

Subject:		Violence against Women and Girls		
Date of Meeting:		16th September 2021		
Report of:		Executive Director of Housing Neighbourhoods and Communities		
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Ward(s) affected:		All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 In October 2020 a Notice of Motion went to Council stating that it recognises the work of the Anti-Harassment Club which brought to light more than 120 testimonies of gender street based harassment in the city since June 2020. It called on all Councillors to support the group and its message.
- 1.2 The Anti-Harassment Club is an activist organisation based in the city. It is dedicated to combating, eradicating, and raising awareness of sexual and gender-based harassment in public spaces, thereby making the city's streets safer for everybody
- 1.3 Following the death of Sarah Everard in March 2021, officers were asked to set out in a committee report what work is being undertaken in the City to reduce incidences of violence against women and girls.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the the work being undertaken by the Council and partners to address violence against women and girls in the City.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy 2020-23 has as a strategic priority, Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and other forms of Violence against Women and Girls. The strategy sets out how the priorities will be addressed through a programme of partnership work. As well as this, the Pan Sussex Strategic Framework for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse has developed an action plan to address violence against women and girls. Four key themes are contained within this document, Prevention and Early Identification, Service Provision, Pursuing Perpetrators and Partnerships. Specific work has

been identified in relation to street harassment including amongst other things, bystander awareness sessions for those witnessing incidents, a restorative justice approach for perpetrators and improving confidence for people to report incidents.

3.2 As part of the monitoring of the community safety strategy, crime data is collected from Sussex Police. This shows that sexual offences showed lower levels at the beginning of the year (2020) compared to the same period the year before, but rose steadily until Aug 20, dropping again in the subsequent months until February 2021. There was, however, a notable rise in recorded sexual offences in Mar 2021. Police recorded domestic violence incidents and crimes have shown a different pattern to most other types of crime in that they increased during the first half of the year compared with pre-Covid levels, although they dropped below previous levels for most of the rest of the year, ending the year 4% down on 2019/20.

3.3 There were 549 stalking offences recorded in 2020/21, continuing the steady upward trend in recorded data seen over recent years
There were 953 recorded sexual offences in 2020/21, and the solved rate was 7.9%, with an improvement on the outturn for solved cases in the previous two years. As with domestic violence offences, the number of sexual offences completed at court was lower than in previous years with 61 being completed during the year, but the conviction rate has been higher at 87% of those completed.

3.4 In May 2021 the Home Office announced that misogyny, is to be recorded by police forces as a hate crime.. The development comes after campaigners including the Fawcett Society and politicians lobbied for tougher legislation to protect women, following the death of Londoner Sarah Everard. In practice police across England and Wales will now be ordered to officially record all crimes they judge to have been motivated by “hostility based on” gender. Seven police forces across the UK already recorded incidents motivated by misogyny as hate crimes, this now means that all 42 police forces in England and Wales will be officially instructed to follow suit. The Sussex PCC has already flagged this for Sussex Police. The new legislation will initially be implemented on an “experimental basis” from autumn onwards. Whether misogyny will remain a hate crime will not be decided until a review by the Law Commission. The Law Commission is also currently reviewing all hate crimes, and is weighing up the option of including misogyny within this. The Commission is expected to deliver their verdict later this year.

3.5 In May 2021, following the NOM the Leader of the Council wrote to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner requesting that in line with a similar pilot undertaken by Nottinghamshire Police in 2016, that she commit to adopting a pilot ‘misogyny as a hate crime’ policy locally, in order to enable our city to:

- collect the data necessary to understand and evaluate the prevalence and nature of public sexual harassment in our community;
- utilise such data to understand the impact of this on our local community and how this can be addressed;
- to establish work with partners to establish support for victims of public sexual harassment

- 3.6 The NOM also requested that the Chief Executive wrote to the government to request that misogyny is made a hate crime in England and Wales as part of an overhaul of legislation, as recently recommended by the Law Commission.
- 3.7 Sussex Police have set up a Local Resolution Team (LRT) consisting of 40 specially trained officers dedicated to responding and resolving standard domestic abuse by appointment and appointments are offered to survivors within 48hrs of contact with the police. The LRT will see survivors either at the police station or via video call. Safeguarding advice and sign posting to specialist agencies will be provided as well as investigating the allegations.
- 3.8 Sussex Police have invested in developing data analytics to inform a proactive approach to tackling domestic abuse. An example of this is Operation Hope which provides an enhanced policing response at times where we know that domestic abuse incidents rise. This operation is running during the lockdown relaxation and will involve, among other things, joint visits between police and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates to those who we know are at high-risk of harm.
- 3.9 The High Harm Serial Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme commenced work on 1st March. This new unit, the Complex Domestic Abuse Unit, is a multi-agency team, bringing together police offender managers, a specialist mental health worker from Brighton Housing Trust, a specialist substance misuse worker, and a dedicated Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) Central to the programme is a Perpetrator Intervention Programme, delivered by SEETEC Justice. The programme aims to provide a tailored intervention for serial perpetrators with Multiple Complex Needs to support them in recognising and addressing their abusive behaviours.

The programme sits alongside a newly commissioned DA perpetrator intervention programme which offers a 12 week rolling intervention for perpetrators who acknowledge their behaviours and are willing to work to address them.

- 3.10 Sussex Police continue to lead in its response to Stalking in partnership with bespoke Victim Advocacy Services and now a newly designed Perpetrator Programme for those with a Stalking Prevention Order (SPO). Designed to be delivered by trained professionals from SEETEC Justice, this provides 12 intensive 1:1 therapy sessions focusing on compulsive and obsessive behaviour intervention (COBI). Perpetrators will be considered for the intervention as the 'positive requirement' within any planned SPO application with Veritas Justice who will monitor and support any associated victims of those taking part in the intervention.
- 3.11 Sussex Police are part of a National pilot area working with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Kent and Surrey police, seeking to create a prosecution team approach from the outset of any investigation. It requires acquiring best evidence, suspect account and a file submitted to CPS within 42 days, this then triggers a face to face meeting with a named lawyer to discuss case progression. Sussex Police have submitted the most cases within the pilot

area and anticipate an increase in cases charged and a reduction in investigation time. The overall aim is to bring more offenders to justice, reduce the length of time of rape investigations and deliver justice for victims.

- 3.12 Sussex Police has a team of 30 specially trained officers providing victim focused support that is separated from the investigations for all victims (over 14yrs) of rape and penetrative offences. Support is offered through the whole judicial process (initial response, investigation, and court), and aims to build trust and confidence in reporting (mainly women); Additional investment in this work took place in 2021
- 3.13 It is recognised that many offences against women and girls are linked to the Night time economy (NTE). Work with partners to tackle some of these issues includes promoting 'Ask for Angela' in several licensed premises, providing a Safe Space in West Street on Friday and Saturday nights and the provision of the beach patrol. The Council, as the licensing authority, continue to support safeguarding initiatives such as the Beach Patrol Quad bike, safe space and street pastors. In addition, the University of Sussex operates a "Good Night Owl" scheme which includes 40 volunteers and is currently funded by the Police Community Safety Fund. Licensed premises are being encouraged to use the "Ask 4 Angela" initiative. Training has also been undertaken with door staff so that they are able to support women at risk of violence.
- 3.14 The Latest version of the Blue Book (6th edition March 21) requires all drivers must have Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation awareness training and every 3 years thereafter.
Brighton & Hove City Council is working in partnership with the YMCA WiSE Project who specialise in this area and have developed an online training session.
Brighton & Hove City Council has funded these voluntary training sessions to ensure all drivers are offered a place. The training has been provided free of charge however in future drivers will be required to attend these courses and pay a fee.
- 3.15 Safe Space launched in 2006 and operates between 11-3.30 from St Pauls Church West Street. It provides emotional, practical and medical support, for example allowing people to charge phones or to sober up so that they can get home safely. The Beach Patrol run by volunteers, provides a service to help to prevent accidents on the beach again normally operating on Friday and Saturdays. Over time the service has also supported people at risk of inappropriate harassment.
- 3.16 The Communities Equalities and Third Sector team have also been supporting (ongoing) the development of a Nudist Beach Users group for female users of the nudist beach to raise awareness around harassment and reported unwanted attention there.
There is the 'Home Safe' group in the city, who chaperone women home safely <https://www.clapbackclub.co.uk/home-safe-brighton> and they were also part of a recent meeting to look at making the eastern beaches and nudist beach a safer

more welcoming space for Women and to raise awareness around how to support people experiencing harassment

- 3.17 The recent LGBTQ+ Covid Impact report shows there is little safe space for Trans women (and Trans nonbinary communities in general) in the city currently, and that there is a need for spaces to be fully inclusive We are expecting the opening of the Ledward LGBTQ Community Centre in Jubilee Street in the next few months which will provide a much needed space for Trans and Nonbinary communities to meet, including QTIPoC communities (Queer Trans intersex people of Colour) work and support ongoing community developmental initiatives. This large new fully accessible space will have large flexible spaces available for women's LGBTQ+ communities to use.
- 3.18 On 24th May 2021, the Home Office launched its third tranche of 'Safer Streets' funding. This funding is available to local authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners to undertake work to make defined geographical areas safer for women and girls. Officers from Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex worked with the Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (OSPCC) to submit a bid. The maximum amount that can be awarded is £550,000. There was an expectation that bidders used local data and evidence, including anecdotal evidence, if necessary, to inform proposals. Bidders were required to consult with public organisations responsible for women and girls in the local area and with local or national VAWG stakeholders to ensure proposals reflect the local needs of women and girls. The bids needed to show innovative plans to deliver the work.
- 3.19 The bid submitted was in two parts, a primary and secondary bid. The primary bid consisted of a roll out of training sessions to be delivered in secondary schools aimed at boys and young men to recognise inappropriate behaviours, the development of a safe space app, work to develop a bystander to upstander programme and a staff resource to undertake this work.
- 3.20 The council's City Transport team have worked in partnership with colleagues to develop the secondary bid. The bid included improvements to lighting and installation of CCTV in the Old Steine area adjacent to Pavilion Gardens. This will be complemented by the work already underway as part of the Valley Gardens Phase 3 scheme. Ongoing work by City Transport includes the provision of 24-hour service offering emergency help at four council-owned city centre car parks and work with partners, including local transport operators, on the issue of women and girls' safety.
- 3.21 In Brighton & Hove, in response to the 'Everyone's Invited' movement and the high profile tragic death of Sarah Everard, some young people in the city have appropriately raised concerns about experiences of sexual aggression and assaults. Schools, Police and Children's Services have worked together when allegations have been raised to ensure investigation, support and interventions as appropriate are in place. This has ensured that support is in place when allegations are made.

- 3.22 Ongoing work has been initiated with these partners and the BH Safeguarding Children Partnership to consider the need to address cultural challenges in school that mirrors that within the wider society. Criminal acts must not be trivialised or normalised within our city and this needs to be challenged where this exists ensuring girls feel safe and misogynistic and sexually inappropriate behaviour and actions are challenged and addressed. A report setting out what work has been done and what work the Council will do in future to address the concerns raised went to the the Children and Young People and Skills Committee on 13th September 2021.
- 3.23 At July Policy and Resources committee a small sum of money was allocated to carry out a city wide survey to ascertain how safe women feel in the city and a study on how safe they are in the city, working with police and other agencies as necessary.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.5 This report is intended to provide an update on current work being undertaken in the city to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.5 The Safer Streets fund required that evidence and consultation was carried out with relevant organisations with a local interest and knowledge about VAWG. Statutory partners have also been consulted with regarding the bid. The OSPCC also carried out an on line consultation exercise regarding the bid.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report is to provide an update of work being undertaken to address violence against women and girls in the city and to invite any comment.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however, any work undertaken by the council as a result of this report will need to be met from current budget resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley

Date: 06/08/21

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report which is for noting.
Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland

Date: 02/9/21

Equalities Implications:

7.2 These are contained within the body of the report.

Sustainability Implications:

7.2 None

