

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 26 MAY 2022

Question 1

From: anonymous (name and address supplied)

To: cabinet member, children and families

How long is a reasonable delay between the Council being alerted to a safeguarding risk to children and the Council taking action to prevent avoidable harm from the identified risk?

Response

In all cases the Local Authority has to ensure interventions are proportionate and considered; time is one of the factors which forms part of this deliberation. Statutory guidance allows for a varied level of different responses to safeguarding risks ranging from a number of hours to a number of weeks depending on circumstances (for instance an Initial Child Protection Conference needs to take place within 3 weeks of a multi-agency Strategy Meeting). In all cases, the Local Authority works in collaboration with other agencies and at times it is other agencies who are better able to take immediate actions (for instance for the police to exercise their powers of police protection). By working together with other agencies the Local Authority seeks to mitigate risks so far as is reasonably possible.

Question 2

From: Mr P McKay, Leominster

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Thank you for seeing the benefit of linking the 'Highways and public rights of way map' with open spaces maps, and asking officer to explore the possibility of developing this integrated approach. Would you also consider asking officer as part of this integrated approach to include making provision to show unadopted 'Highways not maintainable at public expense', with an appropriately coloured line, to avoid them appearing to be a gap in connectivity, even though some have public street lights, are shown with pink line, etc., on other pages?

Response

I am pleased that the intended integration of the open spaces map and Public Rights of Way map has been well received, work is still in progress to achieve this. I am pleased to be able to inform you that "highways not maintainable at public expense" are already incorporated on the integrated mapping system, and are shown in pink.

Question 3

From: Ms J Liddle, Ledbury

To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing

What plans does Herefordshire Council have to develop its Domestic Abuse Strategy and adopt the approach of Plymouth by becoming an authority that is pro-active and explicit in its commitment to tackling violence against women and girls? (<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/newsroom/pressreleases/councilunitedfightingviolenceagainstwomenandgirls>) Taking a public stand and maintaining that clear commitment sends out a valuable message to those who see domestic abuse as not really an issue in the county.

Response

Domestic Abuse is one type of gendered crime that falls within the umbrella of Violence Against Women and Girls. In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 our local strategy is based on the

new broader definition of domestic abuse which removes some of the emphasis on gendered abuse. The council acknowledges however that there is a need to consider separately the issues specifically faced by women and girls and is committed to working with our partners to ensure strong leadership and effective working relationships.

The Council is committed to supporting the strategic priorities of Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, as outlined in their strategy for 2021/2024, which specifically include violence against women and girls and sexual violence.

Thank you for drawing our attention to the Plymouth approach, we will look into how this approach could benefit Herefordshire.

Question 4

From: Ms S Meia, Leominster

To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing

Why do the statistics in the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy cite the gender of the victims (70% are women) but not that of the perpetrators?

Response

The statistics included in the Strategy are taken from the needs assessment which was carried out in 2021. There is a statutory requirement to refresh the local needs assessment yearly which provides an opportunity for more detailed data to be included going forward.

The Council recognises that comparing more detailed data helps to understand the nature of abuse, avoid inaccurate assumptions and develop local strategy and policies that address the needs of the population.

The current needs assessment focused on the demand placed on numerous domestic abuse services within Herefordshire and the expected prevalence of domestic abuse in the county. We will provide the breakdown of the gender of perpetrators in the final strategy.

Question 5

From: Dr R J McLean, Leominster

To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing

Given that local authority resources are limited, of the four priorities in the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy, how will you prioritise between the four priorities?

Response

The Council's strategy for Domestic Abuse has been written in consultation with strategic partners with priorities that incorporate the roles of these partner agencies. The partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse ensures that no single agency is responsible alone for delivering against priorities and associated outcomes therefore, the Council will lead on some priorities with partner agencies leading on others. Progress on priorities and measurement of outcomes is reported through the Local Partnership Board which is a statutory requirement in the

Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Partnership will utilise resources and be flexible in its approach to the priorities based the emerging evidence.

Question 6

From: Ms R Farkas, Sutton St Nicholas

To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing

As we know that a significant proportion of children on statutory plans (including those in care or on the cusp of care) are from homes where domestic abuse is a key issue, to what extent does the authority see investment in addressing domestic abuse effectively for those families as an opportunity to avoid more costly interventions in the medium term?

Response

The Council is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk of domestic abuse. Providing timely support to victim-survivors through both statutory agencies and commissioned services is vital. The council recognises that many children are affected by a toxic trio of issues within their family or home including domestic abuse. In light of this the Edge of Care team was established in 2019, the objective of the Service is to reduce the problematic domestic abuse, drug or alcohol and inter-related behaviours in order to reduce the risk of becoming Looked After Children, and to enable successful reunification of families.

The Council recognises that there is additional work required to identify domestic abuse at the earliest possible stage and to this end is in discussion with West Mercia Women's Aid to explore options for workforce development specifically for those practitioners working with vulnerable children and young people.

Intervening and supporting effectively may also reduce longer term costs but this is a secondary consideration.