

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 7

Subject: Preventing and tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, and sexual violence – Brighton & Hove City Council's strategic direction 2024-2028

Date of meeting: 27th June 2024

Report of: Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Youth Services and for Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Contact Officer: Name: Anne Clark, Strategic Lead Commissioner, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls
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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: significant impact on 2 or more wards

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report updates Cabinet on the strategic direction for Preventing and tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, and sexual violence (VAWG/DA/SV) Strategy 2024-2028.
- 1.2 The Council Plan outcome 2, prioritises a fair and inclusive city where people feel safe and welcome. This report directly contributes to achieving outcome 2 for the city. Following feedback from the Equality, Community Safety and Human Rights Committee in October 2023, a series of consultations with the public and key stakeholders have informed the strategic direction to date.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees the strategic direction towards a final Preventing and tackling VAWG/DA/SV strategy 2024-2028 as set out in the route map in section 3.6-3.7 of the report. Cabinet notes a full strategy will be brought for approval in Autumn 2024.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is the umbrella term used to describe a range of abusive and violent behaviours and acts, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls. This term and its definition adopted by the United Nations is used to describe the forms of abuse against all genders but acknowledges the disproportionate impact of abuse and violence on women and girls.
- 3.2. The Council and Government acknowledge that that everyone can be affected by VAWG/DA/SV and our strategic direction includes support for everyone affected by VAWG/ DA/SV.
- 3.3 The Council recognises that VAWG/ DA/SV affects all sectors of the community regardless of age, gender, race, disability, or sex. It includes but is not limited to:
- Domestic abuse
 - Sexual violence/rape
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Stalking
 - Crimes committed in the name of “honour”
 - Forced marriage
 - Female genital mutilation/cutting
 - Faith based abuse
 - Violence against women in public spaces
 - Forced Prostitution and human trafficking
 - Digitally enabled Abuse
 - Economic Abuse
- 3.4 The UK government has identified the prevalence of VAWG as a national threat. The government has committed to a range of actions to tackle VAWG, this includes the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Health and Care Act 2022 and the Marriage and Civil Partnerships Act 2022.
- 3.5 VAWG/DA/SV is high in Brighton and Hove with domestic abuse being particularly prolific; police reports show that there were a total of 5,487 domestic violence incidents and crimes recorded by the police in 2021/22, of which 3,299 were crimes. Police data also shows that in the same period there was a recorded 1,239 sexual offences in Brighton & Hove, of which 1,077 were serious sexual offences including 397 rape offences. 463 incidents of stalking in Brighton & Hove recorded by the police in 2021/22. The majority of victims in all these cases were women and girls.
- 3.6 The Council is seeking to adopt a new Preventing and tackling VAWG/ DA/SV Strategy 2024-2028 which will be a partnership document. Survivors, residents, statutory, community and voluntary sector partners are all contributing to the development of the strategy, which builds on Brighton and

Hove's Strategy for Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls 2012 – 2017 and the Violence Against Women and Girls Framework 2018.

3.7 The strategy will be brought to Cabinet for approval later this year and will align with the Council Plan and the aims of the Brighton and Hove Community Safety Strategy 2023-2026. The Pan Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 is also a key reference. The aim of the new strategy will be to ensure everyone understands the role they play in tackling VAWG/DA/SV. It will include commitments and actions across Council services and partners drawing together key aspects of service policy and strategy to support a coordinated community response to the issues identified.

3.8 There has been extensive consultation undertaken to date and the findings from this can be summarised as: identified needs for better co-ordination across services, prioritising prevention and support for survivors and changing perpetrator behaviour. Building on these results, this cabinet report lays out the strategic direction and the further actions required to reach a final strategy document. The council recognises that VAWG/ DA/SV is a cross cutting issue and there is a need to strengthen our whole council response. We will undertake a series of workshops to identify joint actions and meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) across key services and partners. The timeline for the route map is as follows:

- 2023 – initial consultation phase completed with external partners and stakeholders.
- June 2024 - Strategic Direction document approved by Cabinet
- Summer 2024 – focus groups with key council services
- Autumn 2024 - finalise strategy and action planning
- Autumn 2024 - final strategy brought to Cabinet
- Winter 2024 – Strategy launch and establishment of strategic oversight board
- Spring 2025 – new commissioning strategy process developed
- Early Summer 2025 – Recommissioning process commences
- Winter 2025 – Contract awards made and new services in preparation

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 There are no alternative options for consideration.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 The strategic direction for VAWG/DA/SV services has been informed by consultation with stakeholders and residents, and with reference to the local and national strategic landscape. There have been multiple community consultation routes used to inform the evidence base for the Strategic Direction document included as Appendix 1. These include:

- Safe accommodation needs assessment (2021). The needs assessment considered data from across Sussex to understand

the support in safe accommodation needs for victims.

- Public Survey to research how safe people feel in Brighton and Hove (2022)
- Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment Workshop (2022)
- Three consultations with Housing Services officers (Feb/Mar 2023)
- Five stakeholder consultation events (Dec 2023)
- Public Survey to seek public opinion on the draft Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (Nov 2023 to Jan 24)
- Reimagine - Combatting Violence Against Women and Girls Event (29 Jan 24)

5.2 Some 233 responses were received to the public survey on a draft strategy. Of these, 60 people (23%) identified as survivors of VAWG, 41 respondents identified themselves as voluntary or third sector organization's and 31 as public sector. The findings confirmed that participants agreed with the four priorities consulted on (A breakdown of the findings is attached in Appendix 2). These were:

- **A strengthened coordinated response.** 233 people responded to this question 75% (176) strongly agreed with a further 19% (46) agreeing with the priority.
- **Prioritising prevention.** 229 people responded to this question, of these 79% (184) strongly agreed and 14% (32) agreed with the priority.
- **Support for survivors.** There were 229 responses to this part of the question. Of those, 88% (204) strongly agreed and a further 7% (17) agreed with the priority.
- **Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour.** There were 233 responses to this part of the survey with 185 (79%) strongly agreeing and a further 30 (13%) agreed with the priority.

5.3. The consultation findings highlighted a number of themes for inclusion in future workplans, including:

- a focus on prevention,
- the role of education and training,
- addressing perpetrator behaviour both by strengthening criminal justice response and behavior change programmes,
- community-based services for children and young people, including working with them to raise awareness and educate them about VAWG,
- enshrining intersectionality in the response to VAWG, to ensure support for all survivors across all risk levels, including those with protected characteristics and including consideration of prostitution,
- improving safety in public spaces and promotion of Safety Apps,
- support for survivors who have no recourse to public funds/refugee status.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any costs of the work needed to develop this strategy will be met from within current budgets for this service. The 24/25 budget of £1.502m is partially funded from grant income of £0.631m, the remainder from permanent budget allocation. Although, prior year spend has increased year on year, from £0.425m in 2021/22 to £0.933m in 2023/24, it has always come in within budget. It is anticipated that the strategy will be contained within the budget allocated and any significant variation will be reported as part of the Councils monthly budget monitoring process.

Name of finance officer consulted: Monica Brooks
Date consulted 30/04/2024

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has duties under a wide range of legislation and statutory guidance to safeguard, work together with other agencies and support victims of violence and domestic abuse. In particular, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets out measures to prevent domestic abuse and protect all victims and requires local authorities to report annually to Government on its work in this area. A Strategy as outlined in this report will assist the Council to meet its responsibilities in this area.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 30/05/24

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 In making the decision to approve the strategic direction set out in this report, consideration should also been given by Cabinet to the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 which requires the council to have due regard when taking decisions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
- Advance of equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.

- 8.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is under review and approval.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 None identified.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

Social Value and procurement implications

- 10.1 Social Value considerations will be part of all future commissioning for VAWG, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services commissioned by the Council.

Crime & disorder implications:

- 10.2 Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls is a priority for all Police Forces. This Strategy lends itself to ensuring crime reduction is an outcome for the strategy through bringing perpetrators to justice.

Public health implications:

- 10.3 VAWG is major public health issue and features UK Health Security Agencies work to reduce harm across the wider determinants of health and address wider system issue such a parenting, poverty, unemployment, education, housing, and homelessness, www.ukhsa.gov.uk. The link between VAWG and Suicide has been recognised and is part of the review of Domestic Homicide Review Guidance. The Strategy aligns with these considerations to ensure that VAWG is part of future workstreams.

11. Procurement implications

- 11.1 At this time there are no procurement implications for this strategy.

12. Crime & disorder implications:

- 12.1 The strategic direction document has been written to enable the Community Safety Partnership to meet the strategic aims set out within the Community Safety Strategy 2023-2026.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Local Authorities have been tasked by national government with strengthening the system and their response to VAWG. The Council Plan identifies a fair and inclusive city where people feel safe and welcome as a priority and there is a commitment to developing a Preventing and Tackling VAWG/ DA/SV Strategy. The strategic direction set out in this report and route map for VAWG/ DA/SV responds directly to the priorities set out in the Council Plan.
- 13.2 Officers will continue to work closely with partner organization's to develop the overarching Preventing and Tackling VAWG/ DA/SV Strategy and action plan.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Strategic Direction document May 2024 - Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – Brighton & Hove City Council's Strategic Direction 2024-2028
2. Public Consultation Responses document 2023

