

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 29 October
2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Carole Gandy and Pattie Hill

Also Present:

Councillor Yvonne Smith

Officers:

J Cooper, S Hanley, S Kelsey and J Willis

Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley

1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel held on 22nd October 2013 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

4. DOMESTIC ABUSE PROJECTS - BRIEFING NOTE

The Chair explained that she had requested a presentation on the subject of domestic abuse due to the significance of this matter to community safety. Members were advised that in an edition of The Times newspaper in September 2014 it had been noted that domestic abuse accounted for 10 per cent of the caseload of the Crown Prosecution Service. This article had also reported that more than seven women a month were murdered by men with whom they had had had a relationship and that according to the Crime Survey for England 30 per cent of women had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16.

Officers presented a briefing note containing further information about the many community safety initiatives that had been launched to address issues of domestic abuse in Redditch. During the presentation of this briefing note the following issues were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Community Safety team delivered a number of projects, often in partnership with the police.
- Elected Members had traditionally been supportive of action taken by the team to tackle domestic abuse. This had included vocal support for the White Ribbon Campaign and participating in a recent pledge against domestic abuse.
- There had been a positive response from the public and other organisations to the White Ribbon Campaign.
- There were different stages at which agencies could work with victims of domestic abuse. This included early intervention with individuals considered to be at risk of being abused and working with victims who had left abusive partners who were in the criminal justice system.
- There had been 744 recorded crimes and incidents in Redditch in 2013/14 linked to domestic abuse. This figure potentially included multiple reports for particular victims.
- A member of the Community Safety team had received training on the CRUSH programme, which offered support and aimed to empower young people aged 13 to 19 years.
- The CRUSH programme provided an opportunity to educate young people about healthy relationships. Participants could also be advised about local agencies that could provide support if they experienced domestic abuse.

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- The Community Safety team was working with the Early Help team and local schools to identify suitable participants for the programme.
- In the long-term the team was hoping to deliver the CRUSH programme in all of the High Schools in the Borough, though the delivery of the programme would need to be managed in a sensitive manner.
- Briefing sessions focusing on domestic abuse were also being delivered in local schools during “Drop Down Days”, which were days in the academic year when students did not attend normal lessons.

Following delivery of the presentation the Panel discussed a number of issues in further detail:

- Progress in the past few decades in terms of agencies working in partnership to tackle domestic abuse.
- Changing attitudes towards domestic abuse within society and the increasing visibility of domestic abuse cases within local, regional and national media.
- The impact of domestic abuse on both female and male victims.
- The remaining challenges to tackling domestic abuse. In particular, concerns were expressed that despite progress in tackling gender based inequalities in general abusive behaviour towards women continued to be normalised, excused and minimised within parts of society. Women and girls subject to abuse often internalised these attitudes.
- The potential for the CRUSH programme to help young people to challenge their assumptions about relationships.
- Support being provided to both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and the potential to challenge the perpetrators’ behaviour.
- Difficulties experienced by young people, and other victims who were inexperienced in terms of intimate relationships, when attempting to identify the early and often subtle signs of domestic abuse.
- The risks encountered by victims of domestic abuse when attempting to resist their abusers. The Panel was advised that victims were most at risk when they chose to leave their abusive partners.
- The impact of parental behaviour on a child’s concept of a healthy relationship.

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- The findings of the *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 to 2013)* and the need for sufficient funding to be allocated by public sector organisations to tackle domestic abuse.
- The police service developed care plans for victims of domestic abuse and reported security needs to the Community Safety team.
- Information provided by the police was used to inform the Community Safety team's risk assessment of the victim.
- There was a need for the children of victims of domestic violence to have access to positive male role models. Members were advised that male members of staff in all relevant agencies, including the Council, Women's Aid and Stonham Services Home Group, took this role very seriously.
- Stonham Services Home Group provided bespoke support to male victims of domestic abuse.
- There was greater variety in terms of the accommodation available to victims of domestic abuse who were leaving their partners than had been the case in previous years. This included safe houses and refuges, and flexible living arrangements that enabled women to live with male children who were aged 16 or more.
- The role of the NHS in supporting victims of domestic abuse. Members were advised that there was some positive practice locally amongst some NHS employees and representatives of Worcestershire County Council had been working with GP practices and A&E departments to help staff identify signs of domestic abuse.
- The pattern of abuse committed by some perpetrators against multiple partners.
- The challenges involved in supporting vulnerable victims who entered relationships with more than one abuser in their lifetime.
- The backgrounds of perpetrators and the fact that they could be from any social class and employed in a wide variety of occupations.
- The development of a Domestic Abuse Policy for Council staff. Officers confirmed that the policy had been added to the Executive Work Programme and was due to be considered in November in time to be launched alongside the White Ribbon Campaign.
- The Diamond Club for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. The Community Safety team had commissioned

a programme with the Early Help team to support vulnerable members of the BME community.

- Suitable participants were identified by Early Help and referred to participation in the programme which involved a mixture of art therapy and life coaching.
- The programme was considered to be successful and had resulted in a number of victims leaving relationships that they had not previously realised were abusive.
- Funding had also been secured by the Community Safety team to deliver three pilot projects supporting specific groups in the BME community. This included work to support the polish community and a new pilot which would be launched in the New Year to support vulnerable members of the Asian community.
- Key findings from the pilot projects had identified language barriers which made it difficult for vulnerable victims of domestic abuse in these communities to access support.
- The outcomes of all of the pilot projects would be evaluated and, if considered successful, Officers were hoping to secure further funding to support similar projects in future.

Members concluded that the community safety initiatives were having a positive impact on the local community in terms of tackling domestic abuse.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

5. LGBT PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES - BRIEFING NOTE

Officers presented a briefing note concerning the community safety initiatives that were being delivered in Redditch dealing with issues affecting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. During the delivery of this presentation a number of points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- There was under reporting of hate crime incidents in the LGBT community.
- The Community Safety team had been working with RSA Arrow Vale Academy to establish an LGBT Youth Support Group. Officers were seeking to identify a suitable location in the town centre where the group could meet so that young people from other schools could also attend.

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- In previous years representatives of the LGBT community had reported that there were limited opportunities available in the Borough to attend social activities for the community.
- Attempts had been made to address this in the past and a social event for the LGBT community had taken place at Fever nightclub in the town centre in two consecutive years. Unfortunately these events had not been profitable and were therefore no longer taking place.

Following delivery of the briefing note the following points were raised during a discussion of the subject amongst members of the Panel:

- Whilst progress had been made in recent years in tackling homophobic language and behaviour there were still people in the community who had prejudices against the LGBT community.
- Members were advised that in many cases homophobic comments and behaviour occurred as a result of ignorance within the wider community.
- Members expressed support for the positive action that was being taken by local public agencies to support the LGBT community.

Members agreed that the content of the scoping document and the update that had been provided during the meeting should be referred for the consideration of the Provision of support Networks for the LGBT Community Task Group once the review had started. There was the possibility that based on this update Members might want to consider amending the terms of reference for the review.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

6. ADULT SAFEGUARDING - PRESENTATION

The Chair announced that due to unforeseen circumstances the lead Officer for this item was not available to deliver the presentation. For this reason it had been suggested that the item should be referred for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a later date.

Members requested that a briefing note be circulated on this subject for the consideration of members of the Panel by email to enable

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the Chair to determine whether this item needed to be referred for the consideration of the Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 6.33 pm
and closed at 7.50 pm