

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (COMMISSIONING)

(Contact: Christine Gore, Tel: (01285) 623605)

(The report is for information)

1. PURPOSE

To update the Committee on the meeting of the group of councillors agreed at the last meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. At the meeting of the Committee held on 24 January 2019 it was agreed that a group of members would meet with officers to discuss the provision of Domestic Abuse (DA) services in West Oxfordshire and what information would be useful to provide to the wider Council.
- 3.2. This report provides a brief summary of what was discussed at the meeting of this group which took place on 27 February.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1. The meeting was attended by Councillors Beaney, Carter and Leverton, with officer attendance from Christine Gore (Executive Director (Commissioning)), Jon Dearing (Group Manager, Customer Services) and Heather McCulloch (Healthy Communities Manager). The Executive Director introduced the meeting by confirming that it was not a formal working group but a meeting to secure a better understanding of members concerns in relation to the provision of domestic abuse services in West Oxfordshire.
- 4.2. The Shared Healthy Communities Manager described the services that were currently provided at a county level following a decision in 2017 to pool the resources being spent across the county in order to secure economies of scale. The Council's contribution to this central 'pot' was £35k per annum. Although there had been some challenges in terms of letting a contract for the work this was now in place, and providing a helpline, counselling and support services for victims of domestic abuse.
- 4.3. WODC is represented at strategic level meetings by the Healthy Communities Manager, who confirmed that the Council is now receiving a better service in return for its investment as a result of all councils and other relevant organisations in Oxfordshire working together to provide a multi-faceted service.
- 4.4. In addition to the countywide service, additional services are provided in West Oxfordshire and Cherwell by a charity called "Reducing the Risk" which operates in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS) and also trains Domestic Abuse Champions.

- 4.5. The Group Manager, Customer Services confirmed that victims of domestic abuse are picked up by the housing team if they present as homeless or potentially homeless. The Families First Officer provides triage around family break up (not restricted to that due to DA), whilst the Prevention and Relief Team seek to prevent homelessness and where this is not possible, to rehouse victims and their families. There have been 2 cases falling into the latter category since 1 April 2018.
- 4.6. It was acknowledged that whilst members may be contacted by victims of DA, those individuals may not necessarily be in touch with the housing service for a variety of reasons, including the fact that it is more likely that the perpetrator will be excluded from the home than the victim having to flee.
- 4.7. It was agreed that there is a need for better data to be available to members for them to be reassured that the services being provided are reaching the right people and being effective, and it was confirmed that this should be available from a number of sources. It was also agreed that there is a need for support that exists within communities to be joined up with the more structured services to ensure that DA victims are receiving the right support.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The councillors present indicated that they had found the meeting very useful and informative and thanked the officers for their time and input.
- 5.2. It was agreed that a formal report on DA services in West Oxfordshire, to include some statistics and performance data, should be submitted to the Committee at its May meeting, and that training for councillors should be provided as part of the overall councillor training package currently being prepared.

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Executive Director (Commissioning)

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Background Papers:
None