

 Executive 8 March 2017		Agenda Item No. 4
Title	Domestic Violence & Abuse Policy	
For further information about this report please contact	Simon Brooke Sustaining Tenancies Manager 01926 456433 simon.brooke@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Not applicable	
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes, 826
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken	Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	20.2.17	Bill Hunt
Head of Service		
CMT	20.2.17	Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	20.2.17	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	20.2.17	Andy Jones
Finance		
Legal Services	10.2.17	Lara Macnab
Portfolio Holder(s)	15.2.17	CLlr Peter Phillips
Consultation & Community Engagement		
<p>This report was discussed at Housing Advisory Group (HAG) on 16 January 2017. HAG is a representative body of councillors and tenants set up to scrutinise the work of Housing and Property Services.</p> <p>The draft Policy has been subject to wide internal consultation, as well as with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Development Manager at Warwickshire County Council.</p> <p>The Policy was considered by Health Scrutiny Committee on the 17 January 2017, who welcomed the development of the Policy.</p>		
Final Decision?	No	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		
Full Council March 2017		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of a Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy. This is a corporate policy, although mainly affecting Housing Services its scope is wider and can touch on a range of other services. The Council does not currently have a Domestic Abuse and Advice Policy.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Executive welcomes the development of the Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy.
- 2.2 That Executive recommends to Council the approval of this Policy.
- 2.3 That Executive notes the plans to develop procedure and training for staff in this area.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1 This Policy has been developed to address gaps in our provision of Policy guidance. The Council currently does not have a Domestic Abuse and Advice Policy. It is expected that approval of the Policy will assist in framing new procedures and training for staff and help improve our services in this important area.
- 3.2 Domestic abuse is recognised to have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing on residents in the District.
- 3.2 It is expected that the development of this Policy will lead to improved coordination of our work across the Council, better liaison with other agencies and improved services in this area. Following approval of this policy, an implementation plan will be agreed including planning new procedures, training and communications.
- 3.3 Part of our work in this area is our involvement in Domestic Homicide Reviews. Recommendations from recent reviews indicated some learning for our teams and improvements required. Whilst these issues have been picked up as they have arisen, we believe that development of this Policy will assist us more generally in ensuring good services in this area.

4. Policy Framework

- 4.1 This Policy will close a gap in the Policy framework that we have. It will form a framework for the development of procedures and training in this area.
- 4.2 The **Sustainable Communities Strategy** will benefit in the following ways:
- 4.2.1 **Housing theme** has as its aim "to address the housing needs of those who wish to live and work in Warwick District". This Policy addresses the housing implications of those affected by domestic abuse. The new Policy sets a framework for our staff to give good housing advice and support those affected.
- 4.2.2 **Health and Well Being theme** has at its aim "to enable and encourage the people of Warwick District to have an equal access to a healthy life and sense of wellbeing". Ensuring good advice and support to those affected by domestic abuse is vital to residents' health and well-being.

- 4.2.3 **Safe Communities theme** has as its aim “to work in partnership to reduce violent crime, anti-social behaviour and reoffending”. Our work in partnership with the Police and other agencies to respond effectively to incidents of domestic abuse will be enhanced by the development of this Policy and procedures and training.
- 4.6 **Impact Assessments:** An Equalities assessment has been completed. This has confirmed that as there is no current policy, the development of one has a positive impact for this area of work and will particularly affect in a positive way certain groups that are particularly vulnerable.

4.7 **Fit for the Future:**

There are no implications.

5. Budgetary Framework

There are no implications.

6. Risks

- 6.1 The development of this Policy will help ensure that services in this area are robust and this assists in the management of risks. Our staff are dealing with some very difficult issues in this area and the risks are that we do not respond effectively, this could lead to further violence.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 Executive could decide not to approve this Policy and decide that no Policy is required. It is believed that there are particular benefits of having a Policy covering Domestic Abuse.

8. Background

- 8.1 Domestic Violence is a major problem affecting our society. It has been estimated that one in four of all women have been affected by domestic violence.

635,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported to the Police nationally. Whilst it has been estimated that only 35% of incidents have been reported.

Home Office research has indicated that domestic violence has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime.

The cost to public services has been estimated in Warwickshire as £54.3m.

- 8.2 Warwick District Council’s staff are primarily involved with reports of domestic abuse in two areas with the Homelessness duty and in our role as landlord to 5,500 council houses.

Our staff receive reports of domestic abuse where a person can no longer live in their current home due to domestic abuse. We have duties in the Housing Act 1996 to investigate, to provide housing advice, in some cases to provide temporary accommodation and if a full duty as homeless is agreed to provide permanent housing.

With our own tenants we receive reports of domestic abuse and we would look to provide good advice and support to our customers.

- 8.3 This Policy has been developed with wide consultation internally as its impact is important in many areas of the Council's work. The Policy is in line with the Government's strategic approach as outlined in the 'Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy'.
- 8.4 We are committed to work in partnership with others and therefore have good links with the police, Warwickshire County Council, as well as a range of support services. We have committed to Warwickshire's Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2015-18. Consultation has taken place with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Development Manager at Warwickshire County Council, who has welcomed this Policy.