

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

# Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee Draft Minutes



Tuesday 22 November 2022

## PRESENT

**Committee members:** Councillors Nikos Souslous (Chair), Omid Miri, Sally Taylor and Andrew Dinsmore

**Other Councillors:** Emma Apthorp, Mayor and Lead Member for Women and Girls (T); Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety; and Patricia Quigley, Lead Member for Inclusive Community Engagement and Co-production (T)

**Officers:** Mohammed Basith, Law Enforcement Manager; Matthew Hooper, Chief Officer for Safer Neighbourhoods; Gemma Lightfoot, Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit Manager; Caterina Giammarresi, Victims Programme Coordinator; Beth Morgan, Community Safety Manager; Neil Thurlow, Assistant Director of Community Safety; Elliot Williams-Fletcher, Gangs, Violence and Exploitation Unit Analyst

**Guests:** Michael Defoe, Chief Executive Officer, Harrow Club; Laura Dix, Senior Service Manager, Advance; Sarah Lumgair, Operations Manager, People Arise Now; Vanessa McCain, Founder & Director, People Arise Now; Martina Palmer, Interim Head of Services, Refuge (T); Charles Rigby, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Violence Intervention Project; Jane Smith, Lucas Ark; Sharon Tomlin, Community Organiser, Old Oak, Sobus; Dr Akima Thomas, Clinical Director, Women and Girls Network

(T) – Attendance by Teams  
The meeting was livestreamed.

**Please note:** *The minutes of this meeting address areas that may be difficult for some people, if the issues raised affect you please go to [Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) | LBHF](#) for further advice and information.*

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Trey Campbell-Simon.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 were agreed.

**4. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAM**

This was a standing item and Mo Basith provided an update with data and completed actions arising from previous meeting held on July 2022, highlighting key areas of performance in undertaking frontline and visible community support. Key highlights were provided in the main report which included performance figures and the high visibility and engagement of Law Enforcement Team (LET) officers and their care and regard for the safety of H&F residents. During quarter two, the LET conducted over 23,806 patrols, an average of over 250 per day at hot spots and areas of concern, received 1433 service requests from residents and businesses were investigated and resolved. LET officers issued 505 fixed penalty notices for issues such as fly tipping littering and highways obstruction. Over five and a half thousand Patrols had been undertaken on housing land and in addition approximately 4000 hours of reassurance patrols were conducted on highways and in district centres with particular emphasis on the Shepherd's Bush and Hammersmith Broadway areas. The LET had also conducted 1154 weapons sweep during their patrols the from July 2022 to September 2022.

Areas of growing demand stemmed from anti-social behaviour (ASB) in parks (appendix 1), much of which was diffused on the scene with LET officers actively engaging with residents in ward areas such as White City and Shepherds Bush. Some of the highlighted completed actions included:

- LET had reached out to every ward councillor and offered site visits, and most had taken up the offer to meet with their local ward LET officer, local meetings, engagement, attending the tenants and residents association meetings;
- LET contact details had been posted at the Monk Street housing office, as requested; and
- LET had engaged with the youth council to explore concerns and identify areas for improvement.

Neil Thurlow commended the work of the LET which had supported several high profile events such as the Queens cortege as it passed through Hammersmith, bank holiday weekend, and Remembrance Day weekend. The two way communication and dialogue between LET officers and residents was essential.

Councillor Omid Miri welcomed the performance update, actions and commended the work undertaken. With reference to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), a breakdown of LET officers by gender was requested, and information about specific training has been given in relation to VAWG, as with mental health training. Mo Basith explained that there were few female LET officers however support had been sought from the council's equalities leads to actively tackle the underrepresentation of women in the team and a new female recruit would be joining the team shortly. It was confirmed that all LET officers had undertaken VAWG training.

Councillor Miri asked how officers sought to identify and engage with women and girls in fear of violence and who might need assistance, noting that there were many in the meeting who could offer advice and guidance about this. Mo Basith described an incident where LET officers had supported a drunk female and remained with her until a family member arrived. LET patrols were highly targeted, recognising areas of need and how this correlated to specific events such as the end of a Fulham football club training session, or entertainment areas in the evening.

Councillor Andrew Dinsmore referred to paragraph 8 of the report and the weapons sweep which had recovered 1154 weapons including 5 knives. He welcomed this and further asked about the efficiency of the sweeps and how this could be improved. Mo Basith responded that weapons sweeps were part of patrolling and although more weapons had recently been found it would be good to see this improved. Every weapon recovered amplified the level of safety that residents would benefit from. A gathering at Bishops Park recently had been dispersed and hidden weapons had later been found in the park so this was regarded as a positive result. Referring to paragraph 15 of the report, Councillor Dinsmore sought clarification about the 1089 ASB patrols, of which 60% required no further action. Mo Basith explained that the 60% figure covered incidents where LET officers had arrived on the scene to find that there was no ASB taking place, or that it had ceased. However, the patrols continued to return to the site and monitor. With regards to paragraph 15b, up to 33% of requests indicated engagement with an individual or group, with 16% classified as no action required. Mo Basith clarified that the remaining 7% may be a dispersal or another task following an engagement with a resident.

Highlighting an issue raised at the July meeting of the committee, it was recognised that there were increased rates of violent crime in London and that part of the LET officers role was to corroborate the finding of weapons or mugging incidents as professional witnesses. Councillor Dinsmore enquired if the LET would benefit from more police support or if officers felt that they were sufficiently well equipped with resources and training to undertake these roles. Mo Basith believed that support from the police and the training were adequate and given that LET officers also operated as a deterrent, a continuous uniformed presence was a benefit to residents who could feel safer. Timing and locating patrols in high footfall areas meant that officers were well placed to actively respond.

Councillor Nikos Souslous referred to paragraph 19 of the report on LET surgeries and sought further information about how these were delivered. Mo Basith explained that the surgeries would be held at Shepherds Bush and Fulham libraries on the first, second and third Monday of each month and attended by local ward LET officers.

The surgeries would be advertised on social media, in the libraries, and on the council website. It was noted that some ward councillor surgeries had sought the support of LET officers to ensure the safety of members. Councillor Souslous encouraged the LET officers to reach out to members with the offer of walkabouts and site visits, and potentially attend surgeries where that would be appropriate. Officers welcomed this, subject to the availability of ward LET officers and shift patterns. The local ward knowledge of LET officers would be an invaluable support to members.

An ongoing consultation on responsible dog ownership was referred to by Councillor Souslous who sought further information. Neil Thurlow explained that this related to public space protection orders (PSPO) similar to the borough wide restrictions on street drinking. There was also an option to implement localised amplification of important space protection orders and one that was currently being consulted on was a borough wide dog control order. This was launched around 18 November and would run until mid-January 2023 and the engagement aimed to include a range of views. Work was being undertaken with the communications team to promote the consultation and to highlight what a PSPO consisted of in terms of the range of prohibitions and what this would mean for dog owners. An analysis of the data and community responses would then be evaluated to inform a range of recommendations for Councillor Rebecca Harvey to consider. To date, about 150 responses had been received, and subject to the level of support, work would then begin to apply for and implement the PSPO.

## **ACTION**

LET Enforcement Manager to provide a figure for the number of female LET officers.

## **RESOLVED**

That the LET performance updated was noted.

## **5. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GANGS, VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION UNIT**

### The Gangs, Violence and Exploitation Unit – Gemma Lightfoot

The Chair welcomed Gemma Lightfoot and colleagues from voluntary sector, Michael Defoe and Charlie Rigby. Gemma Lightfoot briefly described the remit of the Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit (GVEU) established in 2020, responding to increased rates of violent crime and with a primary focus on serious youth crime working with young people between the ages of 10 to 25 years in the borough. The team's staffing structure included a dedicated data analyst, two anti-social behaviour (ASB) co-ordinators and four outreach workers. Outreach support work aligned with a need for enforcement through injunctions and behaviour orders, and this work was underpinned by proactive and reactive criminal network analysis.

The breadth and depth of the GVEU remit was set out in the report and emphasised the value and importance of early intervention in addition to enforcement, as indicated by key performance indicators across the community (not just young people). The primary aim was to reduce violent crime committed by young people.

Key data highlights were set out in paragraph 26 and 28 of the report and in addition, included:

- Outreach work with 1500 young people
- 251 Norton classified domestic violence assault of injuries or murder offences committed by young people aged between 10-24 years, October 2021 to September 2022
- Following three unrelated murders in 2019, there had not been a murder recorded in the borough since February 2021(paragraph 25)

Reported in paragraph 30 of the report, data on serious injuries caused by youth violence explicitly demonstrated that this was a difficult period of post-pandemic recovery. The pandemic had greatly impacted crime figures and it was important to understand this in the broader context of the Unit's operational work. Paragraph 34 of the report detailed the development work undertaken to produce a vulnerability tracker, collaborating with youth justice colleagues, police and colleagues in children's services. There was a clear correlation between vulnerable young people, and gangs and exploitation linked violence. The tracker allowed the GVEU to implement early interventions and preventative work with young people at the earliest opportunity.

A key success was a bid to the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), MOPAC (Mayors Office for Policing and Crime). The funding would support targeted interventions in South Fulham as there were serious concerns about youth crime in the area. Community empowerment to utilise the Council's new Sands End Arts & Community Centre (SEACC) was welcomed by parents of young people in the area with coffee mornings that offered a safe space to meet and talk. The funding also supported a late night youth project on Friday evenings, based at Sands End Youth Club and delivered by The Harrow Club.

The totality of the programme delivered in Sands End showcased the value of preventative work and investment to achieve the dual outcomes of protecting young people and developing a safe and supportive community environment through a range of projects, including one that had successfully channelled and nurtured the musical and creative interests of young people. Due to the success of the project, an additional £25k was awarded by the VRU. It was acknowledged that listening to and engaging with young people was critical in successfully delivering interventions. Completed and future initiatives also included:

- A half term residential break
- Advice and guidance to vulnerable young people and their families, in advance of the Notting Hill Carnival (the first time the event had run since the pandemic)
- A project with the Lyceum Gym
- A youth club in White City
- The Fearless project, with Crimestoppers (the project had led to another successful funding bid which was allocated to support the council's Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) work)
- Gloves not guns - to deliver two sport and dance activities in White City

The GVEU recognised the importance working in collaboration with young people, families and the wider community to address violent crime and the sector wide impact of this, particularly in light of future legislative changes in relation to serious violence.

#### The Harrow Club – Michael Defoe

Michael Defoe commended the work of the GVEU and outlined the work of The Harrow Club, a charity that worked with young people to address serious youth crime and violence and based in both H&F and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). Early intervention work was instrumental in preventing serious violence which proactively succeeded in helping to reduce serious youth crime, as exemplified by the work at the Sands End Arts & Community Centre and the late night youth club based there. This was critical project in stemming the flow of serious youth crime and helped to divert young people from the potentially life changing repercussions of a violence dominated environment. Targeted mentoring was a fundamental part of this, recognising that interventions could not be delivered in isolation. Much of this was possible through collaborative and partnership work with GVEU outreach officers and partners such as the Violence Intervention Project (VIP), sharing collective responsibility for engaging with young people that were at risk of being vulnerable to joining a gang or being exploited.

#### The Violence Intervention Project – Charles Rigby

Charles Rigby described the beginnings of VIP, triggered by the 2007 fatal stabbing of Kodjo Yenga, a young refugee from Congo, in Hammersmith Grove. What followed was a prolonged period of outreach work which eventually identified a need for a more therapeutic intervention to working with young people. The charity was built around the notion that “shame is the catalyst of violence”. Young people expressed acts of violence as being rooted in disrespect or feeling violated but ultimately this was about being made to feel small and resorting to violence in order to release those emotions. VIP was eventually established in 2017, predicated on utilising therapeutic elements, with initial funding agreed by the then Director of Children’s Services, Steve Miley, and additional funding later provided by the Mayor of London. A team was built to offer clinical supervision on a weekly basis in either practice development or direct supervision and had led to the coining of the term “shame informed practice”. Charles Rigby emphasised the importance of working with other boroughs given the cross borough links with young people gravitating from neighbouring areas and reiterated the value of collaborative partnership working, avoiding siloed practices.

There was a key concern about adolescents reaching their twenties and to move them away from street based gang related behaviour. However, systemic trauma and damage often manifested itself through substance misuse, gambling addiction or suicidal ideation. Moving forward, the charity was keen to secure future funding for over 18s and partner with other organisations to support young people and encourage them away from a gangs based lifestyle.

Councillor Andrew Dinsmore thanked the organisations for their commitment and hard work. He described his recent court experience in attending the trial of person who had attacked him. At aged 21 years, this individual had a history of 26

convictions and lacked literacy skills. It was noted that the work of VIP and The Harrow Club had a life-changing impact on diverting young people from a life of violence. Councillor Dinsmore asked about the handling of intelligence data and how this informed police led operations and the work of the police generally. Gemma Lighthouse explained that intelligence was communicated to the police whom they worked closely with, as evidenced by the Fearless campaign. Charles Rigby explained that information was shared sensitively but it was acknowledged that young people wanted to share intelligence to prevent violence or criminal activities, and this had led to operations to close county lines or the legislative closure of properties.

Councillor Dinsmore referred to paragraph 60 of the report and the concerns highlighted about areas such as South Fulham and White City. Expanding on this, Gemma Lighthouse explained that £68k of funds from the VRU for capacity building required an area specific focus. The localities were identified where there had been evidence of a clear pattern of serious youth violence and intelligence that linked to the exploitation of young people. The value of the council's work and enhanced response had been evidenced in successful collaborative work with the police and other council departments.

Councillor Omid Miri sought further information about the VIP's therapeutic work with children and young people who had been traumatised by their experiences, and referenced the definition of a "thug", as a "traumatised human unable to grieve" as coined by James Gilligan, psychiatrist and author. Gemma Lightfoot acknowledged the impact of violence on a young persons mental health. The GVEU aimed to appoint a mental health practitioner and offer this as an option for those who did not want to access more conventional mental health services. Councillor Miri observed that there was a fine line between socialisation and criminal behaviour and queried whether repeated approaches by LET officers could trigger further trauma and alienation. In response Gemma Lightfoot explained that detached outreach workers engaged with young people to build trust. A potential target could be exploited and taken advantage and groups like VIP offered an alternative and safer route for engagement. The Harrow Club outreach workers had all undertaken trauma informed training and had worked with many young people throughout the pandemic through detached outreach to encourage them and engage with them positively to build trust.

Building trusted relationships was fundamental to successful collaborative work. Commenting on the value of community policing, Charles Rigby observed that a strong community relationship with the police was likely to encourage greater trust. Young people who had experienced difficulties with the police would be less likely to have that trust and therefore turn to those seeking to exploit them. Councillor Souslous highlighted the activities of People Arise Now, where a football game had been organised for young people in Sutton with the local police force as a positive example. Gemma Lightfoot commented that just before the meeting started she agreed with People Arise Now to host a similar event in Hammersmith & Fulham. Councillor Miri welcomed the approach, with LET engagement activities on the Bayonne estate, in Fulham Reach, a known ASB area, which he attended being good examples of positive community policing or mentorship.

Councillor Souslous asked each of the speakers what their proudest achievements were, what would they do if they were provided unlimited resources, and what did they feel that the council could improve on in the context of this work. Charles Rigby felt that it had been a significant achievement to secure funding from MOPAC and that unlimited funding would secure the future of all third sector organisations working in this area. Gemma Lightfoot responded that it was a significant achievement to work with a group of young men in South Fulham and although it was difficult to evidence the outcomes, the intervention of GVEU had positively altered the life courses of these young people and their families. Unlimited funding alongside long-term planning and continued commitment to the Unit's aims would allow this work to carry on, delivering commissioned projects from with enhanced capacity from having a larger team. Councillor Souslous emphasised that the Council was proud of the work of the GVEU and was committed to supporting its work.

Due to technical difficulties, Councillor Emma Apthorp's comments and question were read out to the committee. Councillor Apthorp welcomed the funding to projects such as those tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and highlighted the importance of recognising the consequences of gender-based violence in the context of youth crime. Councillor Apthorp asked about the impact of tracking serious youth crime and sought reassurance about respecting the privacy of young people. Gemma Lightfoot responded that intelligence was entered into a "vulnerability tracker" which adhered to GDPR requirements and was distinct from a "gang violence matrix", identifying those that might be vulnerable to gang violence and exploitation. It offered clearer insights into what practitioners or outreach workers could do to support young people.

Councillor Dinsmore asked to what extent the glorification of violence in film, music and in the media impacted on young people's perceptions about violence, touching on the concept of shame referenced by Charles Rigby. There was a recognition that the narrative arc in films such as Die Hard and Lethal Weapon reflected the human predisposition towards violence, although this was "Hollywood violence" and more extreme. The impact on individuals who had experienced trauma, abuse or neglect was amplified as aspects of it such as shame mirrored their life experiences and reality. The perpetuation of violence came as much from first hand experiences as from the influence of the media, but the latter was not the only root cause. Michael Defoe touched on the influence of Drill and rap music, as a reflection of the poor homelife experience of some young people who then might use violence as means to achieving fulfilment or gaining control, as they saw no other alternative but to perpetuate what was portrayed in unfiltered arts and social mediums. Gemma Lightfoot acknowledged that there was an element of glorifying violence and recounted the experiences of young people in H&F who had seen the success of Drill music artists from RBKC and whose music contained serious threats to each other. The council had worked in partnership with the police to address this through successfully implementing criminal behaviour orders and recognised the work of Rebel Records, where creating music was not predicated on encouraging violence.

Councillor Souslous thanked Councillor Dinsmore for his petition campaigning against the sale of machetes on Amazon and which had already received over 125k signatures.



## **RESOLVED**

That the report was noted.

### **6. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

#### Council's strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls – Beth Morgan

Councillor Nikos Souslous welcome Beth Morgan and a range of organisations who kindly contributed to the discussion. The council's response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been a key administration commitment and 2021 saw the appointment of Annabel Moores, Violence Against Women and Girls Lead followed by the publication of the council's coproduced VAWG strategy 2022-25 in March 2022 setting out a five year action plan (included in the agenda pack). A fundamental aspect of the work was that it adopted a co-ordinated community response incorporating multiple agency support involving all partners and not just the council in tackling offences. Focusing on the three key elements of refuge and safe accommodation, commissioning of domestic abuse support services (Angelou Partnership) and survivor consultation (Women and Girls Network) the approach emphasised collaborative engagement between partners in addition to placing survivor engagement at the heart of the commissioning process. Performance monitoring data was appended to the report.

Beth Morgan also announced that since the publication of the agenda the Greater London Authority Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Fund had verbally confirmed funding in H&F for 2023/24.

Consideration of the report by the Committee had been timed to coincide with the annual, international 16 days of activism event which would run from 25 November – 10 December 2022. This aimed to highlight gender-based violence, and this year also overlapped with the commencement of the men's football World Cup. High profile football tournaments and similar events unfortunately often also recorded a spike in domestic abuse offenses. Local events to mark the 16 days of activism had been scheduled and a final list would shortly be confirmed. These included a workshop on allyship and bystander intervention looking at the role of the community in tackling abuse against women and girls, particularly in the public realm. Webinars for practitioners were also planned which aimed to raise awareness of harmful practices, the "Ask Angela" scheme was being further promoted with licensed premises across the borough and the council was also hosting an event in solidarity with women in Iran. A communications campaign to raise awareness about VAWG services was also being implemented.

#### Advance – Laura Dix

Laura Dix outlined the work of the organisation, established in 1998, with their main offices located in H&F. The two key aims of the charity were to support women who had experienced domestic abuse and who also had experience of navigating the criminal justice system, often there was a crossover with women going through both experiences. The Angelou Partnership worked as a consortium of organisations, which included Advance, to collectively support women and girls who experienced

domestic violence and abuse (DVA). Advance consisted of independent domestic violence advisors who worked with women aged 13 plus. Typically, advisors worked with individuals for about 3-6 months, walking alongside the person during what was potentially the most challenging time in their lives and complemented by specialist advisors providing support on mental health and substance misuse. The consortium consisted of a range of partners with different areas of expertise and the aim was to offer provision according to need. Solace Women's Aid supported women and girls who had experienced sexual violence, Galop provided advocacy and casework support for LGBT+ people who experienced abuse and violence. Al-Hasaniya, was a Moroccan Women's Centre serving the health, welfare, educational and cultural needs of Moroccan and Arabic-speaking women and their families, and IKWRO, Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, worked to combat discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Laura Dix described the referral service offered and how the organisation could be contacted by women or practitioners, with access to tailored support across the consortium based on need, signposted and supported in accessing provision. An increase in domestic abuse cases had been observed as increasing throughout the period of the pandemic with significant casework pressures arising from waiting lists with mental health being a related factor and demand for therapeutic support which was oversubscribed. The cost of living crisis was also having a significant impact and an impediment as women struggled to meet the cost of public transport to attend advice centres, one solution for which was online provision to improve accessibility.

#### Women and Girls Network – Dr Akima Thomas

Dr Akima Thomas outlined the work of the WGN, which was currently responsible for conducting a consultation, details of which had been previously circulated to the committee and commended by Councillor Souselous. Based in H&F and established for 32 years the organisation delivered a London-wide, integrated provision of services which included individual and group therapeutic services. This also included a specialist sexual violence advisory team, and a West London Rape Crises service, which was open to all survivors of sexual violence. In addition to these core services, Dr Thomas commended the council for commissioning the organisation to develop the consultation which intended to support survivors by developing an independent advisory panel to include the voices of vulnerable and marginalised communities. A better understanding of the survivors' experience could then help shape future provision. An added layer of accountability and transparency would also strengthen policy and commissioning decisions. The opportunity to create greater equity by including the survivors' voice and doing so at a strategic level was a bold approach, which also facilitated an intersectional exploration of those communities and women who did not come forward to access survivor and VAWG services.

Acknowledging the inherent difficulties in navigating the criminal justice system, Councillor Andrew Dinsmore commended the work and asked contributors if they had observed any improvement in the past 12-14 years. Dr Thomas responded that any improvement had been negated by the pandemic and further deteriorated as a consequence. Survivors of sexual violence currently waited for about 5 years for a court date which was described as horrendous. A significant amount of work and resources were required to improve police and Crown Prosecution Service support, and, despite changes to the law, any therapeutic notes still required disclosure as

the case proceeded through the courts. Laura Dix explained that it was hard for women to disclose sexual DVA, and difficult to ascertain risk from family members due to coercion. Experiences were disclosed as a result of developing trust which was fragile. There was much work to be done at a societal level and a longer term approach was required to embed, develop and sustain services. Recognising the potentially devastating consequences for survivors when a trial collapsed, Laura Dix added her personal view that jurors be offered training on understanding DVA.

Beth Morgan added that barriers included the common and sometimes mistaken perception that sexual abuse was perpetrated by a stranger rather than a family member, a narrative that made it harder for a woman to disclose sexual and violent abuse. In terms of holding perpetrators to account, it was explained that operational groups consisting of multiagency representatives did view accessibility to the criminal justice system and retain oversight of the system. H&F had also commissioned the Impact project, a co-located project working with women who were engaging with the criminal justice system in relation to DVA court cases. Training was also offered to police officers as part of the project to help them to understand the complexities. Looking forward, the intention was to grow the project by working with perpetrators and undertake early prevention work.

Councillor Miri thanked the organisations for the work being undertaken and observed that while it was obviously right that VAWG focused on women and girls, he asked what the long term solution would be to prevent DVA from occurring, for example, by offering education for young people or outreach work in schools and communities, and how cultural barriers could be overcome. Dr Thomas replied that this was a broad and difficult question to answer, however, it linked to understanding the roots of violence, the impact of social inequality and coercive power, and how the community could respond to this through either legislative sanctions, or education by raising awareness and preventative work, both of which were key. Societal change in terms of addressing the gender power imbalance was required at a basic level and needed to be tackled with resources. The lack of progress in the criminal justice system was frustrating but some fundamental societal changes were required to improve equity.

Laura Dix concurred with Dr Thomas's view and stated that a multipronged approach centred around prevention was important in tackling the social narrative in popular culture and the media around "possessing" a partner. She advocated the need for raising awareness in schools as one way of tackling this at source. The work undertaken by WGN and similar organisations was very hard, and whilst the commendations, support and acknowledgement of the great results achieved in supporting women were welcome, these were gendered crimes rooted in inequality and prevention was the key.

Beth Morgan agreed that gendered-based prevention work was fundamental, together with health focused work, requiring a community coordinated response with zero tolerance of gender based violence. Changing challenging behaviour and defining the role of men as allies was gaining traction, together with bystander intervention as there were small actions that communities could collectively undertake to positively intervene. Anticipated specialist project work with young

people was about early intervention so that challenging behaviour traits could be addressed early on before issues escalated.

Sarah Lumgair described the work of People Arise Now with those who have experienced DVA and one of the barriers highlighted has been the need to recount their experiences on multiple occasions to multiple people and she asked if there was a way to limit this to one initial statement that could be shared across services. Dr Thomas concurred that this would be the ideal but recognised the limitations of this as each service operated with different remits. For example, a survivor may present at WGN initially, and an advisor would collect and capture information about their case, which might not have been reported so that there was a potential safeguarding issue to consider. As the person moved to counselling services, Dr Thomas hoped that a second retelling did not fundamentally re-traumatise the individual and might even be beneficial for some, at a therapeutic level. One of the ways in which a survivor could tell their story was not about interrogating the truth of their experience and what had happened but was more reflective. The difficulty was that not all services were equipped to respond appropriately.

Laura Dix agreed and continued that one of the benefits of the Angelou Partnership was oversight from a range of organisation collaborating within the partnership with one “front door” access to all of the organisations using one referral form. This was not the case previously where an individual might have had to approach one organisation, been assessed for an hour, and then referred on to another more suitable service and then have to retell their story again. A person now received a short, initial assessment and then be referred to the most appropriate services. The Angelou Partnership was relatively unique in offering this innovative and forward thinking approach. Advance was often contacted by women who sought a letter of support about their circumstances from a GP, family court or social housing service and this was provided based on the notes of their particular case history. Beth Morgan concurred and recognised that as service providers, the complexities of some systems were an added burden that could be improved upon by removing barriers through simplifying organisational structures and processes, supporting a woman through their journey.

Councillor Souslous welcomed the comments, acknowledging that the removal of barriers to ease access to services, and to reduce the impact and trauma as consequence of a woman having to retell their story was an important priority. Councillor Rebecca Harvey recounted her experience of the advice sector, where individuals were provided with a letter explaining the reason why they had sought advice or support and outlining what had been offered to them as next steps. This was valuable as it empowered the person to take ownership of the systems they were navigating.

A further question from Sarah Lumgair sought to understand whether restorative justice was facilitated by any of the organisations, particularly where a person needed support in navigating the criminal justice system. Beth Morgan responded that a fuller response to this question would be more helpful and offered to follow up after the meeting.

Councillor Dinsmore was interested to understand what challenging or misogynistic behaviour in school age pupils looked like and the preventative measures could be implemented to counteract this. Beth Morgan explained there was a new initiative being rolled out in schools led by Children's Services called the Bambu project. Funded by the VRU, details about the two year project were provided, to be delivered by Domestic Violence Intervention Project and Rise Mutual and that further information about this could be provided.

Councillor Souslous asked the organisations what achievements they were most proud of, what they might do if offered the resources and what could the council do more of to assist. Dr Thomas responded that the establishment of an independent advisory panel was their greatest achievement. It represented a healing arc, beginning with a woman entering a service and realising the ambitions of empowerment and co-production. The testimony of survivors could support other survivors, raising awareness for better resources and access to services, greater capacity, more training and specialisms such as the Indigo project supporting survivors with mental health and complex needs. A more holistic approach was sought encompassing group work and therapy to support survivors in services that could be collocated long term, moving them forward from surviving trauma to thriving. Dr Thomas commended H&F for the work undertaken to date, but more commitment was needed that extended beyond scope of investment with a greater focus on VAWG, both in terms of allyship and accountability, and prevention work.

Laura Dix described their biggest achievement as having staff across the Angelou Partnership uniting in response to the pandemic to support survivors, supporting women who were "locked" up in their own homes, hearing difficult stories and still working and supporting each other as a team, and as part of the consortium partnership. More resourcing and investment were needed to support community based prevention work, and to support women the first time that they disclosed their trauma. The right response from the community then would access the right support from services. The inclusion of the item on the agenda was commended and there was encouragement for this focus to continue.

From a local authority perspective, Beth Morgan was most proud of how VAWG had become a key priority across the organisation, extending it beyond a community safety issue and encompassing other services such as children's and environment (housing) and she hoped that this would continue. Offering refuge and safe accommodation was key and her vision for utilising unlimited resources was to see the provision of more self-contained and accessible housing provision.

Due to technical issues Martina Palmer's contribution was communicated by Caterina Giammarresi. Refuge provided DVA support through the Damascus refuge provision, supporting women with children who were fleeing their homes. Crises accommodation was provided to support them initially and to enable them to move onto living independently. The achievement that they were most proud of was to give women a voice, to empower them to be at the forefront of developing survivor services. This not only reflected the way in which provision was delivered but also informed Crises Intervention support and wider lobbying campaigns. Refuge's most recent campaign had successfully lobbied for a change in law making it illegal to threaten to share intimate images, a serious issue in DVA relationships. This had

been supported by coproduction work with survivors, amplifying their concerns and voices. In terms of future work, Martina Palmer echoed the comments of other contributors regarding the need for greater resources and access to safe and suitable accommodation nationally. Access to employment opportunities to ensure independence was another issue and also linked to housing, making it difficult for women to move forward. This, combined meeting the different needs of children that were also affected meant that women remained in refuges for longer because there was no where for them to move onto. Addressing mental health needs post pandemic had become harder as there was extensive waiting time to access therapeutic support services.

Councillor Souslous apologised sincerely to contributors who had joined online for the technical difficulties experienced and invited them to provide any further comments or questions which could be responded to following the meeting. Councillor Patricia Quigley sought further information and clarification regarding the responsible dog ownership PSPO (public space protection order) consultation and why an “easy read” version of the consultation document was not offered, to be provided following the meeting.

Councillor Souslous thanked all contributors for their attendance and participation and the following actions were noted:

## **ACTIONS**

1. For the Community Safety Manager to share details about restorative justice facilitators and how this provision was delivered;
2. For the Community Safety Manger to share information about a new Children’s Services initiative tackling challenging or misogynistic behaviours in schools; and
3. With regards to Agenda Item 4, Annual Performance Report for the Law Enforcement Team, the Assistant Director for Community Safety to provide a response as to why an easy read document was not offered as part of the PSPO consultation.

## **RESOLVED**

That report and actions were noted.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

Committees discussed suggested items for the next meeting which included:

- The council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- To scrutinise the police and their contribution to supporting local communities, and the community organisations they work in partnership with to achieve this;
- Mental Health services in the context of the two items discussed (GVEU and DVA), although it was recognised that this fell within the remit of the Health, Inclusion and Social Care Policy and Accountability;
- The impact of the cost of living on community safety, although it was recognised that this was a key cross cutting theme being tackled across the council; and

- To achieve insights into causal factors of social inclusion by considering the work and contributions of community and faith leaders in helping to prevent crime.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

24 January 2023\*.

*(\*this date was later amended to 1 February 2023)*

Meeting started: 7pm  
Meeting ended: 9.44pm

Chair .....

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