

## CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 29 March 2018 at 5.00pm at The Park Inn, Forgegate, Telford

PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY, 6 APRIL 2018

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: WEDNESDAY, 11 APRIL 2018)

**Present:** Councillors S Davies (Leader and Chair), L D Carter, A R H England, J C Minor, A D McClements, R A Overton, S A W Reynolds and P R Watling.

**Also Present:** Councillors A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader).

### **CB-165      Apologies for Absence**

Councillor R C Evans.

### **CB-166      Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **CB-167      Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Together**

**Key Decision** identified as **Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Together** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 22 March 2018.

The Director of Children's and Adults' Services was invited to present his report which provided Cabinet with an update on the multi-agency work which had happened over the last 12 years in Telford & Wrekin to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation. He welcomed the impending arrival of the Truth Project and encouraged anyone with experience of child sexual exploitation, either as a victim, survivor or as parent/ guardian or friend to speak to the Truth Project about their experience. He also reminded any victims or survivors that they could contact Family Connect for support.

The report set out a number of statistics around child sex offences and explained the context in which this data was provided, particularly around the data including all child sex offences, not just CSE, and the increased reporting in recent years which mirrored partners' awareness raising activity. Context around the Family Connect referral process and the work of the CATE Team (Children Abused Through Exploitation) to prevent CSE and not just to work with victims was also provided.

The report went on to explain the current position in respect of Inquiries, both actual and suggested. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, established by the Government and chaired by Alexis Jay OBE, included an Inquiry into institutional responses to the sexual exploitation of children by organised networks and it had been confirmed that the Truth Project, one element of the Inquiry structure, would be coming to Telford as part of its on-going inquiry. This provided a local opportunity for

victims and survivors to come forward and explain, in a supported way, what happened to them and would give the Inquiry a clear and first hand picture of what has happened in Telford in the past. The programme would be widely publicised by the Inquiry. The Council and its partner agencies would be working to support this Inquiry and it was recommended that a dedicated liaison officer, funded through the Council's capacity fund, be appointed to liaise with the Inquiry team in the planning of the local arrangements to ensure that the Project's time in Telford was as effective as it could be.

Whilst the Council welcomed the impending arrival of the Truth Project, consideration had to be given to the impact of this on calls for a local inquiry. The Council had already commissioned two Reviews into CSE, an independent review and a scrutiny review, both of which focussed on the post-2006 position. The Truth Project would allow the historical (pre-2006) and any more recent perspectives to be addressed.

The report also set out the differences between a statutory and a local inquiry in terms of duplication, budget, public confidence, independence and the ability to investigate historically. The report noted that the decision about whether or not to include Telford as a specific site in the IICSA Inquiry was being made by that Inquiry. If the conclusion was that Telford should be included in the IICSA inquiry then that would indicate that there was further learning to do in Telford and the involvement of the IICSA inquiry would be welcomed by the Council for that reason. However, if IICSA determined that there was no need for Telford to be included in the wider inquiry, this would be an important consideration for Members considering the commissioning of a local inquiry.

The report went on to detail the current arrangements to prevent the sexual exploitation of children including how children at risk of CSE were identified and worked with, the action taken to safeguard them and promote their welfare and take action on perpetrators. The report explained the specialist pathway of the CATE Team, their successes and the annual funding increase of £180,000 by the Council. The Police were also leading on the "Tell Someone" campaign. Supported by all Partners, the campaign was designed to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation across 4 localities in the West Mercia region including Telford & Wrekin.

The report also set out the historical context of work to prevent and protect children and young people from sexual exploitation, which included the work of the Council's Area Child Protection Committees and partners and the Local Safeguarding Children Board to address sexual abuse and raise awareness of the sexual abuse of children, the introduction of the CATE Project in 2006 and commencement of Operation Chalice in 2009 which had led to the successful conviction for various child sex offences of seven men who had been sentenced to a total of 49 years imprisonment. There had also been three (in 2010, 2011 and 2012) unannounced inspections of Children's Services by OFSTED where partnership arrangements were identified as being an effective way of supporting children and young people who were at risk of exploitation and vulnerable to exploitation. A lot of work continued to provide training on, raise awareness of, and deal with individual cases of child sexual exploitation. A number of reports had been commissioned which had informed local learning, including Newstart's review of Child Abuse through Exploitation Learning between 2008 – 2013 (commissioned by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and published in 2013), the Local Safeguarding Children's Board report – Child Sexual

Exploitation Learning Overview Report (published 2014), the Independent Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (2014) which had been reviewed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board with the 15 recommendations contained within the report being used to inform the multi-agency action plan for 2014/15, and the Council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee's report (2016) and subsequent updates on the implementation of recommendations. There had also been a Motion to Council on 22 September 2016 which sought a comprehensive plan to demonstrate a clear commitment to the improvement of Children's Services, which had been provided by way of a report to the Council on 24 November 2016. In January 2018 the Council had approved its Community Safety Strategy "Safer Telford & Wrekin Strategy 2017 - 19" which identified "Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and its impact on victims" as one of three priorities. There had also been a number of press reports and calls from the MP for Telford for the commissioning of a local inquiry. A Motion from local opposition members seeking the commissioning of a non-statutory local inquiry would be considered on 10 April 2018.

In considering the report, Members welcomed the imminent arrival of the Truth Project to the Borough and noted the considerable work that had happened, and was continuing to happen, to tackle this vile crime. Members noted efforts to raise awareness and increase safeguarding in schools through Team Safeguarding Voice (TSV), Crucial Crew, the provision of CSE training to staff and practitioners and training for designated safeguarding leads, support and advice for schools, the delivery of assemblies by NSPCC, Tell Someone campaign and the Working for Marcus project by Loudmouth. The additional financial resource which had been provided for the ongoing support of victims was also noted. Members were of the opinion that, due to limitations on compelling external agencies to take part and that historical cases of CSE pre-dated the creation of the Council, a Council-led Inquiry would not give victims the answers that they sought and a full statutory Inquiry was required.

The Conservative Group Leader recognised the dedication of the CATE Team and welcomed the Truth Project. He also praised the report's drive to seek national standards for training private hire and hackney carriage drivers to recognise and report CSE. However, he remained concerned that the true scale of CSE may be unknown and was of the belief that a locally commissioned Inquiry was required to give victims a voice at an early stage as it may be some considerable time before the IICSA Inquiry findings were published.

The Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader also put on record his thanks to all those employees involved in tackling CSE and his dismay after a recent encounter which suggested that Council staff were embarrassed by cross-party disagreements on this sensitive issue. Having carefully considered the arguments for and against a locally commissioned inquiry, he considered that an independent inquiry which was not commissioned by the Council was the best way forward and he welcomed the Truth Project's early arrival in Telford.

**RESOLVED that –**

- (a) NWG be commissioned to work with the CATE team to undertake a health check of the existing partnership working arrangements in respect of**

**working to prevent child sexual exploitation in Telford & Wrekin and support those affected by it.**

- (b) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding & Early Help in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Adults Early Help & Support to submit a bid to the Government's Trusted Relationships Fund to support the Council's continuing work in this area.**
- (c) funding from the Capacity Fund be agreed and committed to commission partners in the voluntary sector to provide on-going support for victims and survivors generally and those who come forward as a result of the work of the Truth Project. This funding to be committed for an initial period of 2 years with a review at that time.**
- (d) the 2 year funding contribution of £70,000 from John Campion, the Police & Crime Commissioner to support work in respect of child sexual exploitation in the Borough be noted and acknowledged. This supplements the extra contributions that the Cabinet is being invited to commit to in these recommendations.**
- (e) use of the Council's Capacity Fund to support the appointment of a co-ordinator post to ensure the most effective liaison between the Council and the Truth Project from now until its work in Telford is completed and reported and to ensure that this takes place as soon as possible be agreed.**
- (f) the current position in respect of the IICSA inquiry and the arrival of the Truth Project in Telford & Wrekin be noted and the Council commit to supporting this in every way to ensure that anyone affected who wants to is aware of the Truth Project and can use the opportunity to help the whole country to learn from their experiences.**
- (g) following recent statements from IICSA, it be recognised that the Truth Project should first complete before IICSA takes any decision on a Telford specific investigation. After this a fully informed decision on a local inquiry can be made. It be confirmed that this decision must be informed by independent advice on the work undertaken by all partners in stopping child sexual exploitation in the Borough and the scope and effect of any future local inquiry**
- (h) having done so before in September 2017 the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Enforcement write again to the Minister for Transport re-iterating the Council's call for standard national hackney carriage and private hire vehicle operator conditions to include provisions regarding safe-guarding and the protection of vulnerable adults and children as are currently included in this Council's conditions.**
- (i) this report and appendices be circulated with the papers for the Extraordinary Council meeting on 10 April 2018.**

A number of questions were taken from members of the public relating to ongoing support for victims, support for under 13s, the timescale for reporting IICSA findings and the need for an earlier local inquiry, investigation of the Police by any commissioned inquiry, whether any proactive work would take place to let victims and survivors know about the Truth Project, education for parents, and confirmation that CSE training was a local mandatory requirement for both private hire and hackney carriage drivers.

The meeting ended at 6.06pm

**Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices**

Jonathan Eatough  
Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning  
Date: 21 March 2018

Signed: .....

Date: .....