

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

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WARD(S): Chalvey, Baylis & Stoke

Portfolio: Councillor Munawar – Commissioner for Community and Leisure

PART I

FOR INFORMATION

PROSTITUTION – UPDATE AND FUTURE ACTIONS

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide an update on action taken to tackle prostitution in Slough.

2. **Recommendation**

2.1 The Panel is requested to note:

- a) the report and future actions as outlined at the end of the report; and
- b) that officers will bring back a report should the current situation change.

3. **Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Safer Communities**

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. **Background**

4.1 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. The good transport links bring regular clients into Slough (for example, airport workers on their way home), with the main ‘hotspots’ traditionally being Chalvey (around Ledgers Road and Montem Lane) and Stoke and Baylis (on Stoke Poges Lane).

4.2 Issues discussed and concerns raised at previous scrutiny panels

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) is ongoing to tackle and deter the Romanian sex workers. Support and engagement work with British girls is still looking positive and the female outreach report worker carries out regular outreach (see 6.2 below)
Use of ASBOs	ASBOs need a vast amount of evidence, which is very hard to collect due to changes in legislation (eg street cautions – need 3 in a 3-month period before an arrest can be made). Courts see sex workers as the victims.	As before. Officers will consider ASBOs, however it is a long process to get to court and ASBOs are not always appropriate.
How best to tackle kerb crawlers	Warning letters eg from CCTV intelligence, and prosecutions when operations are run. Discussions with Reading re possibility of sharing their 'Change' programme. The 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.	At present there are not sufficient numbers to warrant a programme. We will continue to monitor and review the situation. Kerb crawling warning letters sent out when suspicious activity is observed.
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, and because residents are reassured that Police and Local Authority are tackling prostitution with all available powers and resources. Reporting to be encouraged.
Displacement	Evidence of displacement to Baylis & Stoke ward (Stoke Poges	As before, there is still evidence of displacement to Baylis & Stoke ward but numbers are

	Lane, Pickford Gardens, Lansdowne Avenue, Bradley Road)	comparatively low (around 8-10 rather than 30 as has been seen previously) Outreach workers and Police are engaging with the sex workers in this location and the British girls are all on the Sex Workers Action Group (SWAG) case management agenda.
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4.3 What has been done since the last Panel discussion (March 2012):

- The council-led Thames Valley-wide Prostitution Strategy Forum, comprising Milton Keynes, High Wycombe, Reading, Oxford and Slough, continues to meet quarterly. Members of this group attended a very useful conference at South Bank University in November which looked at best practice and supportive engagement.
- A Communications Plan has been produced and this is due to be implemented in 2013.
- The Thames Valley Police Strategy (2008-2011) was replaced locally with a partnership Action Plan for 2011-13 (see appendix B) which continues to be monitored. It covers four strands: prevention/support, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance.

4.4 Work 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"> • Targeted patrols – outreach workers and Police regularly engaging with sex workers • Town hall slip road now blocked off preventing use by kerb crawlers to circle area • Equinox (currently residential detox) is now a hostel for those with addictions and support needs and has emergency as well as long term accommodation
Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing with partners and neighbouring boroughs eg Ealing, Hounslow, Reading • Use of targeted CCTV operations to identify kerb crawlers and sex workers

Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning letters and street cautions issued (see 5.4.1 below) • Working with UKBA to serve letters served on Romanian sex workers, (see 5.4.3 below) • Kerb crawler prosecutions and publicity of outcomes eg £1000 fines
Reassurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitution is being kept as a Safer Slough Partnership priority and on agenda for Police sector tasking meetings • Police attend residents' meetings and update as appropriate • Regular police presence in known 'hotspots'

6. Changes in Situation

6.1 The latest figures we have are as follows. (Please note that reporting levels have decreased since the last reporting period, and the number of sex workers on the streets has gone up):

	Jan-June 2011	Sept 11-Feb 12	June 12-Nov 12
Reporting figures for Chalvey	28	13	8
Sex workers on streets - British	10	7	8
Sex workers on streets - Romanian	10	2	6
Street cautions issued	23	14	23
Kerb crawler warning letters	16	9	6
UKBA letters issued to Romanian sex workers	n/a	5	6

6.2 According to the latest SWAG meeting, 6 British girls have come off the streets and gone into rehab or moved out of the area to a refuge. All street sex workers are referred to the SWAG case management meetings. Numbers of British girls remain constant as there are some with very chaotic lives who are not ready to exit street sex work, although most will engage with outreach workers and the Police. It is important to note that girls will only seek help and exit prostitution when they feel ready, and support is there when they need it in the meantime.

6.3 The number of Romanian girls has recently increased. This may be because of recent operations in neighbouring boroughs. The UKBA has issued 5 letters to

Romanian sex workers inviting them to interview to look at their situation and whether they are exercising their treaty rights. If they do not turn up they will be due for arrest and removal from the UK. (Note: 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. Cross-borough work with Hounslow and Ealing is ongoing.

6.4 The number of kerb crawlers had previously reduced in Chalvey, due to the closure of the old town hall slip road and the changes to the road system, which made it impractical to circle the Montem Lane/Ledgers Road/A4 route. This is being monitored by Police and a request has been submitted to reinstate the CCTV camera to Ledgers Road.

6.5 According to Police the number of sex workers in Chalvey has dropped. There is evidence of displacement to Bradley Road/Stoke Poges Lane which Police and outreach workers are aware of (see 4.2 above). This most likely due to the closure of the old town hall slip road and kerb crawlers going elsewhere (see above 6.4).

7. Ongoing work

Activity	How this will help successful future outcomes	Update
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.	Last update report to SSP June 2012.
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	DAAT services are working well and the female outreach worker post and Equinox, which has emergency accommodation, are particularly effective in the strategy to tackle prostitution
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.	Police update residents as appropriate and encourage reporting in order to identify times and locations where there is a problem.

8. **Conclusion**

- 8.1 Ongoing work is taking place to tackle prostitution in the borough. The main hotspot was originally Chalvey, however various factors have seen the number of complaints reduce in this location and, whilst there is still activity in Baylis & Stoke Ward the number of complaints regarding this location is very low, Police activity and outreach is still focused on tackling the problem. The action plan is ongoing and the partnership remains committed to keeping prostitution as a priority.

9. **Appendices Attached**

A - Partnership Action Plan

10. **Background Papers**

None.