

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	STRATEGY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION
DATE OF DECISION:	20 DECEMBER 2021
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR VASSILIOU CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND HERITAGE.

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
Executive Director	Title	Executive Director Communities, Culture and Homes	
	Name:	Mary D'Arcy	Tel: 023 80 834611
	E-mail	mary.d'arcy@southampton.gov.uk	
Author:	Title	Senior Policy and Strategy Officer	
	Name:	Stephen Barratt	Tel: 023 80 833714
	E-mail	stephen.barratt@southampton.gov.uk	

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
NOT APPLICABLE	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
<p>Cabinet is requested to consider the approval of a Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation ("the Strategy"). The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ("the Act") places new duties on local authorities to assess the need for accommodation-based support and prepare strategies to provide such support for survivors of domestic abuse and their children. The Council has carried out a local needs assessment to determine the level of need for support in safe accommodation in Southampton. The Strategy sets out the actions the Council will take (working together with relevant partners) to adequately address the needs identified over the next three years. The Council is required by law to publish the Strategy before 5 January 2022.</p>	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	(i) That Cabinet approve the Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation.
	(ii) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director Communities, Culture and Homes, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Heritage, to make minor changes to the Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation during its period of effect.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	The Council is required by s 57 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, resulting in them being able to reside in safe accommodation, be it their own or new accommodation.

2.	The Strategy will facilitate the work of the Council, in partnership with the Southampton Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board (“the Board”), in tackling domestic abuse in Southampton. This will be achieved through the Coordinated Community Response model (adopted by the Strategy), which shifts responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
3.	It was considered whether the Council’s existing strategy for tackling domestic and sexual abuse (Southampton Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse Multi Agency Strategy 2017-2020) could be revised and renewed to meet the requirements of the Act. This option was rejected because the production of an entirely new strategy, following consultation with the new Board, presented the opportunity for the Council to adopt the Coordinated Community Response model. A whole-system strategy, dealing with other community-based domestic abuse support provision and issues associated with sexual violence and violence against women and girls, is due to be brought to Cabinet for approval in or around September 2022.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
4.	Section 57(1) of the Act provides that the Council must carry out the following functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area; b. prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area; and, c. monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
5.	In October 2020, the Council received £50k to help prepare for the duties in the Act, through which it obtained the services of specialist domestic abuse charity Stranding Together to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. carry out the needs assessment required by s 57(1)(a) of the Act; and, b. prepare a draft of the Strategy.
6.	The development of the Strategy has been informed by a review of jointly-commissioned Domestic and Sexual Abuse services, carried out by the Integrated Commissioning Unit (“ICU”) between October 2020 and June 2021 (“the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse (DVSA) service review”).
7.	In August 2021, Cabinet approved the appointment of the Board, the purpose of which is to provide advice to the Council about the exercise of its duties under s 57 of the Act. The first meeting of the Board took place on 5 October 2021, during which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Director Communities, Culture and Homes was appointed as chairperson of the Board; and, • The Council consulted the Board on the draft Strategy in accordance with s 57(4)(a) of the Act.
8.	Further to the decision to appoint the Board, in August 2021 Cabinet approved relevant delegations of authority to the Director Communities, Culture and Homes, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Heritage. These delegations include the authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out any functions required to give effect to the Strategy; and,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do anything considered necessary to fulfil the Council’s legal obligations pursuant to the Act.
9.	<p>The Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021 (“the Strategy Regulations”) require the Council to publish a s 57 strategy before 5 January 2022. The Strategy Regulations further require a draft s 57 strategy to be published at least 10 weeks prior to this. The Council met the latter requirement by publishing the Strategy in draft form on its public website on 11 October 2022.</p>
10.	<p>Safe accommodation for the purposes of s 57 of the Act is defined by the Domestic Abuse Support (Relevant Accommodation and Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Sanctuary Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (“the Relevant Accommodation Regulations”).</p> <p>It includes accommodation provided by a local housing authority, a private registered provider of social housing, or a registered charity whose objects include the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse; which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> refuge accommodation; specialist safe accommodation; dispersed accommodation; second stage accommodation; part of a sanctuary scheme; or, other accommodation designated by the local housing authority, private registered provider of social housing or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation. <p>Bed and breakfast accommodation (accommodation which is not separate and self-contained premises, and in which any one of a toilet, personal washing facilities or cooking facilities are shared by more than one household) is specifically excluded from the definition of safe accommodation.</p>
11.	<p>Support within safe accommodation is described by statutory guidance as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the overall management of services within safe accommodation; support with the day-to-day running of the service; advocacy support; domestic abuse prevention advice; specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and with additional and/or complex needs; children’s support housing-related support; advice service; and, counselling and therapy. <p>The list is non-exhaustive and other relevant support services can be put in place based on victims’ needs.</p>
12.	<p>The Strategy identifies the following seven priorities in addressing the need for support in safe accommodation in Southampton:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Early identification, intervention and prevention. Survivors have access to a range of appropriate housing options and support services, which increase safety and prevent homelessness/ loss of tenure. The needs of children and young people (CYP) are understood and supported.

	<p>iv. Domestic abuse responses are survivor-led.</p> <p>v. Effective perpetrator management.</p> <p>vi. Develop and embed Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>The Strategy sets out the actions the Council and its partners will take to address each priority. Performance indicators are provided, against which the success of the actions may be measured. The Council is required by s 59 of the Act to provide annual reports to the Government on its performance in giving effect to the Strategy.</p>
13.	<p>The Council undertook public consultation on the Strategy in draft form between 23 September 2021 and 3 November 2021. The aims of the consultation were to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> communicate the strategic proposals clearly to residents and stakeholders; ensure any resident, business or stakeholder who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have; and, allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objective in a different way.
14.	<p>The consultation used an online questionnaire as the main route for feedback. Responses by letter and email were also accepted. The consultation was actively promoted by the Council through the Board, stakeholder groups and other relevant channels. Overall, there were 26 separate responses to the consultation. A full summary of the methodology and results of the public consultation, produced by the Council's Data, Intelligence, and Insight Team, is appended to this report.</p>
15.	<p>The Council has taken the consultation responses into account in the development of the Strategy by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> reviewing and responding to the comments made by consultees about the priorities and actions in the Strategy. making amendments to the Strategy based on the consultation responses, where appropriate. <p>The Council's actions in response to the consultation have been recorded and appended to this report.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
16.	<p>The Government has allocated £125m of New Burdens funding to local authorities to cover the cost of funding the duties which relate to the provision of support in safe accommodation. The Council's allocation for 2021/22 is £587,012 ("the 2021/22 allocation"). The Council, using delegated powers, approved the following expenditures of the 2021/22 allocation in June 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic Abuse Partnership Lead/Coordinator - £65,785 (Appointed) Data & Intelligence Analyst - £50,122 (Appointed) Lived Experience and Engagement Officer - £50,122 DAS+ (intensive support for women victims identified with complex needs) extension to March 2022 - £35,000

	Plans for spending the remaining 2021/22 allocation (£385,983) in giving effect to the Strategy are under development and will be finalised following Cabinet's consideration of the decision to approve the Strategy. Decisions to approve spending will be taken by the Director Communities, Culture and Homes in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Heritage. New Burdens funding for 2022/23 and 2023/24 is yet to be announced by the Government.
17.	The Strategy impacts upon the jointly-commissioned DVSA service because this service includes the provision of refuge accommodation (a type of safe accommodation within the meaning of the Accommodation Regulations). The current DVSA contracts will end in March 2022. In August 2021, the Leader of the Council, following consultation with the Joint Commissioning Board, decided to support the further procurement of DVSA services for a period of 7 years (5+2) from March 2022. The total value of the services to be procured is up to £3,340,000 ("the service value"). The Council's contribution per annum is £344,000. Because the service value was finalised through the DVSA service review before the safe accommodation needs assessment was carried out, it has been approved that the new DVSA contracts will include the potential to vary the service value by up to 45% of the Council's contribution (£154,800) to ensure needs relating to safe accommodation can be met through the DVSA service, if required. It is anticipated that any increase in the Council's contribution for this purpose would be met through the New Burdens funding.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
18.	The Strategy provides for the following actions with potential property implications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the suitability and capacity of existing refuge provision, with the potential to increase refuge funding by 20%. • Exploration of the expansion of sanctuary schemes (in registered social housing) whereby survivors of domestic abuse are enabled to remain their own home through the installation of additional security to the property or its perimeter where they reside. • The exploration/development of safe accommodation pathways for women with complex needs and for children and young people. • The maintenance by the Council of its Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.
19.	Part 7 of the Act requires the Council to grant a new lifetime tenancy to a tenant or a member of their household when re-housing an existing lifetime social tenant or offering an existing lifetime tenant a new sole tenancy in their home if the Council is satisfied that the tenant or member of their household has been a victim of domestic abuse and the new tenancy is granted in connection with that abuse. The Council's Housing policies and strategies will be reviewed against this new requirement and amended as required.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
20.	Functions under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
21.	Statutory requirements relevant to those functions, including (but not limited to) those set out in:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Human Rights Act 1998. • The Housing Act 1996. • The Homelessness Act 2002. • The Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
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Other Legal Implications:

22.	In exercising its duties, the Council will pay regard to its obligations pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, in particular, the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in s 149 of that Act. A detailed Equality and Safety Impact Assessment has been carried out to support the proposals in the Strategy and appended to this report.
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RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

23.	Failure to publish the Strategy before 5 January 2021 would contravene regulation 3 of the Strategy Regulations. Pursuant to s 4 of those regulations, the Council must ensure that it reviews the Strategy within the period of three years beginning with the date of its first publication, and within each three-year period thereafter.
24.	Failure to effectively support survivors of domestic and/or their children by failing to provide access to services within the scope of Part 4 of the Act and as identified in the needs assessment will result in contravention of the Act and associated legislation.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

25.	In implementing the Strategy, the Council will act fully and wholly in accordance with relevant Policy Framework Plans, in particular the Safe City Strategy (Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy) and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Board reports bi-annually to the Safe City Partnership and provides advice and support to the Health and Wellbeing Board in relation to domestic abuse.
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KEY DECISION?	Yes
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WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	ALL
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation.
2.	Public Consultation Summary Report.
3.	Record of actions taken by the Council in response to the public consultation.
4.	Equality and Safety Impact Assessment.

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None.
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.		No
Other Background Documents Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)	
1.	None.	