

**Subject:** Fawcett Society Charter  
**Date of Meeting:** 23 April 2009  
**Report of:** Acting Director of Strategy & Governance  
**Contact Officer:** Name: Mary Evans Tel: 29-1577  
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**Key Decision:** No  
**Wards Affected:** All

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Fawcett Society has recently launched a new charter to encourage organisations to support their campaign against the objectification of women.
- 1.2 At Council on 19 March 2009 a notice of motion was introduced by Cllr Amy Kennedy and seconded by Cllr Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett that the Council sign up to the Fawcett Charter and that Council propose a new blue plaque to commemorate Millicent Fawcett.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Cabinet restates its strong commitment to Gender Equality and the work that is already underway.
- 2.2 That Cabinet proposes that the Commemorative Plaques Panel considers erecting a blue plaque outside Brighton Town Hall to honour the memory of Millicent Fawcett

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 The Fawcett Society campaigns for equality between women and men in the UK on pay, pensions, poverty, justice and politics. The current chair of their trustees is Angela Mason who is the National Advisor for Equalities and Cohesion at the Improvement and Development Agency.
- 3.2 The Fawcett Charter was launched last November to encourage organisations to tackle the objectification of women, particularly in relation to lap dancing clubs. They are particularly concerned that lap dancing clubs are being increasingly used for corporate entertainment. The components of the charter are:
- Support for Fawcett's aim of challenging the objectification of women;
  - A commitment to audit employee expenses to ensure local authority money is not being spent in lap dancing clubs;
  - A commitment to review internal policies and procedures to ensure they adequately address potential occurrences of objectification.

3.3 The Fawcett Society takes its name from Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett who made it her life's work to lead the peaceful campaign for women's votes. Millicent Fawcett was married to Henry Fawcett, MP for Brighton from 1865 to 1874, and in 1897 she spoke to the NUWSS Conference in Brighton Town Hall.

#### **4. CURRENT GENDER EQUALITY WORK**

4.1 The Council has an existing Gender Equality Scheme which sets out our response to our duties as a public authority under the Equality Act 2006. The actions within the Gender Equality Scheme are reviewed annually and now form part of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2008-2011. The objectives of the Gender Equality Scheme are already in line with the aspirations of the Fawcett Society and actions contained within the Action Plan include the work to ensure equal pay and equality for women and men within employment and service delivery.

4.2 The national campaign "Together we can end violence against women and girls" has visited Brighton & Hove and a series of local focus groups are underway to inform the development of the national approach. Locally the Partnership Community Safety Team are leading on work to address sexual violence and abuse building on existing good practice in relation to domestic violence.

4.3 At Council on 8 March 2007 the Council agreed to respond to government consultation to call for the discretion to set policy concerning adult entertainment and to be able to take a position that the council would not normally consider favourably, applications proposing strip-tease entertainment and lap-dancing. On Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, representatives from across the country met with MPs and Peers to urge the Government to strengthen proposed reforms to lap dancing club licensing rules. This included the Deputy Chair of our Licensing Committee, Councillor Jeanne Lepper.

4.4 One of the commitments within the Fawcett Charter is to audit employee expenses to ensure that money is not spent in lap-dancing clubs. In common with other Local Authorities we would not expect any expenses of this type to be incurred.

4.5 The city council's Financial Regulations provide a framework that requires all expenses incurred to be for legitimate business reasons, and to be certified by a second authorised officer (whether these expenses are reimbursed through the creditors system or petty cash). In addition the Code of Conduct for Employees requires all offers of gifts and hospitality above £25 to be declared and recorded. Internal Audits are carried out annually on the creditors system and registers of gifts and hospitality. Expenses claims are reviewed as part of other planned audit reviews. Any evidence of expenses being incurred on lap dancing or strip clubs identified through these audits (or specific allegations) would be investigated by Internal Audit.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The resource allocation for blue plaques is managed with existing budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice Date: 08/04/09*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 08/04/09*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 These are addressed within the body of the report.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no implications

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications

### Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no implications

### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 These are addressed within the body of the report.

## **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 Not applicable.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Given the existing commitments and work underway, becoming a signatory to the Fawcett Charter would not add to or alter the Council's gender equality work.

- 7.2 The Charter appears to be targeted to private sector organisations where the use of corporate entertainment is commonplace. The Council's policies and procedures are prescriptive and restrictive in relation to the appropriate use of public funds and therefore an audit of employee expenses would not be a good use of resources.

- 7.3 Cabinet is asking the Commemorative Plaques Panel to consider erecting a blue plaque in recognition of the contribution of Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett to gender equality, and her local connection with Brighton & Hove.

Brighton & Hove City Council funds one blue plaque every year and the proposal for Millicent Fawcett should be considered on its merits, alongside any other nominations that are received by the Panel.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendices:**

None

#### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

#### **Background Documents**

None