

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Executive Director (Adult and Communities)

To

Cabinet

On

13 January 2022

Report prepared by: Tracy Harris, Lead Commissioner for
Prevention

The Street Prostitution Strategy and Charter of Agreement

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) Community Safety and Customer Contact Working
Party

Cabinet Member: Councillor Jones
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report accompanies both the Street Prostitution Strategy and Charter of Agreement developed further to Co-Production and workshops undertaken by members of the Street Prostitution Strategy Steering Group.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Street Prostitution Strategy and Charter of Agreement to be taken through the governance process to Cabinet for agreement.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees for the work undertaken in the strategy and through the Charter of Agreement to be overseen by the Violence and Vulnerability Board

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2020, in response to an identified concern about women selling sex on Southend streets, a meeting jointly hosted by the Council and the Southend Clinical Commissioning Group was convened with partner organisations, including adult social care, the Police, housing services, health services and key charities providing outreach and other support services.
- 3.2 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss this concern and it was identified that this group of women that are highly vulnerable have been poorly represented through Southend Borough Council strategies to date.
- 3.3 The meeting and work stream was led by the Head of Social Inclusion within the Council; this role has since been deleted however work on the strategy has been overseen by the same Officer who has now transferred to the Commissioning Team as Lead Commissioner for Prevention and Localities.

- 3.4 A Notice of Motion was submitted to Southend on Sea Borough Council's Cabinet in January 2021 on Street Prostitution to approve a strategy to support a risk reduction approach for women selling sex in street areas and build pathways to enable them to exit street prostitution in a safe managed way. The ask was also for the work to be embedded into the Violence and Vulnerability Strategy. It was agreed that the Motion would be referred to the Community Safety and Customer Contact Working Party for consideration. This Motion was approved at the working party.
- 3.5 There have been two coproduction events with women who sell sex alongside a workshop held with stakeholders, this then led to the production of the two documents.
- 3.6 The strategy will be monitored through the monthly held Street Prostitution Steering Group and be evaluated and re developed further to one year after it is adopted.
- 3.7 All groups working on delivering the Strategy will be asked to sign up to the Charter of Agreement which will again be reviewed after one year.
- 3.8 This workstream will be ongoing, being developed and reviewed especially after year one where the scope of the work will need to be widened to include other groups and types of sex work, this is documented and considered in the equality impact assessment. Therefore, a decision will to be made by Executive Directors on the ownership and lead for this work going forward.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 The Strategy is not approved in its present form, and further work is undertaken as directed to update the content so that it is agreeable for approval.
- 4.2 The Strategy is not adopted, and work continues with the current outreach service and drop in provision currently being provided by our Voluntary Sector partners to support these vulnerable women.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 To endorse the work that has already taken place to support this socially excluded and vulnerable group and ensure that the Strategy developed has overall Senior Leadership support via the Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Group. The Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Group will report on the work progress biannually.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

Safe and Well

This strategy will help to deliver on the Safe and Well outcome by providing co-ordinated support services to reduce harm and provide a clear pathway to exit street

prostitution. It will protect and improve the quality of life of this most vulnerable group in our community as well as ensuring residents feel safe and secure in the areas that street prostitution is operating from.

Opportunity and Prosperity

The strategy will also help to deliver on the Opportunity and Prosperity outcome by ensuring that the women's voices are heard, and that they feel valued and invested in as individuals. Co-ordinated support services and clear exit pathways will also ensure that the women can exit and create a new life for themselves, if they are ready to do so.

Active and Involved

This strategy also supports the Active and Involved outcome, as the strategy itself has been formed by the voices and experiences of this vulnerable group of women, as well as the perspectives of local services. All of which helps to shape services in Southend

6.2 Financial Implications

The cost of delivering this strategy is minimal to the Council, it involves officer time. Most of the agencies working to deliver this strategy are funded through other sources. The strategy could deliver potential savings to the Council as more co-ordinated resources and improvement to working practices would mean less women are reaching crisis point and require support through Adult Social Care.

6.3 Legal Implications

None

6.4 People Implications

None

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

Three coproduction events have been undertaken to develop the strategy.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

This strategy maximises the opportunity for promoting equality. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the strategy.

6.8 Risk Assessment

All partners involved in working to deliver this strategy have risk assessments in place.

6.9 Value for Money

The Council are acting as a point of oversight in the delivery of this strategy. The strategy will ensure partnership working and improved practice are co-ordinated with commissioned and non-commissioned services to deliver wrap around support and ensure that information and guidance is in place in order to prevent crisis for this disadvantaged group of women.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

Street Prostitution has significant impact on the local community with high levels of anti-social behaviour because of the women selling sex and the men in the area who are pimping the women or buying sex, including drug-dealing, hazardous litter, and noise nuisance. By coordinating support to this group of vulnerable women and providing them pathways for them to exit prostitution we will improve community safety.

6.11 Environmental Impact

None

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

**Appendix 1 - Street Prostitution Strategy for Southend on Sea Borough Council
2022/23**

Appendix 2 - Charter of Agreement