

 Health Scrutiny Sub Committee 17 January 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Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?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	Being undertaken

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	6.1.17	Bill Hunt
Head of Service		
CMT	6.1.17	Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer		
Monitoring Officer		
Finance		
Legal Services		
Portfolio Holder(s)		Cllr Peter Phillips
Consultation & Community Engagement		
<p>This report will be discussed at Housing Advisory Group (HAG) on 16 January 2016. 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>		
Final Decision?		No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		
Executive March 2016		

Summary

- 1.1 To give the Committee an opportunity to see the draft Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy and the opportunity to provide comment on this Policy.
- 1.2 The Council does not currently have a Domestic Abuse and Advice Policy. This Policy has therefore been developed to address gaps in our provision of Policy guidance. It is planned that the agreement to the Policy will assist in framing new procedures and training for staff and help improve our services in this important area.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Health Scrutiny Committee note the report and welcome the development of this Policy.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1 Health Scrutiny Committee requested sight of the Policy given the scope of the Policy and the impact of domestic abuse on the health and wellbeing on residents.
- 3.2 We believe 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.
- 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 we would pick these up normally 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:** We are undertaking an Equalities assessment. However, as we do not have a current policy we consider this development as a positive 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 We could not approve this Policy and decide that no Policy is required. We believe 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 may receive reports of domestic abuse and we would look to provide good advice and support to our customers.

- 8.3 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 the Warwickshire's Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2015-18.