

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 139

**Subject:** Preventing and tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, and sexual violence – Brighton & Hove City Council's strategy 2025-2028

**Date of meeting:** 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025

**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:** It is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards)

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

- 1.1 Violence against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWG/DA/SV) is one of the most significant crimes in Brighton & Hove that harms many of our residents every year.
- 1.2 This report sets out how the Council will support its mission to create a better Brighton and Hove for all, achieving a fair and inclusive city where people feel safe and welcome by delivering this strategy and action plan to prevent and tackle VAWG/DA/SV.
- 1.3 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 strategy

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the Preventing and Tackling Violence against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy 2025-2028 in appendix 1.

- 2.2 Cabinet agrees the implementation of the 3 year delivery plan set out in appendix 2.
- 2.3 Cabinet agrees to the setting up of a new VAWG/DA/SV Oversight Board to report into the Community Safety Partnership to ensure effective implementation, accountability and alignment with strategic objectives.

### **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 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
- 3.3 The current (2024) UK government has identified the prevalence of VAWG/DA/SV as a national threat. The Governments mission is to “reduce such violence by 50% (VAWG) within the next decade”.
- 3.4 VAWG/DA/SV is high in Brighton and Hove with domestic abuse making up 11% of all recorded crime in Brighton & Hove for 2023/2024. Police reports show that there were there 1,209 sexual offences, with which 1,009 of these incidents were classified as serious sexual offences. In addition, there were 460 stalking incidents reported to the Police in Brighton & Hove in 2023/2024.
- 3.5 The attached strategy is built around four key strategic priorities that guide our approach to addressing VAWG, DA and SV, these are below:

- **Strengthening the co-ordinated response** to all forms of VAWG, DA and SV irrespective of whether the incident occurs in private or public space, we will join up council and partner services and address gaps in provision.
- **Prioritising prevention** to end VAWG, DA and SV through a collaborative approach to awareness raising, data and information sharing, education and communication campaigns.
- **Supporting survivors** to ensure anyone affected by VAWG, DA and SV has access to high quality trauma-informed support. Working across public, private and third sector partners, with specialist and community providers, we will identify and support victims at an earlier stage.
- **Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour** by shifting the focus away from the victim's behaviour to the perpetrator's, strengthening the criminal justice response and supporting behaviour change.

3.6 To ensure a clear and targeted delivery, we have also developed an action plan directly under each strategic priority. For each priority, we have outlined a specific action to be taken and its intended outcome. This structure allows partners and stakeholders to clearly understand the desired impact of each action, supporting a coordinated effort toward achieving our overarching goals. The full list of actions can be found in appendix 2.

3.7 To ensure effective implementation, accountability and alignment with strategic objectives, a structured governance model will guide the delivery and tracking of actions. The new VAWG/DA/SV Oversight Board will report to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the board will monitor actions, address emerging challenges, and adjust our response as needed (see Appendix 4 for Oversight Board draft terms of reference – these will be further developed with partners as part of setting up the Board). The Board will include representatives from other senior Boards including the Adult Safeguarding Board, Children's Safeguarding Board, Community Safety Partnership Board and Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board will report directly to the Community Safety Partnership Board and report to the other senior Boards as required and align with the Cabinet.

#### 4. **Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

4.1 One option was not to develop a new strategy and action plan, and to continue the reactive responses to VAWG. However, doing so would inhibit a pro-active approach and long-term planning, and would ignore the rapidly changing threat that is VAWG in the city.

#### 5. **Community engagement and consultation**

5.1 The development of the strategic aims and this strategy was informed by a review of key documents, including national guidance to support victims and survivors of VAWG, DA and SV existing council strategies and engagement events between November 2023 and September 2024.

5.2 The council carried out a public consultation on the strategic aims. 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 feedback demonstrated strong support for our four key priorities:

- A strengthened Coordinated Response: 75% of respondents strongly agreed, and 19% agreed.
- Prioritising Prevention: 79% strongly agreed, and 14% agreed.
- Support for Survivors: 88% strongly agreed, and 7% agreed.
- Building an Accountable Community and Changing Perpetrator Behaviour: 79% strongly agreed, and 13% agreed.

5.3 Alongside the public consultation, we also organised workshops with local stakeholders and community members to discuss the four strategic priorities in detail, ensuring diverse perspectives were considered and securing active partner involvement.

- VAWG strategy consultation – A stronger coordinated community response (Thursday, December 7, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Prioritising Prevention (Tuesday, December 12, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Support for Survivors (Friday, December 15, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Accountable community and perpetrator behaviour (Wednesday, December 6, 2023)

5.4 To ensure a whole council approach to preventing and tackling VAWG/DA/SV, we brought together in September 2024 council officers from across directorates and services areas to run an engagement workshop to ensure a council wide alignment on VAWG/DA/SV actions and strategic priorities.

5.5 Alongside our internal and external engagement, we also took a robust approach to the reviewing of data, internal strategies, legislative frameworks, lessons from safeguarding reviews, domestic homicide review reports, and analysis on national reports. To see a more in-depth outline and analysis of this please see the full strategy in appendix 1.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 Any costs of the work needed to develop this strategy, including the creation of the Oversight Board structure and officer involvement with the board meetings 4 or 5 times a year will be met from within current budget resources for this service. The 2024/25 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 within budget. Any significant variations will be reported as part of the Councils monthly budget monitoring process.

Name of finance officer consulted: Michael Bentley Date consulted  
06/01/2025

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 The Council has duties under a wide range of legislation and statutory guidance to safeguard and to work together with other agencies and to support victims of violence and domestic abuse.
- 8.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 in particular sets out a range of measures to prevent domestic abuse and protect all victims. It imposes legal duties on local authorities to assess, strategise, and provide accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse, while also ensuring cooperation with other organisations to enhance the support system for victims.
- 8.3 Amongst other things, the Act requires local authorities to report annually to Government on its work in this area and to develop and publish the Strategy appended to this Report. Taking the actions outlined in this Report will assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities in this area.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson Date consulted 14/01/25

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The cabinet report highlights considerations informed by this EIA. These are summarised below:

Public consultations revealed significant safety concerns, due to sexual harassment, particularly at night, and the need for improved support and respect for dignity for those with lived experiences of VAWG, alongside a balanced provision of services to meet the needs of a diverse city like Brighton. The EIA highlights the need for a co-ordinated community response to VAWG, DA, and SV, with the support of key statutory partners with a focus on prevention, support for survivors, and accountability for perpetrators.

It is important to address funding reduction implications for those impacted, particularly for joint commissioning, and recognise the disproportionate impact on women and girls, alongside gender normativity, inequality and intersectional impacts. Intersectional considerations and an inclusive approach are important so that we do not minimise how VAWG, DV ad SV have an additional impact on top of age and gender when there are additional layers of impact being disabled, from a migrant or socio-economically vulnerable, Black and non-White-presenting Minoritised Ethnic background, and LGBTQIA+, especially Trans, Non-Binary, and Intersex people. The strategy and EIA outline several recommendations and mitigating actions, including various statistics and layers of impacts for the cabinet to consider in provision of services

- 9.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached in appendix 3.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

10.1 None identified.

## **11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

### **Social Value and procurement implications**

11.1 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:**

11.2 Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are serious violent crimes, and this strategy directly aligns with the Councils Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy 2023-2026

### **Public health implications:**

11.3 VAWG is a major health issue and features in UK Health Security Agencies work to reduce harm across the wider detriments of health and address wider system issues such as homelessness, parenting, poverty, education and unemployment, [www.ukhsa.gov.uk](http://www.ukhsa.gov.uk). The link between VAWG and suicide has now been recognized with the inclusion of suicide in Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) formerly known as Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR). The strategy aligns with these workstreams and we will continue to work with Health to address health inequalities linked to Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

## **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 Throughout the journey of developing this report, we have developed four key priorities with the recommendation of focusing on: A strengthened coordinated response, prioritising prevention, supporting survivors, and building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour. These priorities will guide our action plan and will be accountable to our newly developed VAWG/DA/SV oversight board.

13.2 The recommendations set out in this report will not have all the answers to the endemic issues of VAWG/DA/SV. However, the priorities developed and supported by residents set out a set of ideas, that if executed effectively, does have the potential to create a Brighton & Hove that is taking serious stand to prevent and tackle VAWG/DA/SV at home and on our streets.

13.3 We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our stakeholders, residents and officers, who have shared their experience and expertise to develop this strategy. This report would not have possible without this valuable contribution and time.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Brighton & Hove City Council's Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2025-2028
2. Action plan as a stand-alone document, which is currently embedded as part of the strategy.
3. Full Equalities Assessment Impact Report.
4. Oversight Board ToRs

