

Cheltenham Borough Council
Council

22 February 2013

Scrutiny task group – Sex trade in Cheltenham
Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Accountable member	Councillor Duncan Smith, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Accountable officer	Andrew North, Chief Executive
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>The issue of the sex trade in Cheltenham, particularly the illegal trade of sexually exploited young or otherwise vulnerable people, was first raised in a motion at Council on 25th June 2012 by Councillor Barbara Driver. Referring to recent exposés in both the national and international press that seem to highlight Cheltenham as a ‘hotspot’ of activity, the motion called on the Council to take action to address these issues. After a debate it was decided to request Overview and Scrutiny to investigate the matter further and report back to Council on their findings. A scrutiny task group was set up to investigate the matter and this report is the result of that review.</p> <p>The matter will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 18 February 2013 and an update will be circulated prior to the Council meeting. The recommendations will then be considered at Cabinet.</p>
Recommendations	<p>The Council is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Endorse the following recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group set out at 7.1 of the Scrutiny Task Group report and forward them to Cabinet for approval:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) That the council should work with the Police, Public Protection Bureau and voluntary organisations to identify emergency facilities where vulnerable people can be housed safely for a short period. This will allow for victims to receive appropriate emotional support from trained professionals whilst also allowing the Police a sufficient period of time to interview them and build a case for prosecution.b) That all Councillors should attend awareness sessions on safeguarding issues, particularly to learn about the warning signs that children, young people and vulnerable adults often exhibit if they are being abused or exploited. As community representatives with local knowledge and local intelligence, Councillors are in a good position to contribute towards this agenda.c) That the council assist the Police and Public Protection

Bureau in producing, promoting and distributing information to those who may be at risk of sexual exploitation or already be victims of it, to let them know where they can go for help and assistance. The task group recognises the challenges involved in making this information accessible to those who are fearful of authority or many not speak English as a first language.

- d) That the council support the work of the Public Protection Bureau in raising awareness of prostitution and potential sexual exploitation. One issue focuses around making hoteliers more aware of the potential for their premises to be used for prostitution and exploitation purposes, and in response the task group recommends that the council use its links to the Cheltenham Hoteliers Associate to raise awareness of this issue, particularly in relevant periods such as the run up to 'race week' .**
- e) That a greater focus should be placed on producing high quality quantitative data on the scale and nuance of sexual exploitation in Cheltenham, and Gloucestershire as a whole. The task group recognises that the Police are already taking steps to address this issue, however as an intelligence-led area of policing, the importance of understanding the true scale of the issues we face so that we can work together with as partners to coordinate appropriate levels of response, cannot be underestimated.**

- 2. Request the Chief Executive to forward the Scrutiny Task Group report to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Police and Crime Panel to make them aware that issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation remain an area of concern and focus to Cheltenham Borough Council. This should be done once the report has been considered by Cabinet so that their proposed response can also be included.**