

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhoods and Community Services

**DATE:** 1 March 2012

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**WARD(S):** Chalvey, Baylis & Stoke

### **PART I**

## **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

### **PROSTITUTION – UPDATE AND FUTURE ACTIONS**

1. **Purpose of Report**

This paper is being submitted as a follow-up to the paper discussed in October 2011 to update on action taken to tackle prostitution as requested by the Panel.

2. **Recommendation/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to comment on the report and future actions as outlined at the end of the report.

3. **Sustainable Communities Strategy Priorities**

- **Safer Communities**
- **Regeneration and Environment**

This report is to update on how the diverse community in Chalvey is being affected by prostitution on its streets and how partners are tackling this by working with the girls involved, making the environment safer and cleaner and enabling all concerned to live in a safe and pleasant environment.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
The Committee is requested to note the report and consider the options available to move forward with tackling prostitution in Slough as outlined at the end of the report.	No threats	N/A

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

No legal implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

No implications.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 **Background**

Residents have long expressed concern at the presence of sex workers on the streets of Chalvey.

Recent conversations between sex workers and the Police and outreach workers seem to uphold the findings of previous research carried out on behalf of the Safer Slough Partnership; although people tend to have varied reasons for working as street sex workers, the following generalisations are helpful for understanding the issue in Slough:

1. There are two distinct groups of street sex workers in Slough – British girls who are local to Slough and who have drink and/or drug addictions, and Romanians who come to the UK to earn as much as they can from prostitution to send home to their families, and who do not have addictions.
2. The sex workers are all women.
3. The good transport links bring regular clients into Slough (for example, airport workers on their way home).
4. The following support would be effective in helping to move women away from sex work:
  - access to treatment
  - safe housing
  - assistance with applying for benefits
  - counselling and support

5. Whilst girls involved in sex work may initially engage with Job Centre Plus and treatment services, their chaotic lifestyles mean they are likely to miss appointments. They may not collect their prescription and their benefits stop if they have not signed on. They may also be unable to hold down secure accommodation.

## 5.2 Issues discussed and concerns raised at the last meeting were as follows:

Issue	Outcome of discussion	Current situation
Why Slough attracts prostitution	The British sex workers are born and bred in Slough so it is close to home for them. Romanian girls came here due to the good transport links, near Heathrow etc. Also it is hard to deter them via Police enforcement due to changes in legislation.	Enforcement activity with UK Border Agency (UKBA) seems to have deterred Romanians from coming back to Slough – will need to monitor this. Support and engagement work with British girls looking positive (see 5.4.2 below)
Use of ASBOs	ASBOs need a vast amount of evidence, which is very hard to collect due to changes in legislation (e.g. street cautions – need three in a three-month period before an arrest can be made). Courts see sex workers as the victims.	As before.
How best to tackle kerb crawlers	Warning letters e.g. from CCTV intelligence, and prosecutions when operations are run. Discussions with Reading re. possibility of sharing their 'Change' programme.	Change programme will provide education to kerb crawlers around the wider issue of sex working – but only if numbers are sufficient and courses are self-funding and run regularly. We will continue to monitor and review the situation.
Reporting levels	Reporting levels are low despite the anecdotal evidence from residents – need people to report on Police non-emergency 101 number.	Reporting levels are still low however this is most likely because numbers of sex workers and therefore kerb crawlers have dropped.
Displacement	Evidence of displacement to Baylis & Stoke ward (Stoke Poges Lane, Pickford Gardens, Lansdowne Avenue, Bradley Road)	As before, there is still evidence of displacement to Baylis & Stoke ward but numbers are low and outreach workers and Police are

		engaging with the sex workers in this location (about 6 girls, no new ones) and they are all on the Sex Workers Action Group (SWAG) case management agenda.
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**5.3 What we have done since the last meeting (October 2011):**

- 5.3.1 A council-led Thames Valley-wide Forum has been set up, comprising Milton Keynes, High Wycombe, Reading, Oxford and Slough. This forum met on 11 January and is meeting again on 29 March. The Forum will share ideas and resources, and organise cross-borough training, for example, on supporting sex workers, which the Ministry of Justice provides (see Appendix A for training flyer).
- 5.3.2 The Thames Valley Police Strategy (2008-2011) has now been replaced locally with a partnership action plan for 2011-13 (see Appendix B). This has been put together by the local Neighbourhood Police Inspector with input from partners. It covers four strands: prevention/support, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance.

Work already in progress and arising from the action plan includes:

Strand	Activities taking place
Prevention of ASB related to prostitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted patrols – outreach workers and Police regularly engaging with sex workers</li> <li>• Town hall slip road now blocked off preventing use by kerb crawlers to circle area</li> <li>• Equinox (currently residential detox) is becoming a hostel for those with addictions and support needs and will have emergency as well as long term accommodation</li> </ul>
Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing with partners and neighbouring Boroughs e.g. Ealing, Reading</li> <li>• Use of targeted CCTV operations to identify kerb crawlers and sex workers (see 5.4.5 below)</li> </ul>
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warning letters and street cautions issued (see 5.4.1 below)</li> <li>• Working with UKBA – five letters served on Romanian sex workers, all have now left</li> </ul>

	Slough (see 5.4.6 below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerb crawler prosecutions and publicity of outcomes e.g. £1000 fines</li> </ul>
Reassurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prostitution is being kept as neighbourhood priority and on agenda for sector tasking meetings</li> <li>• Police attend residents' meetings and update as appropriate</li> <li>• Regular police presence in known 'hotspots'</li> </ul>

#### 5.4 How the situation has changed

5.4.1 We have the following prostitution-related figures for Chalvey. Figures for September 2011-February 2012 are considerably lower than January-June 2011:

	Jan-June 2011	Sept 11-Feb 12
Reporting figures for Chalvey	28	13
Sex workers on streets - British	10	7
Sex workers on streets - Romanian	10	2
Street cautions issued	23	14
Kerb crawler warning letters	16	9
UKBA letters issued to Romanian sex workers	n/a	5

5.4.2 According to the latest SWAG meeting, two more girls have come off the streets bringing the total to four. All street sex workers are now referred to the SWAG case management meetings and the seven British girls known to be working on the streets were all discussed at the case management meeting on 3 February. Of these, two have not turned up to appointments (this is being followed up by the Neighbourhood Police Officer who is able to engage with them) and the other five are engaging well. We have discovered that there is a domestic violence/'pimp' scenario in one case which outreach workers are hoping a detox in another part of the country will resolve.

5.4.3 According to Police and CCTV operators, the number of sex workers in Chalvey has noticeably dropped. This is partly due to the Romanian sex workers who returned home for Christmas not returning so far (perhaps put off by the UK Border agency's targeted action). There is evidence of displacement to Bradley Road/Stoke Poges Lane which Police and outreach workers are aware of (see 5.2 above).

- 5.4.4 The number of kerb crawlers has also noticeably reduced in Chalvey, and with the closure of the old town hall slip road and the changes to the road system, it is increasingly impractical to circle the Montem Lane/Ledgers Road/A4 route. Also as the girls do not seem to be frequenting this area, there is no 'market' there.
- 5.4.5 A CCTV operation ran for three months in order to gather intelligence and enforce legislation aimed at kerb crawlers, and also to identify any sex workers loitering (which could be used as evidence of 'persistent loitering'). This involved operators, between the hours of 9pm and 5am, scanning the hot spot streets for cars circling the area repeatedly and likely to be kerb crawlers, but this did not produce any new evidence or convictions (although it did produce some intelligence and kerb crawler letters were sent out). No enforcement action has been taken due to the lack of activity or suitable evidence and no ASBOs are being pursued.
- 5.4.6 The UKBA issued five letters to Romanian sex workers inviting them to interview to look at their situation and whether they are exercising their treaty rights. They did not turn up and they were due for arrest and removal from the UK although left of their own accord. However if they return they are still liable for arrest and removal as this counts as a holiday and the UK their place of abode. n.b. Removal is not the same as deportation and they would be able to return to the UK after removal if they wished to do so. The UKBA would have to allow them three months to show they are exercising their treaty rights before reissuing letters.

## 5.5 Future work

Activity	How this will help successful future outcomes
SWAG group to report to Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) and continue to work on action plan	The comprehensive action plan covers all areas of work required for successfully tackling the problem of sex working. Reporting to SSP will require accountability and provide top-level support for our work. It will also ensure coordination with, and buy-in from, partners. Regular update reports will be produced.
Monitor recently commissioned Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) services	This will enable us to spot any gaps in service which we will then endeavour to fill.
Community engagement through residents' meetings and newsletters (which could also go online), to be agreed with residents. The importance of reporting to be emphasised.	This will ensure a two-way communication between residents, Police and partners providing reassurance that action is being taken, reporting on results and getting feedback on residents' perceptions of the problem.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

N/A

7. **Conclusion**

This report gives an update of the work taking place in Slough to tackle prostitution and looks at how we can work together in the future to reduce the problem still further. It would be helpful to hear the views of Panel members and meeting attendees as to how they view the current situation.

8. **Appendices Attached**

A - SWICC training flyer

B - Partnership action plan

C - Case study

9. **Background Papers**

Prostitution – Current Challenges and Future Actions (Report to Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, 24 October 2011)