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## Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

### Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007

### Subject: Safer Leeds Partnership Prostitution Strategy

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report is prepared to offer an insight into the background for the Safer Leeds Partnership's Prostitution Strategy which was presented to the Safer Leeds Executive at their January meeting for final ratification. The Strategy is attached as appendix 1.

1.2 The Leeds Strategy has been prepared as a direct result of the Government's national Prostitution Strategy that was agreed and circulated in April 2006 and has been adopted in principle by a large number of the key cities across the UK where prostitution, particularly street based activity, has been identified as a major concern to communities in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## 2.0 Safer Leeds Prostitution Strategy

2.1 The Leeds Strategy will be supported by a fully costed implementation plan once 2007/08 budgets for health, drug care and housing which are key aspects of the strategy have been confirmed by central Government.

2.2 The key themes of the Leeds Strategy are in line with the national approach, i.e.,

- Prevention
- Tackling supply and demand
- Developing routes out
- Ensuring justice

2.3 Intelligence obtained for recent police activity across the city has identified in excess of 250 women engaged in street based prostitution. It is envisaged that

there are similar numbers working in saunas and off street premises albeit confirmation of this proves extremely difficult. The majority of these women identified in the first group are using Class A drugs and many are committing crime to sustain the habit, either for themselves or their pimp.

- 2.4 Both history and more recent research within the national Strategy have confirmed that dealing with prostitutes by arrest and imprisonment has failed to solve the problem within any of our UK cities. Whilst the Leeds Strategy adopts the recommended holistic approach to the problem by focussing on the individual needs of the woman and offering ways out of prostitution, it maintains a resolute response to those who choose to ignore the options available and supports firm action through the Courts to all who commit crime. Kerb crawlers are specifically targeted for attention as they present an identified problem to females within communities that suffer from prostitution.
- 2.5 In conclusion, to be affective the Strategy must be adopted by a multi-agency response as enforcement alone will not solve or improve this problem within the city. Commitment by stakeholder partners both in resources and funding is essential if Leeds is to follow the success of cities like Glasgow where significant change has occurred over the past five years due to an open dialogue between the public and voluntary sectors.

### **3.0 Recommendation**

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the information provided and to make any comments and recommendations as appropriate.