

AGENDA

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 1 November 2022

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: The Sapling Room, The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4DE*

Membership:

Councillors Cameron Beart, Lloyd Bowen, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Nicholas Hampshire, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Peter Macdonald, Lee McCall, Richard Palmer (Chair), Hannah Perkin and Ken Rowles.

Quorum = 5

Pages

Information about this meeting

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The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 7 September 2022 (Minute Nos. 283 – 290) as a correct record.

Part B reports for the Community Committee to decide

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---------|
| 5. | Domestic Abuse Policy | 5 - 14 |
| 6. | Mayor's Civic Award | 15 - 18 |
| 7. | Forward Decisions Plan | 19 - 20 |

Issued on Monday 24 October 2022

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Communities Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	1 st November 2022
Report Title	Draft Swale Domestic Abuse Policy
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Stephanie Curtis, Community Safety Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. That the Communities Committee agrees this draft Domestic Abuse Policy to go out for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the draft Domestic Abuse Policy and asks Committee to consider it and to agree to a proposed public consultation.

2 Background

- 2.1 Swale Borough Council, through both its safeguarding and community safety duties have been supporting domestic abuse victims for many years, linking in with both statutory and voluntary sector partners to improve partnership work and its response to victims. Since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a domestic abuse officer has been on post to review compliance to this Act and support wider partnership work to improve responses to victims and their families.
- 2.2 The Swale Community Safety Plan, developed by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), identifies a number of priorities of which Domestic Abuse is one. The SBC Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures also includes detail of how SBC will respond to domestic abuse.
- 2.3 SBC is an active partner within the CSP and has participated heavily in local activity to increase service provision in the Borough for victims/survivors of domestic abuse. This also includes identifying gaps in services and working to address these, such as behavioural programmes for perpetrators in recent times. SBC also works closely with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership and financially contributes to the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (support service).
- 2.4 Within Swale, for the period September 2021 – end August 2022 there were 5465 incidents of domestic abuse reported to Kent Police. This is a 3% increase on the same period the previous year. There has continued to be an increase in reported domestic abuse incidents over the last ten years within the Borough. This is in

part felt to be due to increased confidence in victims to report concerns, but also recognises the high prevalence of this issue.

- 2.5 SBC has agreed to apply for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. The accreditation standards are set to increase good working practices within organisations and will assist SBC in reviewing and making improvements where necessary in supporting domestic abuse victims and families.
- 2.5 Due to the volume of domestic abuse incidents within Swale; the standards within the DAHA accreditation and a need to ensure that our response to domestic abuse is coordinated in the best manner, a standalone Domestic Abuse Policy has been developed.
- 2.6 This policy covers:
- Legal Duties
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Staff Training
 - Partnerships
 - Publicity/awareness raising
 - Responding to domestic abuse
- 2.7 This policy will be underpinned by a separate domestic abuse procedure that will provide a daily framework for staff to ensure the correct response is given to victims/families. This will sit alongside existing safeguarding procedures. Additionally, a separate policy will be developed for staff affected by domestic abuse.
- 2.8 The Policy does introduce the idea of Domestic Abuse Champions within the organisation. These would be voluntary roles for staff interested in additional training on this agenda and would be the 'go to' for advice/guidance within their teams, in addition to the Safeguarding Officers.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 That the Communities Committee agree for this draft Domestic Abuse Policy to go out for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not approve this draft policy for consultation - with the Community Safety Plan and Safeguarding Policy in place, there is no legal requirement for a separate Domestic Abuse Policy. However, having one in place is considered good practice and will consolidate all domestic abuse work by SBC.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation is proposed to take place with the following groups:

- Domestic Abuse Service Providers
- Other external partner agencies including Kent Police, Housing Associations
- Local residents
- Victims/Survivors of domestic abuse

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This Policy supports the Corporate Plan priority ‘tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone’ and the objective of ‘ensuring that the council plays a proactive role in reducing crime and ASB, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision’.
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no additional finance, resource or property implications in implementing this refreshed policy. Funding is already committed to the county commissioned domestic abuse service from existing community safety core budget. Further grant funding is provided on an adhoc basis towards perpetrator services or other required local services through core community safety budget or the grant received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Council is required to comply with a variety of legislation in relation to Domestic Abuse including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Care Act 2014, Childrens Act 1989 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p> <p>This policy does not introduce any additional activity to meet the requirements of this legislation but consolidates existing action into one place.</p>
Crime and Disorder	The policy details the main aim of the Domestic Abuse Policy which is to increase the safety of those residents within the Borough that are affected by domestic abuse.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No environment and sustainability implications have been identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	This policy consolidates existing activity under both the community safety and safeguarding agendas into on place, all of which seek to increase the health and wellbeing of those affected by domestic abuse.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The creation of this policy will bolster the existing Safeguarding Policy for the Council, ensuring appropriate responses are in place for those affected by domestic abuse.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	No specific implications on risk management or health/safety have been identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No specific implications on groups with protected characteristics have been identified.
Privacy and Data Protection	The introduction of this policy does not identify any new privacy or data protection concerns. Any data gathered or shared will continue to be done so in line with existing community safety/safeguarding mechanisms.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft Swale Domestic Abuse Policy 2022-25

8 Background Papers

No background papers.

Swale Domestic Abuse Policy 2022

1. Introduction

Swale Borough Council is committed to ensuring the safety of its community. The Council believes that all forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable and this Policy sets-out not only the Council's responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, but what further action the Council will take to support domestic abuse victims and their families in partnership with other agencies.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy and its associated procedures are to increase the safety of those residents within the Borough of Swale that are affected by Domestic Abuse.
- 2.2 This policy demonstrates how Swale Borough Council (SBC) will meet its legal obligations and assure members of the public, employees, volunteers, Members and those working on behalf of the Council as to what they can expect SBC to do to increase the safety of victim/survivors of domestic abuse; and how we will work in collaboration with external agencies to do so.

3. Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 Domestic Abuse is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violence behaviour. It is between those that are 16 and over and are, or have been in an intimate relationship, family members or have a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
- 3.2 Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to:
 - Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control)
 - Psychological or emotional abuse
 - Physical or sexual abuse
 - Financial or economical abuse
 - Harassment and stalking
 - Violent or Threatening Behaviour
 - Online or digital abuse
- 3.3 In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women and perpetrated by men, but SBC recognises that this is not always the case.
- 3.4 The Domestic Act 2021 formally recognised children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. SBC had already understood this impact and had been working with partner agencies to determine what local services needed to be in place for children affected by domestic abuse.

4. Swale Context

- 4.1 Within Swale, for the period September 2021 – end August 2022 there were 5465 incidents of domestic abuse reported to Kent Police. This is a 3% increase on the same period the previous year. Domestic Abuse is one of the highest crime volumes in the borough.

- 4.2 There has continued to be a steady increase in reported domestic abuse incidents over the last ten years. This is the case nationally. This is in part felt to be due to increase confidence in victims to report concerns, but ultimately is reflective of the high prevalence of these issues.
- 4.3 Annually within Swale, the local domestic abuse picture is captured within the Community Safety Strategic Assessment. This reviews all local data and contextual views from partner agencies to better understand the prevalence, a breakdown of issue types and risk concerns. This data is currently used by the Swale Community Safety Partnership to determine local actions for the upcoming year.
- 4.4 Within Kent, an annual Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment is also completed. This reviews Kent wide concerns on this agenda, as well as focusing on how partners have worked together to address already identified concerns.

5. Legal Duties

- 5.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 30th April 2021. It includes:
- A revised legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right
 - Introduction of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner
 - Legal duty on Councils to fund support for survivors in safe accommodation
 - New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors
 - New criminal offences
 - A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing if they need to escape an abuser
- 5.2 The Care Act 2014 stipulates how local authorities (in this case Kent County Council) and other parts of the system such as relevant partners (which includes SBC as a district council) should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. This includes those experiencing or having experienced domestic abuse.
- 5.3 The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has a right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 10, 11 and 13 of the Children Act 2004 specifies what is required of SBC.
- 5.4 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 17 places a duty upon SBC to consider the impact of its functions and decision in crime and disorder within their local area; and to fully cooperate within the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Within the Swale CSP, SBC is an active partner and tackling Domestic Abuse is a key priority for the Partnership and has been for many years. SBC and the CSP also recognise that domestic abuse is a piece of the wider agenda of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and is committed to working together to tackle this.

6. Policy Position

6.1 Principles

- 6.1.1 SBC believes that all forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable and is committed to the following principles:

- To work in partnership with external agencies to ensure the most appropriate response is in place as a Borough to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, working towards a Coordinated Community Response.
- To ensure our staff have the correct skills, tools and knowledge to effectively respond to victims of domestic abuse
- To ensure that all practice is underpinned by safety led case management
- That a survivor led approach is taken to all service development
- To provide inclusive services that are accessible and meet the individual needs of all
- To consider our role in how perpetrators of abuse are held to account for their behaviour and seek to ensure appropriate support services are in place for them
- To actively promote our domestic abuse response

6.1.2 This policy will be developed and reviewed on a regular basis, with residents, service users and partner agencies affected by domestic abuse. It will be reviewed as a minimum within three years. Consideration will be given to any changes in legislation or policy.

6.1.3 Should any learning arise from Domestic Homicide Reviews, Serious Case Reviews or Serious Adult Reviews which impact on this Policy and the way in which SBC responds to domestic abuse, the Policy will be revised sooner.

6.2 Scope

6.2.1 This policy covers Swale Borough Council's response to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. It clearly identifies the role of the Council in this agenda and how it will work in partnership with other agencies.

6.2.2 This policy will sit alongside existing SBC Policies including:

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Community Safety Plan
- Staff Domestic Abuse Policy
- Housing Strategy
- Housing Allocations Policy

6.2.3 This policy will also sit alongside standalone domestic abuse procedures. These will provide a daily framework for staff to enable the right response is given and will focus on identifying individuals/families experiencing domestic abuse; how to respond in a safe way; and recording and sharing information.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 **All Staff, Members, Volunteers:** All are responsible for ensuring that that they are aware of how to identify a victim of domestic abuse and how to direct them for support.

7.2 **Senior Management Team (SMT):** SMT are responsible for ensuring that this Policy and related procedures are implemented, monitored and regularly reviewed.

- 7.3 **Community Safety Manager:** The Community Safety Manager will be responsible for ensuring that this policy and associated procedures are implemented. This role will also be the main link for all partnership related activity.
- 7.4 **All Service Managers:** All service managers (and contract managers responsible for contracted services) must ensure that they and their staff have received the appropriate training and are confident to identify victims of domestic abuse and signpost accordingly.
- 7.5 **ASB and Vulnerability Team Leader/Safeguarding Officers:** These posts will be responsible for implementing this policy and associated procedures on a day to day basis. They will be the main point of contact for all other staff/Members/volunteers that have identified a victim of domestic abuse and will ensure that an appropriate response is in place.
- 7.6 Domestic Abuse Champions will be introduced into customer facing teams. These roles will be a voluntary and provided with additional levels of training. They will be the first point of contact within teams for those seeking advice on any identification of domestic abuse concerns.

8. Staff Training

- 8.1 SBCs Safeguarding Policy details training required by staff across a range of safeguarding subjects including domestic abuse. Training required varies depending on the level of contact by roles with vulnerable adults, children and families, with those with the greater level of contact required to complete face to face/virtual training. Those staff with less contact will need to complete an e-learning module.
- 8.2 The Safeguarding Policy and Training Plan are reviewed annually, and this is where all domestic abuse related training will be captured.
- 8.3 Staff training compliance is monitored on a quarterly basis.
- 8.4 Specialist staff, including those within the Safeguarding Team will also consider enhanced domestic abuse training.
- 8.5 All domestic abuse training will be delivered by a domestic abuse specialist agency.
- 8.6 Staff will need to have the confidence to identify, respond to, support, refer and record domestic abuse in a way that is appropriate to their role. Specialist staff will also be required to use risk identification and assessment, information sharing and general safeguarding.

9. Partnerships

- 9.1 SBC is an active partner within the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP), for which domestic abuse remains a priority and has been for over ten years. It contributes to the development and delivery of any associated actions within the Swale Community Safety Plan relating to domestic abuse, including chairing the Swale Domestic Abuse Group, which is a sub-group of the CSP. The Community

Safety Plan is reviewed annually, taking into account current threats and risks as part of the community safety agenda, including for domestic abuse. SBC works closely with other local partners to understand any gaps in services and how these can be addressed.

9.2 SBC is also an active partner within the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

9.3 SBC also works closely with the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership and the Kent Safeguarding Adults Board.

10. Publicity/Awareness Raising

10.1 SBC will ensure that information on accessing domestic abuse support is available on its website, signposting to appropriate local support services.

10.2 SBC is committed to working alongside the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership on all publicity and awareness raising work. This will include:

- Promotion of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse website which holds comprehensive information on all local support services
- To be an active participant in the national '16 days of action' campaign and other localised communications campaigns.

10.3 SBC will work closely with other local partners to ensure there are a variety of mechanisms in place locally, including face to face, for victims to access support and advice.

10.4 SBC will continue to promote the White Ribbon Campaign, hosting local Ambassadors to spread the message that Violence Against Women and Girls will not be tolerated.

10.5 Any communication will be tailored to different audiences to ensure messaging is inclusive and that victims from all groups are able to access support.

11. Perpetrators

11.1 Throughout this policy, SBCs response to supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse has been discussed, but it must be recognised that perpetrators of abuse must also be identified and held to account for their behaviour.

11.2 SBC will work in partnership with other local agencies to ensure that a holistic response is in place for tackling perpetrator behaviour.

11.3 When staff identify perpetrators of domestic abuse, information sharing with appropriate agencies will take place to ensure that appropriate action can be taken to safeguard the victim and ensure the perpetrator can be held to account for their behaviour.

11.4 SBC will work alongside partner agencies to ensure that there is adequate local provision in place for perpetrators to access to address their behaviour or other needs. Staff will seek to promote these services to perpetrators as appropriate.

12. Responding to Domestic Abuse

12.1 Key Contacts

12.1.1 The Safeguarding Team will be the main contact point for all staff, Members, volunteers and contracted services for advice on domestic abuse cases. They can be contacted on:

- Email: safeguarding@swale.gov.uk
- Phone: 01795 417457

12.1.2 For any concerns outside of office hours, where there is an immediate concern for safety, this must be reported to Kent Police on 999 or 101 or Social Services on 03000 41 91 91.

12.2 Record Keeping

12.2.1 All details of cases will be kept in line with the Safeguarding Policy. The My Concern Safeguarding Database is in place to record and manage all safeguarding concerns, including those for domestic abuse.

12.2.2 It is the responsibility of all staff, Members and volunteers to ensure that they have made the Safeguarding team aware of a disclosure or concern of domestic abuse, so that details of that concern and action taken can be recorded.

12.3 Risk based process

12.3.1 All support to domestic abuse victims will be tailored around a risk-based approach. Safeguarding staff and those that are most likely to identify victims of domestic abuse will be required to understand how to risk assess a concern and then take appropriate action.

12.4 Local Support Services

12.4.1 SBC does not directly deliver domestic abuse specialist support services. As a result, staff within the Safeguarding team are required to have good knowledge of all local support services for victims and families.

12.4.2 Through the Community Safety Partnership mechanism, regular mapping of local services will take place. SBC will also work with partner organisations to identify any gaps in services needed locally.

12.5 Tailored Response

12.5.1 SBC recognises that not all victims/survivors of domestic abuse can access services in the same manner; nor may be willing to at the same point of their journey. Each response given to an identified or potential victim will be tailored to their needs and wishes.

Community Committee	
Meeting Date	1 November 2022
Report Title	Mayors Civic Award
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That Community Committee agree to the setting up of a Mayors Civic Award2. That the first award is given in April 2023.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the proposal to set up a Mayoral Civic Award for Swale.

2 Background

2.1 The Council welcomes and values the work undertaken by local people, volunteering in their community.

2.2 Volunteering comes in many different guises and it is often those who quietly go about helping others who are the unsung heroes.

2.3 The council does award 'Freedom of the Borough' in exceptional circumstances, but it is felt there was no civic award to say thank you to people who are not normally celebrated

2.4 The council did run the Swale Volunteer Awards for many years, but it is felt that in the current financial climate, when so many are struggling it is not appropriate to spend a significant amount of money on an annual awards ceremony.

2.5 The proposal

2.6 The proposal is as follows: -

- The Mayor's Award (or civic award) is an annual award. There will be a one round of applications with a maximum of three awards granted in any municipal year.

- Anyone can nominate someone (or group) who they feel have given outstanding service to the Borough of Swale. There will be no age limits. The nominees must live or carry out their volunteering/good works within the Borough of Swale
- The award will be advertised in 'Inside Swale' and through the council's social media platforms. Councillors and staff will be encouraged to promote the award through their networks.
- Staff or serving Borough Councillors may not be nominated and nominations cannot be considered for any works associated with Swale Borough Council (eg for a former councillor or staff member undertaking their previous role with the council)
- Judging for the award will be undertaken by a panel of judges consisting of the Mayor (Chair) and one councillor from each of the political groups represented on the council. Each nomination will be considered on its merit. The Chief Executive will provide support to the panel and carry out due diligence on the nominees.
- The awards will be awarded at a meeting of full council. The award recipients will then be invited to afternoon tea with the Mayor.

2.7 The cost of the Mayors Civic award would be in the region of £500 annually and this can be covered from existing budgets.

3 Alternative Options Considered and rejected by officers

3.1 Not having a Mayors Civic Award but increasing the numbers of Freedom of the Borough awards. This was rejected due to the exceptional nature of the Freedom of the Borough Award.

3.2 Returning to the wider volunteering awards ceremony. This was rejected due to the resourcing and costs of providing this event.

4 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

4.1 No consultation has been undertaken to date

5 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Volunteering assists delivery of many of our corporate priorities and the awards will assist in recognising the contribution from local people

Financial, Resource and Property	This policy can be delivered within the current budget for the Mayor.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	There are no implications.
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	There are no implications.
Health and Wellbeing	Being recognised for work can aid Health and Wellbeing
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	There are no implications.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	There are no implications.
Equality and Diversity	Equality and Diversity will be considered as part of the judging process
Privacy and Data Protection	Any data held as part of the nomination process will be held in accordance with council policies

6 Appendices

6.1 None

7 Background Papers

7.1 None

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Community Committee Forward Decisions Plan

Report title, background information and recommendation(s)	Date of meeting	Open or exempt?	Lead Officer and report author
Domestic abuse policy	01.11.22	Open	Lead officer: Emma Wiggins Report author: Steph Curtis
Community Safety Strategic Assessment	10.01.23	Open	Lead officer: Emma Wiggins Report author: Steph Curtis
Built Facility Strategy (BFS)	01.03.23	Open	Lead officer: Emma Wiggins Report author: Jay Jenkins
Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)	01.03.23	Open	Lead officer: Emma Wiggins Report author: Jay Jenkins

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