

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 10 March 2022

From: Assistant Director: Community Safety, Rob Hill

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2022/048

Outcome: Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy provision and Domestic Abuse Dispersed Accommodation will be successfully commissioned, as described in the published Safe Accommodation Strategy. Contracts will also be awarded to ensure the provision of Refuge space.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve the contract for the provision of refuge accommodation, as set out in section 2.1 of the report;
- b) Approve the procurement exercise for a domestic abuse outreach service and delegate responsibility for awarding the contract to the Executive Director: People and Communities, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee; and
- c) Approve the procurement exercise for dispersed safe accommodation and delegate responsibility for awarding the contract to the Executive Director: People and Communities, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

Officer contact:

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Member contacts:

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force in late April 2021. The Act places a statutory duty on local authorities regarding the provision of safe accommodation for victims of Domestic Violence. This includes refuge accommodation which is currently commissioned in Cambridgeshire until March 2022. The new requirements were brought to this committee in July 2021.
- 1.2 This duty comes with funding specifically for this purpose, and for Cambridgeshire in 2021/22 this was £1,140,318. The amount for 2022-23 has been confirmed as £1,140,318. This comes to the authority as a non-ringfenced grant and will be taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval. The Government has confirmed continuation of funding in future years.
- 1.3 The required Safe Accommodation Strategy was agreed and has been published on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership's website.
- 1.4 This report is being brought for three elements of the Safe Accommodation Strategy which require key decisions in order to proceed with commissioning arrangements, as these will be over the value of £500,000 over the course of the contract.

2. Main Issues

2.1 Refuge Accommodation

- 2.1.1 The Committee previously approved the recommissioning of domestic abuse refuge provision in July 2021. Following this, a procurement exercise took place in Autumn 2021 to provide the support costs for three refuges, equating to space for 32 women and up to 55 children at any given time. These will be available to those fleeing from out of area, and within area if there is a significant distance and this is deemed to be safe. Within the package there is funding for children's support workers and a flexible fund to enable those who need it to access talking therapies.
- 2.1.2 In July 2021, approval to delegate the award of contract to the Executive Director of People and Communities was not requested and therefore, in the interim, before returning to the Committee to gain approval to award, a waiver to notify of intent to award has been granted.
- 2.1.3 This waiver has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and the Chief Officer under section 5.11 of the contract procedure rules, outlined below.

5.11 Waivers over the Council's Key Decision Threshold

Waiver requests cannot be sought for Waivers equal to or above the Council's Key Decision threshold.

The single exception is in circumstances where a minimum of three bids cannot be obtained following a competitive procurement process (excluding a Framework Agreement etc.) and the total value is equal to or above the Key Decision threshold, written approval must be obtained from;

- The Chief Officer,
- The Monitoring Officer ,
- The Chief Finance Officer.

The Officer must not make an award or carry out an award of contract unless they have a fully approved Waiver.

This approval must be obtained prior to notifying any bidders of an intention to award. This would not alter the Officer's requirement to notify Committee that it intends to procure over the key decision limit nor seek approval of the outcome (unless delegated earlier by Committee) ‘

2.1.4 This has been granted on the grounds that there was only one compliant bid for each lot of the tender. Through the evaluation of the tenders, there was assurance that the value for money was adequately demonstrated. Approval is now required from the Committee to award these contracts.

2.1.5 These contracts are for 4 + 2 years, with a total contract value of £2,490,000 over the 6 years.

2.2 Mobile Advocacy

2.2.1 In this context, “mobile advocacy” is referring to domestic abuse support which can be accessed by anyone regardless of level of risk, to enable them to remain safe in their own home or to find alternative accommodation. This is also sometimes referred to as outreach support.

2.2.2 This service would ensure victims and survivors can access direct support, and this is an independent confidential service. It is essential that those suffering domestic abuse who need a service can access support before they need other statutory help from agencies such as housing, social care or police.

2.2.3 From April 2022, there is no open access provision for domestic abuse support in place. The Safe Accommodation funding will be granted to the three existing providers, for 6 months, until alternative provision is in place, to ensure no gaps for those who require this service. This period will be funded via grant the funding amounts for this provision will be in the region of £140,000 split across these three providers.

2.2.4 Reporting on numbers of victims supported is unclear but is in the region of 2,200 victims per year. Data can be inconsistent year on year, however without mobile advocacy provision there will be a significant unmet need.

2.2.5 The approach across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is currently inconsistent, with three providers working differently. Staff are paid and trained differently, and the service offer varies.

- 2.2.6 In August 2021, a wide stakeholder consultation event was held in relation to the Safe Accommodation Strategy, where the need to ensure a consistent approach across the area was highlighted as desirable.
- 2.2.7 In October 2021, a workshop was held with partners in the police (Head of Public Protection), the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (Director of Commissioning) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (Head of Adult Safeguarding). The view from the workshop was that there needs to be a single service delivering this work across the area, which ensures effective working with the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service.
- 2.2.8 This support service would be funded for two years, using the DLUHC Safe Accommodation Funding and would be a single service commissioned for delivery across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 2.2.9 A “Soft Market Testing” exercise was carried out in January 2022 to ask potential bidders what sort of service they would consider delivering. It is anticipated that such a service would cost approximately £700,000 over a two-year period. As this is over the threshold, a key decision is required from this Committee to proceed with procurement and delegate responsibility for award of contract to the Executive Director of People and Communities.

2.3 Dispersed Safe Accommodation

- 2.3.1 As set out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy, this accommodation is primarily for residents in this area who are being abused. It will provide access to safe accommodation for:
- Victims / survivors and their children who are not able to live in a communal facility
 - People who need a carer
 - Large families
 - Those with disabilities
 - People with pets
 - Male victims
 - Families with teenage boys (many refuges will not allow boys over the age of 12)
 - People from the LGBT community
 - BAME victims whose needs are not met with traditional refuges.
- 2.3.2 Being supported in this accommodation may mean the survivor does not have to give up their job, which is important for those who are homeowners and have a mortgage to pay. Survivors can still access their support network if safe to do so, and they will have regular support provided by the Housing IDVAs who will support them to move back to their own homes with all safety measures in place, for example Occupation Orders, Restraining Orders, and target hardening where this is safe to do so.
- 2.3.3 A number of models for delivery have been considered, having consulted with the Heads of Property and Procurement. It will be necessary to follow a procurement process to lease units of accommodation from “Registered Providers” (Housing Associations), who will manage the property, and carry out the landlord function. The Safe Accommodation Manager will work closely with these providers, and all nominations into those properties will go via this post. The IDVA service (Housing IDVAs) will provide support to those

residing in these properties. The landlord will claim all appropriate rent in the form of Housing Benefits, and these will be repaid to the Council on an agreed timeframe. It is estimated around 50 victims and their children could be supported with this model each year.

- 2.3.4 It is anticipated that over the course of a two-year contract, the cost is likely to be around £500,000, and therefore requires a key decision from this committee to approve and delegate responsibility for award of contract to the Executive Director of People and Communities

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

Domestic abuse and sexual violence both have significant impacts on health and independence. A report for the Home Office into the economic and social costs of domestic abuse (2017), estimates the physical and mental health care costs of domestic abuse is £2333m annually, averaging £1200 per victim.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

In a report for the Home Office into the economic and social costs of domestic abuse (2017), the estimated lost economic output attributed to domestic abuse was £14098m per year (an average of £7245 per victim). Therefore, any actions to tackle, reduce or challenge the issue is likely to reduce this lost output.

3.3.1 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

It is estimated that between a quarter and a third of children have been exposed to domestic abuse at some point during their lives, but it is not possible to estimate the cost of the impact on children due to incomplete and inconsistent data.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

No significant implications.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

Victims of domestic abuse often have complex needs including adults at risk with care and support needs and other vulnerable adults.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in Section 2

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Procurement and contract procedure rules will need to be followed when commissioning the new services described in the paper.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in Section 2.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are highly gendered crimes, therefore there will be greater impact on female residents in Cambridgeshire. Any public awareness activity should make it clear that the issue includes violence against men and boys, as well as women and girls

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

See wording under 4.4.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

No significant implications.

4.7 Public Health Implications

Violence is a public health issue at individual and population levels. The DASV Partnership and White Ribbon campaign will help increase awareness and understanding of this particular violence issue and awareness raising is an important element for the delivery of the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse Strategy.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, this project looks to use existing infrastructure and therefore does not have a positive or negative impact of energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact either way on low carbon transport.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, this project uses existing infrastructure rather than constructing new buildings which could have a negative impact on habitats.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact waste management or plastic pollution. By using existing infrastructure the project prevents waste from potential construction.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, this project does not impact water use, availability and management.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact air pollution.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: This project is helping vulnerable people but not with climate change and is therefore neutral.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Amanda Rose

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily R Smith

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Alexandra Mueller

5. Source documents

5.1 [Cambridgeshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024](#)