

Report to Overview Select Committee

Date of Committee meeting: 27th May 2021

Enhancing Women's Safety

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood & Environmental
Services



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;
- a) outline the current community safety work around ensuring women's safety,
 - b) the process to be used to improve women's safety further within Leicester city and,
 - c) outline the opportunity to access government funding to undertake proactive community safety work which will make a difference to the daily lives of women and girls.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The issue around women safety has become more prevalent over the recent years. Leicester City Council takes this matter seriously and as such has undertaken considerable work around the domestic and sexual violence agenda. Whilst domestic and sexual violence and abuse issues affect both men and women, the majority of victims tend to be women and girls. In addition to this stream of work, existing community safety work undertaken to date, whilst not focussed on women's safety solely enhances women's safety e.g. work around prostitution, night-time economy, target hardening of homes and public spaces.
- 2.2 Safer Leicester Partnership (the city's community safety partnership) will be reviewing the work that it currently undertakes around this agenda and identify any further strategic steps that can be taken within a partnership context. In terms of the actual delivery, the Safer Leicester Partnership's Community Safety Tasking Group (CSTG) will identify a programme of work that can be undertaken to improve women safety.
- 2.3 Furthermore, the Government has faced mounting pressure to make our streets safer following the murder of Sarah Everard. In a bid to improve security, the Home Office has made available £25 million through a programme called the Safer Streets fund. This fund will be allocated through a bidding round where police authority areas will be invited to submit bids, with costed proposals against the type of issues which are to be addressed.
- 2.4 This funding can be used, for instance on better lighting and CCTV facilities in the streets so women feel safer walking through streets, parks etc. That said, it will be up to individual areas to identify key issues and hotspots for their city and then in turn agree on a programme of actions and solutions. The Home Office will be looking for innovative and creative set of actions that bring

together and involve both local communities and the voluntary sector in the identification of solutions.

- 2.5 As this work progresses, a further report with detailed plans and activities will be brought to the Committee for comments later in the year.

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 Leicester City Council has for some time taken the issue of women's safety seriously, and with this in mind resourced considerable work around the domestic and sexual violence and abuse (DSVA) agenda.
- 4.2 The current four Leicester City Council DSVA services (all delivered by UAVA) started on 1/12/15, these are;
- Children, young people and families service (CYPFS) for sexual and domestic violence. This incorporates practical and emotional support and is for children and young people of any age.
 - Safe Home Service, which is for those who do not have safe housing due to sexual or domestic violence. This service can secure homes where appropriate, give housing advice and support and provide emergency supported accommodation (refuge provision).
 - Domestic Violence Perpetrator Interventions service. This is for men and women and is aimed at those who want to change their behaviour (they have not been ordered by a court to do so). This includes partner/ ex-partner support and a variety of individual and group work programmes.
 - Information and Support Service. This includes helpline, individual and group support across all levels of risk (of harm) and need and includes counselling, recovery, crisis and advocacy work.
- 4.3 In addition to this the city council and partners have undertaken work within the night-time economy such as "Ask Angela" which provides women with an opportunity to alert bar staff should they feel vulnerable and unsafe. A further initiative, involved the establishment of a safe haven via the use of the CityBus by the Clock Tower in the city centre, where individuals are able to report crime, minor cuts etc. Furthermore, significant work has been undertaken to safeguard sex workers by offering health and safety advice as well as advice on how to stay safe on the street.

- 4.4 Officers are also exploring the use of a digital platform and applications to help make city spaces safer, particularly for women. An example of this is the use of MySafetipin app which helps inform decisions about moving around a city, based on the safety score of an area. The app is free and uses crowd-sourced data.
- 4.5 A recent bid was submitted through the “Changing Futures” funding stream, it is expected that the funding will improve outcomes for adults experiencing multiple disadvantages. Leicester’s submission specifically includes the following with a significant emphasis on women;
- a) Women with Multiple Disadvantage particularly sex workers
 - b) Prison leavers including short term/revolving door offenders
 - c) Those with a dual diagnosis or proposed dual diagnosis
 - d) Complex mental health cases
- This bid was submitted on 6th of May, it is expected that a decision will be announced at the end of May/ early June.
- 4.6 The Safer Leicester Partnership produce a 3-year plan which contains a number of priorities. These priorities are determined through identifying threat, harm, and risks that the city faces which partners agree should be addressed through joint effort. These priorities are reviewed annually to ensure they remain focussed and that appropriate joint planning and resourcing allocation around these key issues is being undertaken. When undertaking a review, consultation takes place with key stakeholders, members of the public and elected members.
- 4.7 Keeping women safe has always been an important matter; to ensure and given recent national concerns this is to be further considered by the Safer Leicester Partnership at its next meeting, taking on board any feedback from Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.8 Once an area of work has been added and recognised as a priority for the Safer Leicester Partnership, this will ensure that there is additional activity and resourcing to address the priority that has been agreed. In order to then achieve a difference on the ground, the priority will be addressed via a multi-agency group; as such, it is expected that this workstream will be delivered through the community safety tasking group. This group consists of officers from, the city council, the blue light services, the two universities, university hospitals of Leicester etc
- 4.9 Further to the above, the Home Office will be providing support under the Safer Streets Fund towards addressing women’s safety concerns. This initiative was previously focussed purely on serious acquisitive crime e.g. robbery, burglary, theft of vehicle. In the wake of Sarah Everard’s death, the Government announced an additional £25m for the Safer Streets fund specifically around Violence Against Women & Girls; this additional funding has been made available to specifically focus on the safety of women and as the Home Office term it by “*increasing the safety of public spaces of concern*”

for women and girls". The funding opportunity formally opened on the 10th May (with a bid deadline of 18th June).

4.10 As this round of Safer Streets funding is being specifically focussed around "*increasing the safety of public spaces of concern for women and girls*"; in order to co-ordinate activities around Leicestershire; local stakeholders have come together to discuss three potential innovative approaches/ bids.

4.11 The type of proposals which partners have suggested come under three headings that is, community, spaces, and people; outline below are some of the ideas discussed to improve women's safety.

a. Community

- Corporate responsibility expectations established to create safe spaces both at night and during the day, such as 24hr petrol stations, corner shops and public facing buildings where women can safely go to for support and assistance.
- Being more proactive post incident to build community confidence around the use of that public space.
- Stalking and harassment, run campaigns on this issue, to encourage reporting.

b. Spaces

- Making spaces busier and therefore safer; planning consideration would need to be taken into account.
- Increased use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR).
- Improved street lighting and CCTV especially in parks/ open spaces.
- Working with taxi drivers, licensees (what to look out for/ do) and ensuring safe routes home especially at night.

c. People

- Work with perpetrators; instilling safer/healthy relationships.
- Education in schools encouraging discussions around the consequences of negative behaviour.
- Work with universities to address students at the start of adult life around this issue.
- Tackle misogynistic attitudes.
- Work with sex workers; supporting them to keep and stay safe.
- Women of different age groups may need tailored support to keep them safe.

4.12 The new Police & Crime Commissioner will determine exactly which geographical areas are to be targeted for this funding opportunity; but given the lack of time to prepare the bids and the very different nature of these bids compared to previous Safer Streets rounds, LLR wide conversation are being initiated around this issue from a prevention perspective. The workshop focussed around the Safer Streets opportunity, but the outputs may well support wider work across LLR.

5.0 Way Forward

- 5.1 Officers will bring a further report to a future meeting of the Overview Select Committee with detailed plans of how this area of work is to be delivered via the Safer Leicester Partnership.
- 5.2 Partners will have also had an opportunity to discuss and submit proposals towards the Safer Streets Fund programme; this information too, will be shared with Overview Select Committee.

5. Financial, legal, and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implication contained in this report, that said depending on the proposals contained within the bid submitted to the Home Office, city council teams may receive funding to deliver activities on the ground which support women's safety. This decision on how the funding will be utilised will be made by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Furthermore should the Safer Leicester Partnership deem this area of work a priority, then a proportion of the monies received from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, (that is, Partnership Locality Fund of £238k) may be utilised to fund activities to enhance women's safety.

Amy Oliver, Interim Head of Finance Ext. 454 5667

5.2 Legal implications

In terms of any funding, the Council must comply with the funding conditions specified and if the funding is used to procure any services then the Council will be required to comply with internal rules and ensure the funding is used for the specified purpose.

Legal Services can advise on any terms and conditions relating to the funding agreement. Any funding will need to be assessed against subsidy rules.

Seema Patel, Principal Lawyer 454 1406

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report. The implications of specific projects proposed or applied for should be considered separately as appropriate.

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 an outline of the opportunity to access government funding to undertake proactive community safety work which will make a difference to the daily lives of women and girls. Whilst this is likely to have a positive impact it is important that going forward so that consideration of equalities impacts is taken into account in the development of any plans/proposals and as an integral part of the decision making process, it is recommended that an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, Ext 37 4148

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