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Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	17 December 2020
Present	Councillor Craghill (Executive Member)

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## **10. Declarations of Interest**

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or discloseable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

## **11. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 September 2020 be approved and then signed by the Executive Member at a later date.

## **12. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been one registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Cllr A Musson, Ward Member for Hull Road, spoke in favour of the outlined recommendations in the officer report. She considered that it was important that the Council send a clear message that they will take appropriate action where people are prevented from accessing health services.

## **13. Protest Vigil at BPAS Clinic Wenlock Terrace, York**

The Executive Member considered a report which set out the detail of a recent vigil by anti-abortion protestors in the vicinity of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) Clinic at Wenlock Terrace and responds to a petition signed by over two thousand residents which called for the City of York Council to create Safe Zones to protect service users and residents from harassment outside abortion clinics in York.

The Head of Community Safety and the Interim Director of Place were in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

The Executive Member acknowledged the concerns of the residents that had signed the petition and of the points raised by Cllr Musson and considered that although this was an emotive issue, it was imperative that service users were able to access health services without intimidation.

It was noted that it would be difficult to enforce action in a pre-emptive way, however the recommendations confirmed in the officer report would enable the Community Safety department and BPAS to gather evidence.

The Executive Member referred to the Demonstrations (Abortion Clinics) Bill 2019 – 21. A Bill to prohibit anti-abortion protests within a safe zone (approx. 150 meters) of abortion clinics, which would be considered for its second reading on 15 January 2021, and her intention to write to the appropriate Government Minister in support of that Bill. As once this is enshrined in national legislation, it would remove the need to address this concern on a local level.

Resolved: The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods confirmed that the following measures be taken in response to the petition:

- i) For the City of York Council to commit to engaging closely with BPAS to support their service delivery in York.
- ii) Through engagement with BPAS, to enable clinic users to report their experience of any future protests via BPAS with anonymity.
- iii) That officers consider other ways that those affected can report their experience of any future protests in the vicinity of clinics, such as an online reporting form or contact point as other councils have used.
- iv) For the City of York Council to work closely with North Yorkshire Police to monitor protest activity taking place in the vicinity of the clinic and to gather evidence that will support future enforcement action through the use of Community Protection Notice and/or a Public Space Protection Order as appropriate.
- v) That the Executive Member will write to the appropriate Government Minister in support of the Demonstrations (Abortion Clinics) Bill 2019 – 21. A Bill to prohibit anti-abortion protests within a safe zone (approx. 150 meters) of abortion clinics.

Reason: To respond appropriately to objections raised in the petition and the request to prohibit anti-abortion protests within a safe zone of these services. To protect the users of the clinic, who have a

legal right to access these services, from potentially being intimidated and deterred from accessing these services and to protect local residents from being subjected to material in the form of banners, posters and flyers which may include distressing content.

Cllr Craghill, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 11.30 am and finished at 11.55 am].