note on the new contract for MEARS. It was noted that colleagues in the housing department are in the process of this, and a briefing note is anticipated to be with Board Members over the next week.

### 13 **Safer Leeds Update**

The report of the Chief Officer Safer Stronger Communities sets out the annual update against priorities included in the Safer Leeds Community Safety Strategy 2018-19, and presents the draft Safer, Stronger Communities City Plan 2021-24.

Appended to the submitted report included the Annual Community Safety Activity and Performance 2020/21 (Appendix 1), Safer Leeds Performance Information (Appendix 2) and the Safer Stronger Communities City Plan 2021-24 (Appendix 3).

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Resources
- James Rogers, Director Communities, Housing & Environment
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer Stronger Communities
- Simon Hodgson, Head of Community Safety Services

- Sharon Coates, Service Improvement Manager
- Claire Smith, ASB Service Delivery Manager

Officers in attendance, provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation, which highlighted:

- An annual update 2021 on the Safer Leeds Community Safety Strategy 2018-21, specifically in terms of activity and outcomes the service has focused on in relation to:
  - Anti-Social Behaviour
  - Drugs and Alcohol
  - Domestic Violence
  - Street Support
  - Hate Crime
  - LeedsWatch
- An overview of the draft Safer Stronger Communities City Plan 2021-24, including its ambition and strategic priorities;
- An overview of key issues and shared priorities that directly affect people's safety, all of which negatively impact on people and places. It was noted that there was a clear need to strengthen the commitment to address inequalities related to the key issues;
- The Safer, Stronger Communities Model and its key aims to improve better outcomes for people;
- The Implementation Framework in place as well as the Connected Boards / Significant Partnerships;
- The focus on Strategic Priorities moving forward, those being:
  - Keeping people safe from harm,
  - Preventing & reducing offending
  - Creating safer, stronger communities

Members discussions focussed on the following matters:

#### Street Support

- The quality of female accommodation facilities;
- The support in place for individuals with tenancy agreements exhibiting behaviours of street homelessness, and clarity on whether the Assisted Support Rough Sleeper Scheme extends beyond the city centre;
- The process of managing individuals refusing support;
- Increased drug related ASB, particularly when a large number of rough sleepers were placed in hotels;
- The demographics of the 10 one bed properties purchased by the council.

#### Tackle Crime and ASB

- The extension and use of social media platforms to reach a wider audience;
- Tackling issues around leaving bins and bags of waste in the streets, and clarity on the use of the new PSPO for Headingley/Hyde Park & Little London/Woodhouse;
- Increased quad bike related ASB and clarity on the powers in place to take action against individuals.

## Hate Crime

- Whether there are specialist officers to deal with enquiries relating to Disability Hate crime

## LeedsWatch

- The position on hardware updates, and the use of data;
- The source of LeedsWatch funding;
- Further clarity on the service redesign and restructure.

Responding to questions from Members, the Board were provided with the following information:

- Leeds is 1 of 2 cities that has a dedicated facility for women, and it was confirmed that the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub will provide women with independent living spaces, and 24/7 support. The Hub provides emergency accommodation but will be there for women seeking longer term accommodation – additional funding will be required to support the Hub long-term;
- The Assisted Support Rough Sleeper Scheme focuses on all wards, although the concentration is mainly in the city centre and links closely with Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs). It was reported that in June 2020, 21 people were on the streets and during the pandemic 200 individuals were moved on as a result of the increased blended accommodation offer across the city;
- 12 navigators are employed through the Third Sector to work with people in their homes to mitigate people returning to the streets;
- Enforcement action can be taken against individuals presenting continued challenges, although this would be a last resort should support be refused/ignored;
- A large number of individuals were placed across hotels, resulting in anti-social behaviour. It was confirmed a high concentration of people at any one time will be avoided in the future, to mitigate issues;
- Clarity on the location of properties purchased by the council can be provided to members outside of the meeting. It was confirmed the council put a bid in for 20 properties and were successful in purchasing 10 of those properties. Consultation with ward members on the location of the additional properties will be carried out;
- Universities are unable to share student information due to GDPR and they do not have access to this until September/October. The council are able to share data with the universities when action is taken against an individual but there are challenges surrounding this prior to September when that individual is not classed as a student. It was confirmed that there are regular meetings with partners, and weekly meetings with West Yorkshire Police to combat issues and prevent and deter at an early stage;
- Clarity was provided on the process for referring cases to the ASB MARAC, and it was confirmed that further details in relation to this will be provided to Community Committee Safety Champions via a briefing note;

- An update will be provided at the next meeting in relation to expanding social media platforms and the work in liaison with housing offices and community hubs to display information;
- The Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) take care of enforcement around litter being left in communities and specific data regarding this can be provided to members;
- Quad bike related ASB remains a high priority for the council and there are issues across the city in identifying the bikes. Liaison with CC Safety Champions will help explore options; reference was made to the way Operation Steerside is operated, which is a police, Bradford council and wider partnership operation focussing mainly on enforcement of anti-social and illegal use of motor vehicles;
- Options are being explored with colleagues in DIS in terms of how CCTV cameras are to be implemented and upgraded – a city wide programme will include details on future arrangements for hardware. GDPR issues have been identified with being able to share data with key stakeholders. It was confirmed that a development plan for LeedsWatch has been set up and explains how data is shared. Additionally, there isn't a solution at the moment on where wider funding will come from.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation, attendance and information presented in the submitted report.

Due to time constraints, the Board agreed there may be a need to provide additional comments on the City Plan, and so it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report and its appendices, together with comments raised during discussion of this item;
- b) To endorse in principle the draft Safer Stronger Communities City Plan 2021-24, subject to additional comments put forward by Board Members over the next 4 weeks.

**14 Domestic Violence and Abuse**

The report of the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment provided an update on the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the progress made by the council in delivering against the statutory duties. As well as an update on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on domestic violence and abuse and the council's response over the last year.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Resources
- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care
- Councillor Marshall-Katung Scrutiny Board Chair (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)
- James Rogers, Director Communities, Housing & Environment
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer Stronger Communities
- Jude Roberts, DV Service Manager
- Nik Peasgood, Leeds Women's Aid

The Scrutiny Board were provided with a PowerPoint presentation, covering the following matters:

- An overview of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the key themes and focuses in relation to the Act;
- The steps the Local Authority have taken in terms of establishing a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB), supported by the Domestic Abuse Voice and Accountability Forum (DAVAF). As well as the Strategic Migration Board;
- The allocation of funding for 2021/22 to enhance current accommodation-based provision and ensuring the needs of children are met;
- The work streams put in place by the Local Authority when responding to the pandemic;
- Key statistics regarding Domestic Incident volume information, and suggested reasons behind under-reporting.

Members discussions focussed on the following matters:

- Frequency of MARAC meetings;
- Availability of adequate and suitable accommodation for families under immediate threat;
- How local DV issues are linked into the strategy on a city-wide level;
- The scope to increase preventative work, such as the delivery of awareness sessions;
- Supporting 'others' who classify as a victim of domestic abuse, such as neighbours with children;
- Whether GP surgeries are continuing to encourage routine enquiries.

Responding to questions from Members, the Board was provided with the following information:

- MARAC meetings are held Monday – Friday and any cases received over the weekend, will be picked up the following Monday;
- Whilst the strategy is intended to be delivered in a phased approach, officers are keen to identify local perspectives when delivering services across communities;
- Routine enquiries have been rolled out to all GP surgeries and confirmation of surgeries not taking part should be fed back to the team;
- A breakdown on the number of reported police cases can be provided on a ward basis.

The DV Service Manager experienced connectivity issues during the meeting and was unable to answer some queries relating to increased preventative work and extending support to neighbours. It was confirmed that a response to this, will be provided to Cllr Smith following the meeting.

The Executive Member for Adults and Children's Social Care highlighted the importance of focusing the needs of children and recognising their health and agreed DV should be a collective piece of work moving forward.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report and comments raised during consideration of this item;
- b) To note the progress made by the council and its response over the last year in delivering against the statutory duties of the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

**15 Co-Opted Members**

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support sought the Board's formal consideration for the appointment of co-opted members.

The submitted report set out that the Board could appoint the following:

- Up to five non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that does not go beyond the next Annual Meeting of Council; and or/,
- Up to two non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that relates to the duration of a particular and specific scrutiny inquiry.

**RECOMMENDED –**

- a) To agree the appointment of co-opted members on an ad-hoc basis for any inquiries where it was deemed appropriate.

**16 Work Schedule**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the 2021/22 municipal year. A draft work schedule was appended to the submitted report, together with the Executive Board minutes from the meeting held 23 June 2021.

Board Members were informed that their views will be sought from the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, on the proposed next steps for the Community Safety Item, and whether the Board support an invitation being sent to the Mayor of West Yorkshire and/or her Deputy to attend a future meeting.

**RECOMMENDED –**

- a) That the draft work schedule be noted.

**17 Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

**RECOMMENDED –** To note the date and time of the next meeting as 23 September 2021, at 10.30 am (pre-meet at 10 am for Board Members)

The meeting concluded at 11:55.