



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES AND TRANSPORT

TOPIC – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

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Democratic Services Officer: Nancy Graham, 01962 848235, ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

At its meeting on 20 January 2014, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) appointed an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to consider 'How the City Council responds to domestic violence', with particular reference to:

- Access to housing support and refuge move on;
- Corporate policy for staff;
- Education and awareness for officers, elected members and customers of the City Council;
- Commissioning of services, directly as key clients or indirectly via the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) e.g. IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates).

This Decision Notice sets out the recommendations arising from the Domestic Violence ISG and those agreed via the subsequent OSC (on 19 January 2015 (Report OS114)).

DECISION

a) That the final recommendations of the Domestic Violence ISG are agreed for implementation as set out below:

1. Put in place a formal partnership arrangement between Winchester City Council and the Refuge by developing a Memorandum of Understanding/Protocol between the two.
2. Investigate the possibility of increasing the number of Stage 2 supported housing units by a further 10 e.g. identify unit locations and funding/grant opportunities.
3. Ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services to review the corporate policy related to the allocation of housing and consider if there is an opportunity for the provision of more permanent accommodation at an earlier stage for those fleeing domestic violence.
4. Actively support the work of Winchester Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum by ensuring a room is made available to them for their meetings up to a maximum of 3 times per annum. **Update:** The Trinity Centre has since offered the Winchester Domestic Violence & Abuse Forum a meeting room to hold their meetings at no cost.
5. Improve the opportunity for education and awareness training for all frontline staff and Councillors in relation to Domestic Violence disclosure and access to support services e.g. ensure that staff and elected members are aware of the corporate policy around domestic violence.
6. Increase awareness opportunities for customers of the City Council by updating the corporate website to ensure helpline numbers are readily available, service web links are easily accessible and literature via customer services/reception/putting information on Council owned public conveniences etc. (healthy relationships) is provided.
7. Actively encourage the Police & Crime Commissioner to commission the continuation/expansion of the IDVA service at a local level (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates).

b) That points 1-3 of the recommendations be passed to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services to take forward in liaison with Housing Services Officers. See below:

- A formal partnership arrangement between Winchester City Council and the Refuge in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding/Protocol between the two.
- Investigate the possibility of increasing the number of Stage 2 supported housing units by a further 10 e.g. identify unit locations and funding/grant

opportunities. It should be noted that in light of the Supporting People funding reductions for this sector being considered by the County Council, even maintaining existing provision will be challenging, let alone facilitating increased provision.

- Review the corporate policy related to the allocation of housing and consider if there is an opportunity to provide more permanent accommodation at an earlier stage for those fleeing domestic violence. It should be noted that the housing options appropriate to each case will be different. The current policy does give flexibility to review each case on its merits and any review will focus on whether the current approach balances the needs of each case sufficiently with other demands on the allocations system.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Domestic Violence is a key priority within the Winchester Community Safety Partnership Delivery Plan. Actions related to this key priority are also linked to the Community Strategy and Portfolio Holder Plans for Communities & Transport and Housing Services.

All of the alternative options were considered by the original ISG who have recommended the actions within this PHD.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Whilst recommendations 4 -7 will require resource limited to staff time. It should be noted that progressing the housing issues within the recommendations as detailed above will have significant implications on staff time and use of internal resources. This will require some changes to existing service plans. In addition, should the recommendation to investigate further opportunities to increase the number of Stage 2 supported housing units be realised, a significant amount of external funding will need to be found e.g. Government/County Council grant or support from partner housing providers.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

These recommendations were put forward by an ISG to The Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2015. The O&S Committee supported and recommended that Cabinet approve the ISG's recommendations (report OS114). The Portfolio Holder for Housing has also been consulted.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

N/A

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

N/A

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

N/A

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 29.04.15

Councillor Ernest Jeffs – Portfolio Holder for Communities & Transport