



Minutes

TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 12 September 2017, in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.00 pm.

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place, please see the webcast which can be found at <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/>
The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr S Bowles (Vice-Chairman), Mr D Carroll (Chairman), Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mr D Dhillon, Mr S Lambert and Ms A Macpherson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms N Bell, Ms V Butler, Ms A Mcroig and Mr N Sims

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Peter Martin.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was noted:
Mrs A Macpherson – Police and Crime Panel Member.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.



4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman expressed sympathy and thoughts to the family of Alan Walters MBE, who sadly passed away.

6 THE GROWTH AGENDA IN BUCKS

Members agreed the Joint Select Committee Growth Inquiry report and recommendations. It was confirmed that the approved report would go to Cabinet for their consideration on the 25th September.

7 MODERN SLAVERY INQUIRY (FACT FINDING)

Contributors:

- **Nigel Sims, Head of Community Wellbeing and Community Safety.**
- **Victoria Butler, Intelligence Officer and Lead officer for Modern Slavery, Thames Valley Police.**
- **April Mcroig, Modern Slavery Coordinator and Anti-Slavery Network Chair.**
- **Nicola Bell, Service Manager for Rahab, Victim support service in Reading.**

The Chairman introduced the item and reminded Members that it was a fact finding item to help inform further inquiry work.

The Chairman welcomed Nigel Sims, Head of Community Wellbeing and Community Safety, and invited him to provide Members with an overview of the information paper (paper can be found in the agenda pack).

In his overview Mr Sims highlighted the following:

- The definition and types of Modern Slavery.
- The Council's legal duty under the Modern Slavery Act as "first responders" and the duty to "notify".
- The steps the Council had taken so far to address the issues surrounding Modern Slavery and the further steps it could take to improve Council compliance.
- The issues and challenges that surrounded Modern Slavery and addressing it.
- That there was currently no dedicated victim service in Bucks for Modern Slavery.
- That the Council was currently getting legal advice as to whether it should have a Modern Slavery statement in its procurement process.

Members raised the following through their questions to Mr Sims:

- **Adult Exploitation Strategy:** Members felt strongly that Child and Adult Exploitation should not be dealt with separately in relation to Modern Slavery. Members were told that the current strategy focussed on adults and that child exploitation was dealt with separately through other safeguarding measures within Children's Services.
- **Prevalence of Modern Slavery in Bucks and the limitations of the data:** Members heard that the data was only recent, very partial and that there was every indication that the problem would be significantly larger than the data currently suggested.
- **The legal and moral requirements to have a Modern Slavery Statement in the procurement process:** Members were told that the team were currently getting legal advice on this. It was suggested that even if there was not a legal duty, other local authorities had taken the approach to do this and that the Council may want to consider following best practice. A Member raised the point that our health partners should consider having the same statements.
- **Industries involved in Modern Slavery:** Members heard that research suggested that industries such as nail bars, construction and agriculture are all areas where modern slavery is prevalent. Members were told that there was an understanding of the industries that could be targeted in Bucks, but a lot was still hidden and more needs to be done to gain an understanding of the prevalence.
- **Support for Victims of Modern Slavery:** Members heard that there was a bid awaiting a decision through the Police Innovation Fund. If successful it would extend a service currently delivered in Reading across the Thames Valley, including Bucks. However, if this was unsuccessful Members were advised that there were no other current budgets allocated for this within the Council. Members raised concern about the lack of victim service and support for victims.
- **Council compliance with its duties under the Modern Slavery Act:** Members were told that it was early days, that there was more the Council could be doing and a need for more of a debate around the duties and how they applied to the whole Council. They heard that training needed to be a priority so that staff would have the skills necessary to identify victims and report them.
- **Public reporting of incidents:** Members were told that public should report this to the police in the first instance. However, awareness was not high within the public and that there was a need to raise awareness with the public. The Council should tag onto national awareness raising campaigns to help raise public awareness.
- **Role of the community and Councillors.** It was reiterated that it was really important that the community had a higher level of awareness to help build a truer picture of prevalence and help in identifying victims.
- **Working alongside bus and train companies:** Members heard that this was not currently happening. They were told that the Council needed to be really pertinent of the geography of county and the need for target hardening with partners and other organisations.
- **Responsibility within the Council for addressing Modern Slavery:** Members heard that the Adult Exploitation Strategy was going to the Safer Stronger Bucks Partnership Board on 2nd November. A detailed action plan would be agreed alongside this. Members were

also advised that other areas of the Council had a responsibility, primarily, but not limited to, the Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards.

Members raised concerns around:

- The need for building a more accurate picture of the prevalence in Bucks.
- That the wider Council had a responsibility, in particular the Safeguarding Board Chairman.

Members requested to see the Adult Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan.

Action: Kama Wager to arrange for this to be shared with Members as part of the Committees' further evidence gathering.

The Chairman welcomed Victoria Butler and April Mcroig from Thames Valley Police. April and Victoria provided Members with a summary about their roles and the work they have done in relation to tackling Modern Slavery within Thames Valley Police and partners through the Anti-Slavery Network.

The full summary can be viewed on the Webcast. It covered:

- The police response to Modern Slavery
- Partnership engagement
- The increase in reporting and identification of victims, due to partnership working and raised awareness.
- The main areas of concern in relation to crime types linked to modern slavery.
- Police operations on Modern Slavery in Bucks recently.
- Partnership working and the development of the Anti-Slavery Network in Bucks.
- The victim support bid and the need for support services.
- The upcoming campaign: the Hidden Harms Campaign launching in October and the need for partners to utilise the resources to raise awareness.

The following areas were raised through Member questions:

- **Public reporting of Moderns Slavery:** Members were told that the public could report through 101, or 999. They were also advised that there was a Modern Slavery helpline and crime-stoppers for reporting anonymous intelligence.
- **The increased identification of victims in Bucks:** Members heard that there had been an increase in reporting and identification of victims which was due to the increased resources within the police and partnerships to drive this. They were told that Bucks had been fully engaged in this through the Community Safety Team.
- **Sentences for Moderns Slavery:** Members were told that it was early days for the use of the legislation. The maximum was a life sentence, but so far, sentences of 3-5 years had been given. However this would change when cases started coming to trial.

- **Activity around the cyber community:** Members were told that TVP were one of only 3 forces that were part of a pilot looking at the “dark web” where there was most of criminal activity took place. The trial would end in one year. The police were using this to gather intelligence on offenders.
- **Local authority compliance with the Act:** Members were told that local authorities have a significant role to play in responding to Modern Slavery, however it is recognised that this is a complex landscape. The Home Office is looking to issue updated guidance on the role of local authorities, including governance of Modern Slavery.
- **Training:** Members heard that Bucks had already made good progress on delivering training through Rahab and Hope for Justice. However there was still a need to ensure that training was sustainable and reached the people it needed going forward. It was suggested that there was a need to consider whether first responder should include everyone or a nominated people within local authorities.
- **Funding opportunities to support victim services:** Members heard about the transformation bid which would enhance the service for victims in Bucks and that the police would like to see the level of service replicated in Bucks. The police told Members that they had explored other opportunities. Unfortunately none of these had been successful; however they reassured Members that they were still exploring opportunities. They highlighted to Members that there was a further need for support for people outside of, pre and post the National Referral Mechanism process.
- **Role of communities:** It was reiterated to Members that there was a need to help raise awareness in communities. Members were told that the District Council were represented at the Anti-Slavery Network and it was acknowledged that the Parish Council could have a role to play on the group. Members were pleased to hear that Bucks County Council was well engaged and were taking steps to develop how they would fulfil their duty and develop partnership relationships, driven through the Community Safety Team.
- **Modern Slavery Statement:** Members heard that TVP were also considering issuing a statement. It was raised with Members that the benefit of doing so was that, if the Council did not issue a statement, and the supply chain was found to be unethical, it could be prosecuted. From a community point of view, it would demonstrate that the Council was taking it seriously – leading by example. Members were told that other authorities had done this. The Council should also look at their procurement and supply chains and check that it was acting in accordance with what was put in its statement.
- **Key challenges:** Members heard that the key challenges from a police perspective were; the lack of intelligence, public perception of modern slavery/lack of understanding, perception of what Modern Slavery was. The lack of engagement was one of the biggest challenges in early stages, but Members heard that this had improved significantly recently. There had been intensive training throughout police on dealing with this issue as a crime. The biggest issue was that victims often don't view themselves as victims.

The Chairman thanked Victoria and April for coming and for their helpful input.

The Chairman welcomed Nicola Bell from Rahab – a victim support service for Modern Slavery in Reading.

Nicola introduced herself and provided Members with an overview of her role and the service offered to victims in Reading. She provided Members with the victim perspective and highlighted the benefits of having, and risks of not having, a victim service. She highlighted how the service had built victim profiles and understanding of the extent of the problem in Reading through the service they provide, data collection, training and effective partnership working.

The full discussion can be heard on the webcast.

The following areas were discussed through Member questions:

- **A combined approach to child and adult exploitation:** Nicola confirmed to Members that she believed that it needed to be dealt with as a whole. The youngest victim she had supported was 7 years of age.
- **Training:** Members heard that raising awareness with frontline staff around what to look for, how to identify victims and how to refer was key. Members heard that in Reading, they were carrying out pilots with checklists and question areas for staff to use to help them identify victims within their everyday work.
- **Support for victims:** Members heard that Rahab, the service had all the processes and systems needed to replicate the service in Bucks and start supporting victims immediately. Members also heard that there were very few other support services that do everything and offer long term support.
- **Prevalence:** Members were told that firstly we needed to understand the prevalence in Bucks, both training and victim support services would help identify victims and start building a more accurate picture. However, Members heard that there was no use in training staff to identify victims if there was no current support for them.
- **Data Collection:** Members heard how Reading collect and record data and log inquiries etc. which had enabled them to build the victim profile and understand prevalence. Members heard examples that demonstrated the discrepancies between the low official recorded data on victims and the numbers of victims recorded by the service.
- **Government responsibility:** Members asked whether the Council could lobby government. They heard that one of the main issues was that there was nothing in place for victims and no access to public funds. It was Nicola's view that Councils could lobby government and highlight what the issues were in the County.
- **Training:** Members heard that in Reading they had struggled to get through to GP's and get them involved in the training, yet they had a key role to play in the possible identification of potential victims.
- **Public awareness and Modern Slavery Statement:** Members heard again that this was a key area to improve and that having a Modern Slavery Statement would be good practice.
- **Ownership and Responsibility within the Council:** Members heard that every head of department within the Council had a responsibility to ensure that it acknowledged and addressed risks of Modern Slavery within its service. Members were told again that

safeguarding teams were key. They heard that there are issues of people not meeting safeguarding criteria who may be victims of Modern Slavery and can therefore slip through the net and their victim status may not be picked up.

Members gave their thanks to Nicola for a very insightful session. The Chairman thanked her for taking the time to come and speak to the Committee.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that:

- They would undertake an inquiry exploring and testing the issues and challenges identified to gather further evidence.
- A detailed scope would be developed.
- Further evidence sessions would be set up.

Mr Carroll, Mrs Clarke OBE, Mr Bowles, Mr Lambert and Mrs Macpherson all confirmed they wanted to be part of the inquiry group.

ACTION: Kama Wager – To set up a scoping meeting and arrange a further evidence gathering date.

8 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman confirmed the following upcoming committee items:

- **31st October:** An item on the National Infrastructure Commission Report and the 12 month review of the Economic Development Inquiry.
- **12th December:** An item on Energy Income Generation opportunities and the 6 month Sustainable School Travel Inquiry Review.

Other areas suggested by Members for consideration to include within the work programme were:

- Transport for Bucks
- The Integrated Transport Programme.

9 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12th December 2017 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury. There will be a pre-meeting for Committee Members only at 9.30am.

CHAIRMAN

