

# Report to Overview Select Committee

Date of Committee meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

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## **Enhancing Women's Safety in Leicester**

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood & Environmental  
Services

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number plus Code No from Report Tracking Database: 1

### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Overview Select Committee (OSC) with details of current community safety work around supporting a safer Leicester for women and girls. The report also highlights how programmes of work are being developed with respect to this agenda and put in place to enhance support for women and girls in public spaces.
- 1.2 This report provides updates on those areas of work reported to OSC in July 2021, the report details information on current and planned work around the following thematic areas:-
  - a) The night-time economy, and;
  - b) Parks & open spaces

### 2. Summary

- 2.1 Understandably the issue around women's safety continues to be highlighted as an area of concern. Police data evidence suggests that women and girls are more likely to be victims of certain crime types both at home and in public spaces.
- 2.2 There are clearly issues of women feeling vulnerable and unsafe in key locations within the city; a recent survey undertaken amongst women and girls show that approximately 18% stated that they felt unsafe; with a large number of respondents stating that they felt unsafe in the city centre/ LE1 postcode area and more specially in relation to people and their behaviours in relation to substance misuse.
- 2.3 As highlighted in the previous report to OSC, the Home Office made available funding for organisations such as the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and local authorities to address issues of crime and the fear of crime faced by women and girls. These funds were to be allocated through bidding rounds where partners were invited to submit bids, with costed proposals against the type of issues which are to be addressed. The council was successful in securing both bids, details of which are outlined further in this report.
- 2.4 Leicester City Council and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) successfully secured funding of £442,379, through a Home Office fund entitled "Safer Streets Fund – Round 3" for safety initiatives and measures within our parks and opens spaces. Further to this, the city council

also secured funding of £249,491 for safety measures within our night-time economy via a programme called “SWaN – Safety for Women at Night”.

- 2.5 Outlined in the full report (section 4) are details of the findings in relation to this survey together with programmes of work underway to support this agenda and enhance women’s safety in Leicester.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that members of the Committee note the current work being undertaken on this agenda and comment on the proposed way forward identifying any additional steps that can be taken to address the issue of women’s safety.

### **4. Report**

- 4.1 The safety of women and girls is a major concern for many people. The tragic deaths of Sarah Everard and others serve as a reminder that this is an urgent public safety issue, we all need to act on. That said, to date women’s safety and the need to take safety measures are focused on women and girls who are asked to change their behaviours from the way they dress, to the way they go home after a night out. This leads to women and girls left feeling that there is to a degree “victim blaming” rather than dealing with the root causes of safety for women and girls, where men (in the main) are the perpetrators of crime levelled at women and girls.

#### Night-Time Economy (NTE)

- 4.2 As mentioned at 2.3, Leicester City Council successfully bid for and were awarded just under £250k under the Safety for Women at Night (SWaN). The Safety of Women at Night fund aims to reduce incidents of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in public spaces at night, including within venues, as well as routes home and to build an evidence base for what is most effective in improving women’s safety within this context. It has a focus on supporting projects that target potential perpetrators, seeking to protect potential victims, or delivering programmes intended to address offending behaviour.
- 4.3 The issue of ensuring a safer night -time economy has been supported by the city’s community safety partnership over a number of years. It has been through the work of the Safer Leicester Partnership that Leicester City Council for example, achieved purple flag status in 2019/20. This means SWaN work has continued to seize opportunities to make the NTE safer.
- 4.4 A survey was recently carried out as part of the “Safety for Women at Night” SWaN programme between mid-January and end of February 2022 to capture the voice of women and girls, to identify their concerns, and identify blockers to reporting. Partners also wanted an improved understanding of hotspots and issues in relation to night-time economy (NTE) safety.

- 4.5 533 responses were received to the survey, (this included 102 responses from men who also completed the survey). The survey showed that approximately 18% of the respondents stated that they did not feel safe in public places (and more so in the evenings/ night); with a large number of respondents stating that they felt unsafe in the city centre/ LE1 postcode area and more specially in relation to people and their behaviours where there was substance misuse (alcohol and drugs).
- 4.6 Of the 330 people who answered this question, only 25% of the respondents stated that they had reported these issues, and most of these were to the police. Most respondents did not report the issues as they felt that these types of behaviours happened regularly and that no action would be taken against the perpetrators.
- 4.7 In relation to how and what can be done to make people feel safer, the top response was “additional police presence” followed by better lighting and CCTV.
- 4.8 Also, as part of this initiative two free training programmes have been developed, directed to venue staff, security staff at licensed premises, public transport staff (buses and taxis’). Outlined below is the information on the two training programmes;
- a) The STANDBYHER programme:  
Stand by Her is a program to encourage men to be better allies to women when they receive unwanted attention. It is about tackling attitudes and behaviours at the earliest level so that we can prevent the escalation in harmful incidents. The programme encourages men to think about their own behaviour and the impact it can have on women, encourages them to respond when they witness women getting unwanted attention and to educate other men and young boys in their networks.
- b) The Spotting Vulnerability In Night-Time Economy programme:  
The course aim is to enable staff working within the night-time economy to recognise different aspects of challenging behaviour/ spotting vulnerabilities with people, which they may encounter as part of their role at work. Also, to be able to understand and be aware of the different methods of resolving such situations where necessary.
- 4.9 A large part of the SWaN programme of work is an awareness raising campaign; this campaign has the strapline “You’re Right, It’s Wrong” focussing particularly on men, using a bystander element. That is reminding and highlighting to men what is unacceptable behaviour, whilst encouraging their friends/ colleagues to step in where necessary. Also as part of this area of work, Leicester University and De Montfort Universities are working in conjunction with students to produce short videos which can be shared on Twitter and Facebook. See annex A with the media toolkit being used by partners.
- 4.10 Other activities being undertaken as part of the SWaN programme include;

- a) Improvement in Security/ Street Pastors in the city centre - Street Pastors and additional ambassadors are being employed to work within the NTE and provide support and advice
- b) Additional CCTV operator is being deployed to monitor CCTV cameras in order to identify any vulnerable women and girls ensuring that police and/ or other support is signposted to the location where the person is located.
- c) Increase in City Watch Membership – City Watch provides a facility whereby businesses can share information between themselves whilst also being able to alert the CCTV control room or the police of issues where their input is required. This action allows for more businesses to trial the membership with a view to deciding whether they wish to take out a membership on a longer-term basis.
- d) Evaluation Costs – the Home Office are keen to learn about and identify those programmes which effectively address women’s safety; therefore part of the programme will focus on evaluation.

### **Safer Streets (Parks & Open Spaces)**

4.11 As indicated above, the city council (in conjunction with the OPCC) were successful in being awarded £442,379 funding for initiatives focussed on parks and open spaces. That is £412,379 from Home Office, Safer Streets Fund round 3 and a further £30,000 through OPCC’s funding to Safer Leicester Partnership.

4.12 Requirements of the fund included the need to ;-

- a) Reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) and increase women and girls’ feelings of safety in public spaces
- b) Build the evidence base for what works on reducing VAWG crimes and increasing women and girls’ feelings of safety in the public domain
- c) Improve the national and local data picture regarding VAWG crimes in public spaces, which could include increased reporting for some crime types; and
- d) Make public spaces safer for all
- e) Ensuring area selection is supported by local or national VAWG stakeholders and organisations such as schools with responsibility for groups of women and girls
- f) Identifying evidence that the area is persistently and disproportionately affected by VAWG and/or low feelings of public safety
- g) Selecting areas with a defined, but not necessarily adjoined, geography.

4.13 Using police information, 8 parks and open spaces in the city were identified as those that needed intervention. These included:-

- a) Abbey Park
- b) Aylestone meadows
- c) Bede Park
- d) Braunstone Park
- e) Knighton Park
- f) Rally Park
- g) Victoria Park
- h) Western Park

4.14 The following programmes of work are now taking place, which were identified by officers (police and council) and local ward councillors as those which were required at each park/ open space to improve safety. Listed below are some of the types of action being taken:-

a. Abbey Park

- Improvements have been made to ensure better sight lines to establish a safe car park environment by the removal of some shrubbery.
- Seating has been removed and replaced with natural perch points to decrease ASB and drug paraphernalia hiding places.
- Oval Shelter and the Event Field Shelter have been sealed off as the redundant areas are prone to encourage homelessness use and giving rise to intimidation of users.

b. Aylestone meadows

- Shrubs, brambles, dead wood, rubble, fly-tipping has been cleared near to the car park to enable better sight lines. Re-seeding and reinstatement has been undertaken where necessary.
- Car park and the ditch area and perimeter has been cleared to create a safe space to offset known cottaging activities and deter exposure offences.
- Low level lighting for car park suitable for wildlife/conservation concerns has been installed.
- Two CCTV cameras have been purchased to cover identified female crime hotspots.

c. Bede Park

- Upper-level mounding infrastructure, seating and fencing has been removed; to discourage it to be used as a gathering point for those intent on intimidating women and girls in the area.
- Seating along the waterside used for street drinking is to be removed.
- Installation of additional lower-level bollard-style lighting to supplement partially obscured existing streetlamps along preferred safe route (and cycleway) is also planned.
- Two CCTV cameras have been purchased to cover identified female crime hotspots.

d. Braunstone Park

- The main Spinney area is to be cleared including the lifting of trees and work to improve sightlines.
- Various entrances on the park are scheduled to be cleared.
- Two CCTV cameras have been purchased to cover identified female crime hotspots.

e. Knighton Park

- Clearance of ground between main park route and cycle route towards adjacent watercourse to prevent covert observation and concealment is scheduled to be undertaken.

f. Rally Park

- Branches covering the lighting on Queen Elizabeth Walk are planned to be cut back.
  - Vegetation is also planned to be cut back and maintained along Queen Elizabeth Walk, therefore opening up the area.
  - Hard prune of shrubs was undertaken away from pathways to ensure clear sight lines throughout all planted areas.
  - Two CCTV cameras have been purchased to cover identified female crime hotspots.
- g. Victoria Park
- Four CCTV cameras have been purchased to cover identified female crime hotspots.
  - Shrubbery was cleared and old grounds maintenance was carried out, including green waste mulching bay along main pathway to pavilion from new walk.
  - Ground clearance is planned around spinney areas near nature sites close to Leicester University to discourage habitation and enhance safety of users
- h. Western Park
- Various areas on the park required sections opening up the visual sightlines: Park View corner / along New Parks Way/ Various sections within the park adjacent to Spinney Areas which require opening up around access routes – these are all planned to be undertaken as part of the overall programme.

## 5. Financial, legal, and other implications

### 5.1 Financial implications

The body of this report sets out the main funding sources to support work around women's safety agenda.

These are summarised below:

<b>Budget</b>	<b>Funder</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Safer Streets Fund – Round 3 Towards women's safety	Home Office	£412,379
Safety for Women at Night	Home Office	£249,491
Safer Leicester Partnership	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	£30,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£691,870</b>

Stuart McAvoy – Acting Head of Finance, Ext 37 4004

### 5.2 Legal implications

The Authority will need to ensure it complies with any specified conditions imposed by the various external funding streams together with an assessment against subsidy control of the incoming funds.

In respect of the forward funding to secure various programmes this will need to be in compliance with the Authority's internal Contract Procedure Rules. Procurement and Legal Service should be engaged to advise and assist with this. There is mention of increasing capacity within certain specialist services, any proposed variation to contract(s) will also need to be in compliance with the Authority's Contract Procedure Rules and formalised in line with contractual obligations.

Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor (Commercial) Ext. 37 1423

### 5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. In general, where services are provided or commissioned carbon emission implications can generally be managed through measures such as encouraging sustainable travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and applicable.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

### 5.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report provides details of the current community safety work around ensuring women's safety in Leicester and how programmes of work are being developed and put in place to support women and girls both at home and in public spaces. Whilst this is likely to have a positive impact it is important that going forward consideration of equalities impacts are taken into account in the development of programmes of work and as an integral part of the decision-making process, it is recommended that Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAS) are undertaken as appropriate. Also any engagement, surveys, training, etc need to be accessible, fair and proportionate for those taking part.

Further advice can be sought from the Corporate Equalities Team.



Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 454 4175

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Section 17 Crime & Disorder Act: implications with regards to the duty of local authorities to consider the impact of their decisions and actions on crime and disorder in the local area.

Daxa Pancholi,  
Head of Community Safety,  
Ext 37 0203

**6. Background information and other papers:**

**7. Summary of appendices:**

**8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

No

**9. Is this a “key decision”?**

No

**10. If a key decision please explain reason**