

Cabinet – 15 October 2015 – Response to Question not Reached at Cabinet

6.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Anne Whitehead, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People

Question: “The Domestic and Sexual Violence Update report notes at p.205 that little progress had been made against a number of the objectives in Harrow’s existing Action Plan, due to them having ‘unachievable aims’. Could you provide more information on these objectives and why their aims were considered unachievable?”

Written Response: The report at paragraph 4.5 lists the objectives in the original action that have been amended in the revised plan before Cabinet this evening. The amendments include additional actions, some changed actions and some deleted actions. We have reviewed our plans as new opportunities arise, Pan-London services are developed and priorities are critically re-examined. The report also includes a proposal to let a new and improved contract to provide additional support for people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, with the prospect of bringing earlier interventions.

As regards the changes, I set out some of these below and the reasons, and am happy to give you a fuller response against each of the actions.

To date it has not been possible to recruit and equip community champions to lead community conversations around Domestic Violence. In part, this has been due to delays in putting together an acceptable but provocative publicity campaign to raise community awareness about Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and Honour-based Violence but I have every expectation that a campaign will be ready for the early part of next calendar year at the latest.

Specialist services relating to prostitution and sexual exploitation will now be taken forward through pan London provision.

The original action plan called for a local Perpetrator programme to be established. Harrow currently buy-in places on a programme run by Barnet which provides some economies of scale. The Council is developing an innovative Family Domestic Violence Programme in conjunction with the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relations which will work with both perpetrator and victim. A perpetrator only programme may be developed for

Harrow in future years but is not currently planned.

The Action relating to body worn video evidencing has been deleted on the advice of the Police who stated that the measurement should be detection rates, rather than relying on how often video evidence is used. Body Worn Video is used in the majority of cases to inform the decision as to whether a prosecution will take place.

As an Administration we have prioritised Domestic and Sexual Violence, hence agreeing today this new contract for services in support of those residents who suffer from this unacceptable abuse. We maintain that even in this time of enforced budget cuts from Government that we remain true to our priorities and have aspirations to do more. As I have set out, this has caused us to reflect on the plan agreed last year, but this has not caused us to move away from such an important issue and I call on the Opposition to support our endeavours to make a difference to peoples' lives rather than trying to pick holes in plans which are too important to make political points from.