

<b>14 December 2017</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Strategy to Tackle Violence against Women and Girls in Thurrock, 2017-20</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All		<b>Key Decision:</b> Key
<b>Report of:</b> James Nicolson Community Protection Manager		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> None		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Julie Rogers, Director Environment and Highways		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership, in line with national government, adopted the definition of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) a number of years ago to replace the previous definition of domestic abuse then in use. The definition of VAWG not only includes dealing with domestic violence and abuse, but also honour based abuse; modern day slavery; human trafficking and, of particular importance, sexual violence and abuse and child sexual exploitation.

Additionally, as made clear on the cover of the Strategy, the needs of men are also fully recognised and addressed in the Strategy.

Thurrock Council has also been an active member of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB), originally set up and chaired by the then Police and Crime Commissioner. Although the definition of domestic abuse used by this countywide Board was expanded recently, sexual violence and abuse are both still excluded.

Accordingly, this Strategy, which has been signed-off by the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Board, refreshes the Thurrock-specific response, incorporating latest developments and response to these crimes, charting progress made and driving current and future activity, as set out in the accompanying Action Plan.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**It is recommended that Members:**

- 1.1 Endorse the direction of travel as contained within the Strategy;**
- 1.2 Identify how they wish to be updated on progress, and;**
- 1.3 Identify any initiatives with which they may wish to be more closely involved to engage community support and harness subsequent partnership-led activity.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership has a long history of tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse. More recently crimes of honour based abuse; modern day slavery; child sexual exploitation and human trafficking have also been the focus of direct local activity to raise awareness amongst frontline staff and communities of these crimes and the ways to respond to them.
- 2.2 Whilst a Thurrock VAWG Strategy was previously in use, more recently the SETDAB Strategy was adopted in its place. Although the SETDAB Strategy continues to be fully supported a refreshed, updated Thurrock-specific strategy is required to address all aspects of the expanded definition in use elsewhere.

## **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 An updated VAWG Strategy is essential to maintain the progress made in Thurrock to tackle these crimes. To ensure that it drives coordinated activity effectively, a detailed Action Plan has been developed to support it. This is closely monitored by the local VAWG Governance Group, attended by representatives of all relevant agencies and service providers, including SERICC.

## **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 To maximise the impact of the initiatives contained in the Strategy, community engagement is crucial. This includes raising the awareness of these crimes, what local services are available; referral pathways to these services; and the progress being made in tackling these crimes. Members are uniquely well-placed to energise community awareness and support, and therefore need to be fully briefed and kept updated on developments.

## **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 The Strategy has been widely consulted with partner agencies and service providers, as well as the local safeguarding boards. Whilst the Strategy has yet to be noted formally by a small number of local bodies, all of these had representatives engaged in the formulation of the Strategy, accordingly it is not anticipated that any changes are likely to be suggested.

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

### **6.1 Tackling VAWG successfully will impact significantly on at least three of the Communities Priorities, these being;**

- **Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity**

The economic cost of VAWG is enormous. Ranging from significant levels of sickness absence from work; lost productivity when at work; and high levels of demands on services, particularly health services, police and the safeguarding agencies. It follows that implementing the measures identified in the Strategy that reduce these crimes will not only benefit the individuals affected by it, but also local trade and industries as well as reduce increasing service demand and subsequent costs on public sector services.

- **Build pride, responsibility and respect**

Supporting those affected by these crimes and reducing offences will help them live lives free of fear and local communities will build pride, resilience, responsibility and respect.

- **Improve health and well-being**

The Strategy outlines the impact on all elements of the health services of VAWG. Clearly, reduction in offending will have a drastic improvement in the health and well-being of victims, their families and friends and indeed in addressing and preventing perpetrators from further offending themselves.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**  
**Management Accountant - Place Directorate**  
**and Environment & Highways Directorate**

It is likely that there will be future financial benefits from implementing this strategy effectively, including longer terms savings from reduced demand for services. All costs relating to this can be met from existing budgets.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor for Children and Adult**  
**Safeguarding**

All local authorities have a number of responsibilities in relation to reducing domestic violence and supporting both victim and perpetrators of such violence, including powers and duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Community Development and Equalities Manager**

The actions contained in this Strategy will help and support a wide range of victims from a variety of communities, some of which have suffered disproportionately in the past, by improving the services they receive. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment is included as an Appendix to the Strategy which details the way in which the needs of specific groups are met.

### 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- ☐ Staff suffering these offences will be able, more readily, to access services and seek remedies to their situations.
- ☐ Health will see reductions in emergency demands for service and providing longer-term support for victims.
- ☐ These offences have a major impact on local crime and disorder levels and reducing these continues to be a key priority.

### 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

### 9. Appendices to the report

Appendix A - A Strategy to Tackle Violence against Women and Girls in Thurrock 2017-2020.

### Report Author:

Jim Nicolson  
Community Protection Manager  
Environment