

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 8th October, 2020

Present: Cllr J L Sergison (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M C Base, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr A P J Keeley, Cllr D Keers, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr M Taylor and Cllr Miss G E Thomas.

Councillors N J Heslop, D W King, D Lettington, P J Montague, M R Rhodes, R P Betts and M A Coffin were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Brown and D Thornevell

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 20/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

OS 20/20 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 August 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 20/21 REVIEW OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

The report of the Director of Central Services provided an update to the scoping report considered at a previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; reviewed best practice nationally that could be implemented within Tonbridge and Malling and identified additional sources of funding that could be available to support these projects.

Representatives from Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services (DAVSS), Kent Police and Clarion Housing provided information about the services available and how victims of domestic abuse were supported.

A written report from Lookahead, who were commissioned by Kent County Council to provide services to high risk victims of domestic abuse in the borough, was attached for information at Annex 1.

Particular reference was made to the development of new initiatives, such as a Cyber Stalking Clinic run by Protection Against Stalking and Lookahead; the Dragonfly programme to identify victims isolated within communities and the Everyone's Business Advice Line, run by the charity Hestia, that worked with employers to provide information, resources and practical guidance to employees.

It was reported that funding to tackle domestic abuse was limited and additional funding remained difficult to source. However, Government had announced a significant emergency fund to help support victims of domestic abuse and other issues during the coronavirus pandemic. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council would continue to liaise with the services working within the Borough to ensure a cooperative approach in applying for funding.

Members listened to the information provided by the invited speakers with interest and expressed appreciation for the good work undertaken by these organisations. A number of points were discussed including charging decisions, financial pressures, definitions of domestic abuse, reciprocal transfers for housing tenants, societal barriers, removing stigma and victimology, cultural differences and the impact of enforced lockdown in the home due to the coronavirus pandemic. These points were addressed by the speakers and Members noted the responses.

RECOMMENDED: That the Safer and Stronger Communities Manager

- (1) work with the domestic abuse organisations operating within Tonbridge and Malling to explore and develop options around the new initiatives proposed within the report (detailed at 1.3 and summarised above); and
- (2) review the financial support offered to the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services and recommend, if appropriate, a level of funding that could be provided by the Borough Council, subject to the views of Cabinet.

***Referred to Cabinet**

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

OS 20/22 SCOPING REPORT: RECOVERY OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

The report of the Chief Executive advised that the voluntary sector had been significantly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, outlined the work of the Voluntary Sector Recovery 'cell' and identified some options for the next stage of the Review.

RESOLVED: That the next stage of the Review should be to invite:

- (1) the Chairman of the Voluntary and Community Sector Recovery Cell to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the work of the cell and outline the key issues faced by the sector; and
- (2) Representatives from West Kent Mind and Citizens Advice North and West Kent to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to highlight particular issues being faced locally.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 20/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm