

Brighton & Hove City Council

Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

Agenda Item 28 (b)

Subject: Public Questions

Date of meeting: 25 March 2024

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by a member of the public.

The question will be answered without discussion. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion. The person to whom a question, or supplementary question, has been put may decline to answer it.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public:

(1) Ruth Farnell – VAWG Strategy Consultation

At the October 2023 meeting of this committee, it was agreed to carry out a public consultation on a new Violence against Women & Girls strategy for 2023-26. The consultation closed on January 1st 2024. Has there been any progress since then on redrafting the strategy, and when will a new draft be presented to the Community Safety Partnership?

(2) Samantha Kidd – Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding

At the July 2023 meeting of this committee, it was agreed to carry out a “needs assessment refresh” in August 2023, before allocating £631,828 of Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding provided to Brighton & Hove Council for 2024-25, and the Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities was given authority to allocate £32,162 of the New Burdens funding for 2023-24 before the end of this financial year. Has the needs assessment refresh taken place, and how was the £32,162 allocated?

(3) Dani Ahrens – Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens Funding

In September 2021, the Tourism, Equalities, Culture and Communities Committee agreed to allocate £241,000 of the 2020-21 allocation of Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding to pay for the commissioned women’s refuge service. The committee report said “Once the needs assessment has been completed there will be a further report to this committee which makes a recommendation as to how the budget should be spent.” Did this further report ever come to a council committee? If not, how was this £241,000 spent?

(4) Helen Saxby – Review of Grant Funded and Commissioned Services

In the Equality Impact Assessment relating to cuts to Domestic Abuse services, presented to budget council last month, one of the mitigating actions identified was “Review of all grant funded and commissioned services by end March 2024 to ensure that they are delivering against

contract specification". Has this review taken place, and when will the results be published?

(5) Gail Gray – Funding for Domestic Abuse Services

At the budget meeting last month, councillors agreed to end the funding for RISE to provide the city's award-winning dispersed refuge service for LGBT people who have experienced domestic abuse, as of September 2024. After protests, we were told that the LGBT refuge service would be recommissioned mid-year with less funding. Were councillors aware when making this decision that the £99,962 awarded to RISE each year from the New Burdens funding also paid for wellbeing services for women and children at the Brighton refuge? Will that service also be recommissioned?

(6) Adrian Hart – Protected Characteristics Under the Equality Act

In the context of protecting those who hold a protected characteristic (as stipulated by the Equality Act and the PSED), how is the council defining notions of *harm* and the *undermining of dignity and safety*?

(7) Phillippa Sawyer – Equality Act

It seems unlikely that any council would consider itself exempt from upholding the Equality Act (2010) in relation to the protected characteristic of Religion or Belief. However, for clarity, can the Chair confirm that the council would never single out a protected belief and nullify it simply because it regards that belief as harmful and/or someone perceives it to be offensive?