

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:9</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2021</b>	<b>CATEGORY: (See Notes) DELEGATED or RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>PAUL WHITTINGHAM <a href="mailto:Paul.whittingham@southderbyshire.gov.uk">Paul.whittingham@southderbyshire.gov.uk</a></b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>HOUSING DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: (See Notes)</b>

## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the Draft Housing Domestic Abuse Policy is approved for further public consultation.
- 1.2 That the final version of the report is presented to the Committee for final approval after the consultation period.
- 1.3 That the Committee notes the provision of New Burdens Funding and the associated Memorandum of understanding relating to this.

## **2.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 This report and the draft policy is in accordance with the commitment made to the Make a Stand initiative by the Council at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Progress with all aspects of this initiative was reported to the Finance and Management Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Since then the government has produced new draft legislation, guidance and funding to support the victims of domestic abuse. In the intervening period the Council has also commissioned and completed a comprehensive review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping within the district. Services for the victims of Domestic abuse were considered within this review and in the resultant strategy which is also on the agenda for this committee.
- 2.2 The report outlines the Council's Draft Policy for supporting the victims of domestic abuse that approach the Housing Service for assistance either with regard to potential homelessness or in order to resolve issues relating to their Council tenancy. The Draft Policy is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3 Contained within the Draft Policy is also the Council's response to the new requirements of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 and also the expected regulatory requirements arising from the recent Social Housing White Paper which was reported to the Committee on 28 January 2021

- 2.4 The report also confirms the allocation of £32,752 “New Burdens Funding” from the Government to support the Council’s activities in delivering the requirements of the 2020 Domestic Abuse Bill.
- 2.5 The report seeks Committee approval to consult on the Draft Policy.

### **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a serious issue for individuals, families and communities across the Country. It can often lead to homelessness and hardship for families and children. The Council has already acknowledged the significance of this issue with regard to Housing Provision in the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Review and Strategy which was presented to the Committee on 28 January 2021. The Council has also already agreed to provide funding for the Domestic Abuse project delivered by Trident Reach in the District to house and support victims of domestic abuse.
- 3.2
- 3.3 Given the significance of the issue, the new legislation and guidance within the Domestic Abuse Bill and the likely requirements of the recent Housing White Paper, it is important that the Council has a clear policy with regard to the Housing aspects of Domestic Abuse.
- 3.4 In order to assist Councils in delivering services to achieve the aims within the legislation the Government has allocated “new burdens funding” of £32,752 which the Council will receive. The Memorandum of Understanding relating to this funding is attached at Appendix B.
- 3.5 This funding will be used to support the enhanced support services for the victims of domestic abuse, within the contract for Domestic Abuse Support recently awarded by the Council.

### **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 The Council’s Housing Service deals with incidents of Domestic Abuse which arise through a number of routes:
- a. Applications from households that are homeless due to domestic abuse;
  - b. Applications to join the Housing Register from applicants still residing in abusive situations;
  - c. Approaches from existing Council tenants who wish to either end their tenancy due to abuse or have a partner or other person removed from their tenancy due to abuse.
- 4.2 Sadly, these scenarios have been commonplace for many years and have consistently been either a major or the main reason for families seeking to be rehoused.
- 4.3 This has been confirmed in the recent review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and associated strategy and action plan.
- 4.4 The impact of this abuse on individuals and families can be significant with employment, education, family and caring networks being lost as families move to escape perpetrators of abuse.

- 4.5 A strong network of local provision has been built up steadily over the years with the Council providing financial support for this through its use of Homelessness and Better Care Fund resources.
- 4.6 The Draft Housing Domestic Abuse Policy consolidates the current provision of service and provides future direction for services in the light of the Domestic Abuse Act 2020. This legislation creates some additional responsibilities for both county and district councils. County and unitary authorities are required to implement Joint Partnership Boards to ensure that what has been described as a postcode lottery of domestic abuse services is ended and that there is a consistent level of accessible support provision across a county or region.
- 4.7 For district councils the requirements are to ensure that there is adequate provision of safe accommodation, for victims of abuse, that they are provided with the necessary support and that Council tenants are not disadvantaged should they become homeless due to domestic abuse.
- 4.8 The Council already operates in partnership with other agencies and providers to deliver services that pre-empt the requirements of the legislation and guidance. This new policy does provide an opportunity to raise the profile of this issue for the public and staff and reaffirm the Council's commitment to support the victims of abuse and also to deal with the perpetrators wherever possible.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The Government has allocated the Council £32,752 Of New Burdens Funding to support its delivery of services to support the victims of domestic abuse.
- 5.2 Confirmation of this is attached at Appendix B. This funding will be used to support the recently enhanced contract for the provision of accommodation and support services through Trident Reach.

## **6.0 Corporate Implications**

### **Employment Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct employment implications within this report.

### **Legal Implications**

- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications contained within this report.

### **Corporate Plan Implications**

- 6.3 This report and the attached Draft Policy directly supports the actions within the Council's Corporate Plan to:
- a. Help tackle anti-social behaviour and crime through strong and proportionate action.
  - b. Support and safeguard the most vulnerable. With partners, encourage independent living and keep residents healthy and happy in their homes.
  - c. Promote health and wellbeing across the District.

## **Risk Impact**

- 6.4 The content of this report assists in mitigating the corporate risk:
- a. 8 Statute and Regulation – the failure to meet requirements, by implementing a policy to assist in achieving compliance with new legislation and expected Housing regulation.

## **7.0 Community Impact**

### **Consultation**

- 7.1 The Draft Policy will, subject to Committee approval, undergo a period of public consultation before being returned to the Committee for final approval and then implementation

### **Equality and Diversity Impact**

- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment of the final version of the policy will be completed before it is returned to the Committee for final approval.

### **Social Value Impact**

- 7.3 This report and the Draft Policy directly contribute to the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy by helping to protect families, young children and vulnerable people

### **Environmental Sustainability**

- 7.4 There are no direct environmental sustainability impacts within this report.

## **8.0 Conclusions.**

- 8.1 The Council has already recognised the significant impact of Domestic Abuse on households, services and the wider community in the Housing and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021.
- 8.2 To mitigate this impact and support the victim of Domestic Abuse the Council has made financial commitments through the Better Care Fund to provide services that now aim to prevent domestic abuse and to support the victims of such abuse .
- 8.3 Through existing networks and the enforcement of powers such as those in the Councils Tenancy Agreement, the Council will also seek to hold the perpetrators of abuse accountable for 'their actions.

## **9 Background Papers**

- 9.1\_\_Reports from the Strategic Director Service Delivery to the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and the Finance and Management committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
- 9.2 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy presented to the Housing and Community Services Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

