

Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>  24 April 2023	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Sharon Godman Divisional Director Strategy, Policy and Performance	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Women's Safety – Scrutiny Review Report</b>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque – Head of Corporate Strategy Paul Burgess - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate
<b>Wards affected</b>	All (All Wards);

### Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Review Sessions on women's safety in the borough. The Report makes seven recommendations for agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Overview and Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Review Report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response to the recommendations;

#### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny review sessions on women's safety in the borough for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny review sessions provides recommendations for improving women's safety in the borough.

### **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 In appreciating the work that the Council had undertaken since developing the Violence Against Women Girls Strategy, it became evident that there was a need to review aspects of the strategy pertaining to Women's safety in the borough. London (including Tower Hamlets) as a region had significant challenges to Women's Safety and this was further compounded by the high-profile cases in the wider media.
- 3.2 The strategy lends itself to meet the council's commitments and strategic priority of 'Empowering communities and fighting crime' by setting three priority areas including:
- support and protection for victims,
  - holding perpetrators accountable,
  - engaging the community and challenging misogyny.
- 3.3 This scrutiny review was chaired by Cllr Abdul Malik (Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member). This review was held over two distinct sessions, taking place on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February and on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023.
- 3.4 The first session allowed the Committee to hear from the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and council officers and several representatives from local women's voluntary sector groups. The focus was domestic violence and the scope set out the following key questions:
- What are the main barriers to tackling violence against women and girls?
  - Do refuges meet the needs of women in the borough?
  - What more can the council do to address domestic abuse?
- 3.5 The second session focussed on women's safety in the public spaces in the borough.
- 3.6 The scope set out the following key questions:
- What are the key issues personal safety that Women face when in or using public spaces;
  - How are the public authorities addressing the women's concerns and providing reassurance; and
  - What are the gaps and what more could be/needs to be done
- 3.7 The review sessions involved a range of stakeholders including:
- Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and supported by council officers;
  - Metropolitan Police
  - Representatives from women's voluntary and communities sector organisations; and
  - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member

3.8 The review sessions resulted in the committee making the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 1**

Tower Hamlets Councillors to support and champion the 'more male allies' agenda and actively promote this across their work

More Male allies needed – Encourage elected members to become Champions and promote this at their member surgeries and joining on walkabouts that are focussed on women's safety.

**Recommendation 2**

Increase capacity at schools on raising awareness of domestic abuse (DA) and support available.

**Recommendation 3**

The Council to review current funding arrangements and increase the capacity to support women's groups that offer domestic abuse services to the community.

**Recommendation 4**

The council and partners to collaborate to improve the awareness of women of the programmes and help available directly that support women's safety on the streets.

**Recommendation 5**

Improve self-defence access.

**Recommendation 6**

The Police to actively target its recruitment and retention strategy for recruiting representative women from the community in Tower Hamlets.

**Recommendation 6**

The Council and RSL partners should work closely to tackle women safety issues on RSL estates.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

#### **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

- 5.2 The actions in the attached report are made as part of the Committee's role in helping to secure continuous improvement for the council, as required under its Best Value duty.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires a public authority, in the exercise of its functions, to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.2 Furthermore Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment).

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Linked Report**

- NONE.

**Appendices**

- Draft Women's Safety Scrutiny Review Report

**Officer contact details for documents:**

Paul Burgess - Strategy and Policy Officer, Corporate