

Committee	Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee	Item	1
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010 7.00pm		
Contributors	Head of Overview & Scrutiny		
Class	Part 1	Date	2 February 2011

## Attendance

Present: Councillors Morrison (Chair), Nisbet (Vice-Chair), Brooks, Folorunso, Foreman, Hall, Mallory, Padmore, Stamirowski

Apologies: None

Also present: Fenella Beckman, Strategic Partnership Manager  
 Liz Dart, Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development  
 Nichola Duffy, Detective Sergeant, Lewisham Police  
 Cora Green, Senior Service Delivery Manager, Victim Support  
 Andrew Hagger, Scrutiny Manager  
 Sandra Jones, Head of Community Sector Unit  
 Greg Pople, Detective Chief Inspector, Lewisham Police  
 Kevin Sheehan, Head of Strategy  
 Geeta Subramaniam, Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People  
 Kellie Williams, Community Safety Officer

### 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2010

- 1.1. **The Committee resolved that:** The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October be agreed.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1. None Declared

### 3. Domestic Violence Review - Evidence

- 3.1. The Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People introduced the item and outlined that domestic violence has been a focus for the Safer Lewisham over the past 2 years. In 2009/10 it was a strategic priority in the sustainable community strategy, while in 2010/11 the victimisation of women was a key priority. Overall there has been a reduction in the number of incidents reported, though there are continuing issues over non-reporting of incidences. This leads to problems of whether people are going to the police or to the housing associations and if it is being recorded by them.

- 3.2. A domestic violence board has been created looking at violence against women (including sexual violence). Sexual violence and domestic violence are both important and very much linked.
- 3.3. Prevent, provide and protect has been the approach taken to domestic violence, as outlined in the report. In addition a positive arrest policy has been adopted by the police leading to victimless prosecutions. This is an approach that has been applauded by the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA).
- 3.4. In terms of domestic violence within same-sex relationships there aren't organisations to specifically deal with it operating in the borough, but there are in neighbouring ones. It is also thought that there is some under-reporting in incidences of domestic violence with elderly people.
- 3.5. Other developments include:
- Communication Strategy
  - Adopting the London Mainstream model for courts with a domestic violence court at Greenwich.
  - Housing and accommodation support such as offering refuge and sanctuary. Sanctuary involves keeping people in their own homes while
- 3.6. There are continuing challenges which will be a focus for the Safer Lewisham Partnership, who will be undertaking a strategic assessment of the domestic violence agenda.
- 3.7. The Detective Chief Inspector then outlined the police's role within domestic violence, highlighting specific initiatives which have been used to tackle domestic violence:
- Project Sapphire focuses on elderly abuse and an MPA report has been done on the effectiveness of this.
  - Raising awareness at events such as Lewisham People's Day.
  - Using positive action and arrests, including corroboration of evidence and victimless prosecution, which sends an importance message about the non-tolerance of domestic violence.
  - Approaches include enhancement of evidence using digital cameras and technology around information for injuries and evidence.
  - The method of recording domestic violence incidents (124d) has been revised and there is increasing awareness of it among officers.
  - Operation Athena (tackling domestic violence, homophobia and racist hate crime) was held on 25<sup>th</sup> November to be in conjunction with White Ribbon Day.
  - Recruiting another LGBT officer to enhance the support offered by the current officer, so the support mechanisms can be offered by people with the appropriate background and knowledge.
  - In terms of domestic violence homicides, from April 2008 to March 2009 there was 1, from 2009-2010 there were 3 while in the present year there have been 0. None of these were same-sex or elderly victims.
- 3.8. The Senior Service Delivery Manager from Victim Support outlined the role of Victim Support Lewisham within domestic violence. They offer independent

support, including practical issues such as insurance, criminal injuries compensation, home safety and security (such as lock changing). They also offer emotional support as well, but are not counsellors. It was emphasised that it is important to offer a safe place to share feelings and help with coping strategies and reassurance and not all victims of domestic violence necessarily need therapeutic counselling.

- 3.9. Victim Support have an ACPO agreement and work closely with the police. They offer open door drop-in centres as well as doing outreach, such as at People's Day and Burglary Day. They are about being out there and available to victims of domestic violence. Victim Support Lewisham monitor self-referrals and have recorded a slight increase in referrals, which (Cora Green) anecdotally attributed to awareness and non-tolerance of domestic violence.
- 3.10. In terms of process, Victim Support will always respond to those contacting them, though they never write to victims as mail can be intercepted by the partner who is abusing. They aim for early intervention, such as for minor instances, and involve themselves with standard and medium risk cases to try and prevent escalation.
- 3.11. Victim Support tries to address security needs and safety planning, as well as providing help with family law, housing and benefits by liaising and supporting and encouraging joined up working between the organisations involved. They also have regard to the impact of domestic violence on children within the family.
- 3.12. Familial abuse was raised as a prominent issue 3 years ago and makes up 15% of the work done by Victim Support, around 300 cases a year. These can often be complex and long-running. Victim Support has around 2 cases a month of domestic violence within an LGBT setting and are conscious of under reporting. They do not have trained men on the staff to support but this has not been a problem so far.
- 3.13. The Committee then asked a number of questions surrounding the topics raised:
  - Whether safe rooms are available for victims of domestic violence. These are provided under the sanctuary scheme, which runs out a refuge and is funded via Supporting People and in conjunction with Registered Social Landlords and Lewisham Homes. However people often want to try and stay to make the relationship work so it is not taken up that much.
  - Whether there sets of figures on types of abuse and historical figures, as Members felt that there should be some attempt to measure and then compare with other authorities. The Committee was informed that reporting to the police is the only 100% reliable dataset. As the figures from them are coming down this indicates that domestic violence is coming down, though this is not the whole picture and not all the data. Officers are looking to collect data from all agencies across the board, though it should be noted that domestic violence support providers are all working at capacity and that the field covers a wide area including health visitors, housing providers and children's services, making co-ordinated collection of such sensitive information difficult.
  - The concentration of domestic violence in specific areas. Officers replied that there are no hotspots as such and that there are no specific themes or groups

that have significantly higher instances of domestic violence. However, domestic violence is more prevalent in South East London than other areas neighbouring boroughs like Southwark, Lambeth and Greenwich also have high levels of domestic violence.

- The causes of domestic violence, of which there are many.
- The evaluation of work carried out in tackling domestic violence over the past few years to assess its impact. Not every bit of work done, it's a combination of it all.
- Officers noted that other local areas are not gathering as much comparative data as Lewisham so it would still be extremely difficult to compare data. However there is a ready reckoner tool for indicating the levels of incidence of crimes that would be expected in an area given its size. This can give indicative numbers for sexual violence and stalking etc.
- That there seems to be under-reporting of elder abuse and what measures are being taken to address this. Officers acknowledged the under-reporting issue and explained that older adults and sexual violence incidents often takes place in a domestic setting leading to difficulties in reporting. There are awareness sessions planned to better equip professionals to help recognise cases and providing information regarding what domestic violence looks like, the impact and fears of reporting.
- The level of co-operation with health service providers. Work has been done with Lewisham Hospital and GPs to provide signposting on domestic violence issues to them and to encourage reporting.
- That as there are no specific LGBT domestic violence services in Lewisham then Members would welcome LGBT appointments in the police to help with dealing with it. Officers informed the Committee that they have met with Gallup, and LGBT domestic violence support organisation, which has guaranteed funding for the next year and will be working more closely with Lewisham, including appointing a young persons advocate and attending the domestic violence forum and the MARAC.
- Whether there is scope for funding a specialist LGBT support organisation in Lewisham. It was indicated that funding for an organisation is not likely to be a priority but that there was scope for joint commissioning and sharing with other boroughs.
- The implication of further budget cuts for police support on domestic violence. While there is a safer stronger communities fund, there has been no indication on further police funding for the borough command unit as yet.

3.14. **The Committee resolved that:** Further data should be circulated to the Committee giving more information on the instances of domestic violence within the area.

#### **4. Lewisham Apprentice Scheme and Future Jobs Fund**

- 4.1. The Head of Strategy briefed the Committee on the current position in relation to the Lewisham Apprenticeship Scheme and the Future Jobs Fund programme.
- 4.2. Key to the success of the apprenticeship scheme has providing support to the apprentices and the placement managers and ensuring that there are clear career paths or routes into employment for each of our apprentices.

- 4.3. The creative industry apprentices have all gone on to secure employment or to further education. The placements within Lewisham Council have contributed to council work and have also helped change the make-up of the organisation, bringing in people who are often younger and thereby reducing the age profile of the Council's work force.
- 4.4. In terms of the future, the Lewisham Council scheme has one more year and officers will continue to work with all our partners including our supply chain, (eg Costains from the Building Schools for the Future Programme) and organisations in the third sector to create apprenticeship opportunities.
- 4.5. The Future Jobs Fund has been used to create 403 six month employment and training opportunities within Lewisham. Thought the funding for the scheme has been stopped, money is in place to support those opportunities that have already been arranged. 45% of Future Jobs Fund leavers have gone on to secure employment; the nearest comparable scheme is New Deal for Communities which has a 20-25% hit rate.
- 4.6. The Head of Strategy assured the Committee that a full evaluation of the Future Jobs fund scheme would be conducted during 2011.
- 4.7. The Committee then asked a number of questions surrounding the report including:
- The incorporation of study into the apprenticeships. Officers confirmed that there is an academic qualification included as part of the apprenticeship and there is consideration given to future studies by participants.
  - The levels of pay for apprentices. All Lewisham Council employed apprentices are paid at London living wage of £7.85 per hour or more The difference between those apprentices employed by Lewisham Council and those on schemes run by other organisations was highlighted.
  - The use of a mentoring system such as the Meister system in Germany, where 3% of corporation tax is set aside for apprenticeships.
  - There is a well established network of support for apprentices. This includes officers in the Apprenticeship Team, the line manager, a mentor and the College Tutor as well as forums like the Young Employees Network.
- 4.8. The Committee congratulated officers on the success of the scheme.

## **5. Establishment of a Strategic Race Equality Organisation in Lewisham**

- 5.1. The Head of presented the report which outlined the conclusions of the review undertaken by Lord Ousely on the organisational arrangements in the Borough to tackle race equality and race relations. The report outlined the background to the issue, the process of the review and the recommendations emerging from it. The 3<sup>rd</sup> option was recommended as the most appropriate for the borough, to have a single focused race equality body with a co-ordinated approach through a consortium of voluntary organisations. Officers outlined that key principles for the new organisation will include:
- governance that is credible

- accessible location of the organisation
- the need to be inclusive,
- independent scrutiny by non-executives
- maximise income from a range of funding sources

5.2. The Committee then asked a number of questions around the topics raised including:

- Whether the new organisation will be the same as the previous organisation in terms of the work around race. Officers informed the Committee that it will be different in terms of choosing membership though the casework element will still be there. Also the independent scrutiny position is new and different, with the aim of it acting as a critical friend.
- Preventing the breakdown of relations that happened occurred at the end of Race Equality Action Lewisham (REAL) from happening again. Members pointed out the long history within the borough concerned with race equality and the issues associated with it. The Committee felt that this function needs to be carried out properly and therefore would like to be kept informed on the progress of formulating the organisation through regular updates.
- The availability of the in-depth report on the demise of REAL for the Committee to discuss. The Committee was informed that the report included personal details that should not be placed in the public arena and that revisiting the disagreements that took place would have little impact if the committee were to discuss them at a committee meeting.
- The membership of the working group, which will be decided by the Mayor of Lewisham and Lord Ousely, and who undertake the task of acting as the independent scrutiny of the organisation.
- The need for the service to be provided, as funds have been ring fenced so should be used unless they are set to be cut from budget and the recognition that there is a need to move quickly.

**The Committee resolved that:**

- 5.3. They should be kept updated on the progress of the new race relations organisation
- 5.4. The new race relations organisation should be set-up and start fulfilling its role as soon as possible.

**6. Select Committee Work programme Report**

- 6.1. The Committee discussed the work programme

Chair: -----

Date: -----

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.