

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 18 November 2024

Classification: Part 1

Key Decision: Yes
Title of Report: Domestic Abuse Recommissioning

Executive Director: Mark Harvey, Executive Director Adults and Communities
Report Author: Katrina Wickes, Domestic Abuse Strategy and Commissioning Manager
Executive Councillor: Councillor Maxine Sadza, Portfolio Holder Social Care and Healthier Communities

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Southend on Sea City Council have aligned with Essex County Council, the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) and Thurrock Council to recommission domestic abuse services for victims, survivors and perpetrators across the whole of Essex.
- 1.2. The tender for the new services will close on Wednesday 27 November 2024. Evaluations will be completed by Monday 16 December 2024, with award being finalised on Tuesday 17 December 2024.
- 1.3. Due to the need to align the award of contracts by the three Local Authorities and PFCC and allow time for mobilisation to ensure the start of the new contract on 1 April 2025 we are unable to align the award with Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1. Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Adults and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet member for Social Care and Healthier Communities to award contracts to those providers who are successful following the procurement and evaluation process, and to conclude any necessary documentation.

3. Background

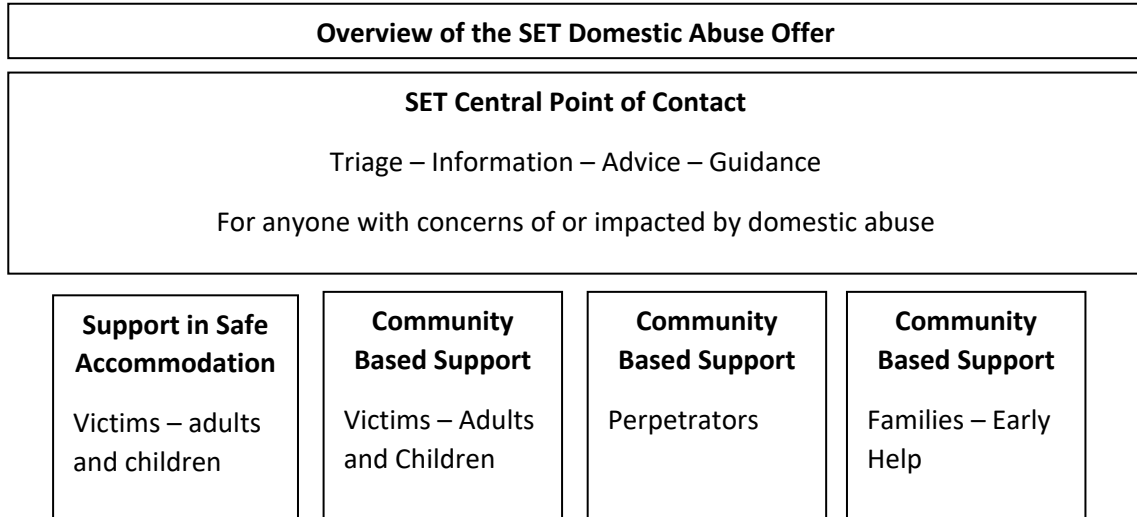
- 3.1. Southend on Sea City Council are part of the Southend on Sea, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB). In 2016 Southend on Sea City Council (then Southend on Sea Borough Council) commissioned their own domestic abuse support services for the local area, as well as jointly

commissioning perpetrator and IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) support services.

- 3.2. The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) included children as a victim group, as well as placing additional duties on local authorities in relation to accommodation for victim/survivors of domestic abuse.
- 3.3. As required under Part 4 of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, we have undertaken a comprehensive Domestic Abuse needs assessment for the city leading to the production and sign off at Cabinet of our Domestic Abuse Strategy for which we are now coproducing an action plan. This work has been closely overseen by the Southend on Sea Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.
- 3.4. SETDAB commissioned social research consultants TONIC to undertake a review of domestic abuse across Southend Essex and Thurrock. From July 2022 to October 2022 TONIC completed the discovery phase which included a needs assessment to build a picture of the landscape at that time, as well as engaging with over 300 people including victim/survivors, perpetrators and stakeholders through online surveys, focus groups and interviews.
- 3.5. In December 2022 TONIC shared their findings from the discovery phase with all those who had fed into it. They then engaged 35 participants including professional stakeholders and individuals with lived experience through a number of co-design workshops with the aim of maximising the impact of the research by building on what is already working well and collaboratively creating strategic actions to address gaps and weaknesses in the system identified during the discovery phase.
- 3.6. The TONIC report identified a number of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities across the SET footprint. Identified strengths included the SETDAB leadership and model for partnership working, high quality core service provision across SET, single point of access and streamlined referral pathways, commitment to embedding lived experience voice in service design and strategic focus on prevention and healthy relationships education. Identified weaknesses included tailored pathways offering specialist support for underrepresented groups, lack of behaviour change opportunities for perpetrators and public understanding of coercive control and psychological abuse. Identified threats included availability of housing for safe accommodation, increased demand for services and few 'by and for' organisations operating locally across the sector. Opportunities identified included alignment of commissioned contracts, commitments to a whole system approach across the section and vision for 'breaking the cycle' of domestic abuse.
- 3.7. We have extended our current commissioned support services so that we are aligned with our SET partners with all contracts due to end March 2025.
- 3.8. Both pieces of discovery work show that there is a high prevalence of domestic abuse across SET with a significant increase having been seen in the last 18

months. Southend on Sea has the highest number of cases across the whole of SET.

- 3.9. From the discovery work a new proposal for delivery of domestic abuse services has developed:



3.10. A workstream lead was allocated to each of the above workstreams, who ran a number of workshops over January and February 2024 with partner organisations across greater Essex, including Southend on Sea, to gain as much feedback as possible about what partners felt this service should look like. From this, service specifications and lots identified for recommissioning were allocated. This led to support in safe accommodation and community-based support for victims being made into one specification, however Essex was split into two lots for this – North and South. Further to this initial piece of work we realised that the Families workstream required further development before this could be commissioned due to limited evidence available in this area and there not being anything off shelf or easy to design. Essex County Council are therefore looking to go out to tender for a strategic innovation partner to develop this area further. Essex County Council will tender this alone, however Southend on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council can ‘buy spaces’ for residents once they have developed something for piloting. The perpetrator workstream will offer early interventions aimed at changing perpetrator mindsets and behaviour to reduce victimisation. This also aligns with our Domestic Abuse Strategy and was a key part of feedback from local community groups and people with experience of domestic abuse.

- 3.11. Southend on Sea City Council led on the lived experience element, recruiting individuals with lived experience who have provided feedback in relation to the identified service outcomes, key elements of the service specifications, and developed their own questions for evaluation as part of the tender. A selection of these individuals have also agreed to be part of a lived experience evaluation panel during the evaluation period.
- 3.12. A collaboration agreement was entered into between Southend on Sea City Council, Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and the Police Fire and

Crime Commissioner in July 2024. This agreement was developed in collaboration with all parties, and legal advice and guidance was sought and provided. Following discussion it was agreed that Essex County Council would be the lead commissioner. This collaboration agreement formally established PEDACC, the Pan Essex Domestic Abuse Commissioning Collaborative. This group continue to meet weekly to work on the domestic abuse recommissioning across greater Essex, with the formal governance board meeting quarterly.

3.13. The tender consists of four lots:

<p>Lot 1: Central Point of Contact <u>Pan Essex</u></p> <p>For professionals, victims, survivors, and perpetrators. It will offer triage, information, advice, guidance and, where needed, onward referral for support.</p>	<p>Lot 2: Support for Victims <u>North</u> <i>(Colchester, Tendring, Maldon, Braintree, Uttlesford, Chelmsford)</i></p> <p>For adult and child victim/survivors. It will offer community-based support, IDVA support and support in safe accommodation.</p>	<p>Lot 3: Support for Victims <u>South</u> <i>(Southend on Sea, Thurrock*, Harlow, Epping, Basildon, Brentwood, Rochford, Castle Point)</i></p> <p>For adult and child victim/survivors. It will offer community-based support, IDVA support and support in safe accommodation. <small>*does not include adults in community as Thurrock are retaining their in-house offer</small></p>	<p>Lot 4: Community Perpetrator <u>Pan Essex</u></p> <p>For perpetrators of domestic abuse and those who are concerned about their own behaviours. It will offer both early intervention and specialist support</p>
--	--	--	--

3.14. The tender will close on Wednesday 27 November 2024. Evaluation, including evaluation by a lived experience panel, will complete by Tuesday 17 December 2024.

3.15. There will be an evaluation panel for each lot which has gone out to tender. Commissioners from the four PEDACC organisations will sit on all four of these panels, alongside colleagues from SETDAB, police and probation with a dedicated day for each lot.

4. Reasons for Decisions

4.1. The tender closes on Wednesday 27 November 2024, with evaluations taking place until Tuesday 17 December 2024.

4.2. This tender will require significant work to be completed during the mobilisation stage as there are TUPE implications and accommodation moves to consider if a new provider is appointed and unfortunately current governance dates do not align with the tender timeline. We therefore require delegated authority to award.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The total funding across **all four lots for all partners is £5,097,458 per annum** over five years with an option to extend for a further two years.

Lot	Annual Lot Value	Lot Value 5 years	Southend on Sea City Council Contribution
Lot 1 - Central Point of Contact	£402,000	£2,010,000	£70,000
Lot 2 - Safe accommodation and community-based support for adult victims and IDVA support for adult victims (NORTH)	£1,952,000	£9,760,000	£0
Lot 3 - Safe accommodation and community based support for adult victims and IDVA support for adult victims (SOUTH)	£2,465,458	£12,327,290	£400,000
Lot 4 - Perpetrator	£278,000	£1,390,000	£30,000

5.2 The total commitment for Southend on Sea City Council towards this contract will be £500K per annum, £2,500,000 for the length of the 5 year contract. We have additional commitments per year on separate contracts of £55K per annum split between a flexible fund (£25K) and early help family offer (£30K).

5.3 For 2024/25 Southend on Sea City Council received £255,078 through their core funding for domestic abuse services. A further £387,764 of grant funding was also issued by the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (now Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) for the council's duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. We have used these figures to inform our planning for the commissioning of domestic abuse services, together with some previous underspend from MHCLG and a £25,000 per annum commitment from Public Health.

5.4 The MHCLG grant was introduced to enable local authorities to meet the duties placed upon them under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In early 2024 MHCLG consulted with local authorities to ask whether they wished to continue to receive this as grant funding, or whether it should be included within the core settlement. Our finance colleagues responded to this on our behalf, following discussions with both Essex County Council and Thurrock Council. We therefore do not anticipate this funding being withdrawn, however provision has been made within the collaboration agreement that all parties will be entitled to withdraw including in the initial period should this occur. If this was to happen, it would affect all parties and therefore it is anticipated that we would work collaboratively to identify solutions to address this.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and statutory guidance places duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide support and protection to victims (including children) with a duty to collaborate under section 13 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. These responsibilities include working with

the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner) to provide such support and protection to victims through strategic planning, co-commissioning and creating joined up services. Essex County Council, Southend on Sea City Council, Thurrock Council and the Commissioner (the Parties) have set up a Pan Essex Domestic Abuse Commissioning Collaborative project board to facilitate and co-ordinate the improvement of Domestic Abuse Services to victims, perpetrators and families to deliver statutory duties and common objectives.

- 6.2 The Parties have entered into a collaboration agreement to undertake this work, for a minimum of 3 years before they are able to withdraw, for a 5 year term (which may be extended or ended earlier in certain circumstances). Should a decision be made to withdraw from the agreement by one party, the agreement would continue with the remaining Parties, unless only one party remained. It is a requirement of the collaboration agreement that should a party decide to leave this agreement they would have to re-procure domestic abuse services for the area they fund, which in this case would be all domestic abuse services for Southend on Sea. The agreement contains a dispute resolution clause which the Parties should follow should such decision be made and this would also have cost implications.

7 Policy Context

- 7.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities to support individuals experiencing domestic abuse in safe accommodation. These duties led to an increase in funding which, in Southend on Sea, meant that we were able to increase our community offer as the new funding allowed us to cover the costs of our Domestic Abuse safe accommodation.
- 7.2 The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 places a duty on local authorities, integrated care boards and police authorities to collaborate in relation to victim support services.

8 Carbon Impact

- 8.1 Each lot requires a carbon reduction plan to be submitted as part of the bid to include a goal of being carbon net zero by 2050 at the latest.

9 Equalities

- 9.1 The Domestic Abuse Strategy maximises the opportunity for promoting equality. An equality impact assessment has been carried out for this work with all actions to be monitored through the Southend on Sea Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. There has been a real push through market engagement and partnership networking events to encourage bidders to work with local by and for organisations to help support these groups. There is also a need for safe accommodation for male victims, with a requirement for the successful provider to bring with them a mixture of accessible refuge, disbursed and move on accommodation to meet the needs of the victim/survivors. This has all been informed by our research reports and feedback from lived experience participants.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 Social research consultants TONIC carried out the initial report, consultation and discovery work. Subsequent consultation took place at the start of 2024 through the task and finish group panels run by commissioners.
- 10.2 In Southend on Sea there was a public consultation in relation to our strategy which was signed off by cabinet in September 2023. For the recommissioning, in Southend on Sea, draft specifications have been shared with internal partners including Housing and Children's Services. This work has been presented to both Adults and Children's DMTs, both the Adults and Children's Safeguarding Partnerships, the Community Safety Partnership and the Health and Well Being Board.

11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1

- 11.1.1 Appendix 1 is the Equality Assessment referred to in 9.1 above.

12 Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
Executive Director(s)	Mark Harvey	03.10.2024
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	04.10.2024
Monitoring Officer	Laurie Gibbins	07.10.2024
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Maxine Sadza	07.10.2024