

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council
MEETING	18th November 2021
TITLE:	Update on progress re: Council cross party motion regarding safety for women and girls in public places, July 21 st 2021
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: The motion Appendix 2: A response Cllr Romero's correspondence Appendix 3: Summary of bid to Home Office fund	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 'Womens safety' has become highlighted in public conscience, it is acknowledged that this is most usually an issue of male violence which must be addressed. Bath & North East Somerset also acknowledges that crime, particularly violence against the person due to their protected characteristics, will not be tolerated.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

2.1 To note the progress being made on the implementation of the council motion regarding safety for women and girls in public places.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 **Note to readers:** *Although 'womens safety' has become highlighted in the public conscience, it is acknowledged that this is most usually an issue of male violence which must be addressed. Bath & North East Somerset also acknowledges that crime, particularly violence against the person due to their protected characteristics will not be tolerated.* It is widely discussed that the safety of women in public spaces will only improve if we focus on changing the attitudes of some boys/men towards girls/women, and also do more to prevent and address the violent behaviour of some boys/men towards girls/women.

3.2 The motion (Appendix 1) commits Council to the following :

7. Resolutely rejects behaviour and actions which may cause women and girls from any background to have to modify their activities in order to feel safe.

- No follow up action necessary

8. Champions the right of women and girls to be protected from violence and harassment in public places within B&NES.

- Councillors Dine Romero and Lisa O'Brien lead and chair a cross party women elected members group focussing on womens safety following recent high profile cases. It meets monthly and is driving the response to the Council motion.
- In 2020 in the early months of Pandemic Community Safety Officer worked with providers and the OPCC to secure additional funding from the Home Office to purchase more sophisticated IT, improve telephone connectivity and switchboard facilities to enable them to continue to provide a high quality service to victims of domestic abuse. Interestingly, many said that remote working arrangements facilitated contact with services as they could find a safe place and time more readily to make a zoom call over attending a specific location.
- The Community safety officer also achieved funding to support services to provide Domestic Abuse related counselling as an enhancement of their service provision, this was vital as all services reported that there was an increase in complex cases.
- The Council's main domestic abuse provider runs a food pantry as part of their services for families and victims, we also bid for an uplift to enable the capacity of the scheme to be extended during the pandemic.
- In June of 2021 a successful bid was made to the MOJ for 2 additional posts to support the work of our main provider who has seen a rise in complex cases but also many more older victims. We have a higher than average older population and similarly high number of older female victims of domestic abuse. One of the new posts focuses on older victims who are often hidden from services as they themselves may not recognise that they are suffering domestic abuse.
- B&NES Council co-ordinates the Domestic Abuse Partnership and in preparation for the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act workshops and focus groups were organised to raise awareness and advise partners of their duties under the Act.
- When new policies/services are developed within the Council, the Equality Impact Assessment process includes the need to consider any positive and negative impacts in relation to sex. Therefore, where relevant, consideration is given to issues that impact upon the safety of women and girls.
- The Corporate equality officer has requested all schools to record, respond and report all serious equality incidents to the council, including incidents relating to sexual harassment, sexual assault or sexist behaviour and language. Whilst

this does not relate to public spaces, if schools address these issues they could help prevent other issues arising outside of school in public places.

9. Believes that this principle should be embedded in our Council strategies going forward.

- Council Legal & Democratic Services Team have recommended that the strategies in the Council's Policy & Budget Framework should be reviewed by Council to ensure the principles are embedded in the strategies that drive the practical changes required to deliver this. The Policy & Budget Framework is part of the Council's Constitution.

10. Supports schemes such as 'Ask Angela' and calls on licensed businesses to participate and to take active steps to ensure harassment and sexual intimidation is taken seriously through participation in this scheme.

- The Night Time Economy Group has taken responsibility for progressing this, Bath BID convened a planning meeting and has gained commitment to engage with license holders via a training event, as well as leading a revitalisation of the Ask for Angela campaign in the local area. Relevant Council teams are supporting this work.

11. Calls on Council departments and other bodies responsible for public spaces e.g. housing associations, parish councils, transport providers, to improve the security of public spaces by encouraging them to review lighting (in streets, car parks and parks) CCTV provision and other pertinent means to improve safety.

- Cllr Romero attended the Parish liaison meeting with PCC Mark Shelford to discuss the motion. She has also written to all relevant bodies requesting information on their current work on public, particularly womens safety. Helpful responses are arriving; the intention is to include samples / summaries for Council in appendix 2 of this document (yet to be collated).

12. Calls on schools, colleges, universities and youth organisations to renew their efforts to promote a 'safety and respect for all' agenda amongst their students.

- Cllr Romero has written requesting a statement from education establishments; she also acknowledged and thanked them for the good work they have already carried out in this field.

13. Requests an update on progress on these matters to Council on 18 November 2021.

- This report constitutes the update.
- The Council's Community Safety Team submitted a joint bid (Universities, City of College, Bath BID, Youth Connect South West) to the Home Office 'Safety of Women at Night' fund (summary, appendix 3). Result of the bid is due by start

November 2021. All partners have committed to working together on this agenda irrespective of success or otherwise of the application for funding.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Consideration of crime and disorder, planning, human rights, equality, public health.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 To be carried out within existing resources, although a bid has been submitted to Home Office for extra funding.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITY

7.1 Bath & North East Somerset will continue to identify equality impacts through the assessment process.

7.2 A strategy is in draft responding to the domestic abuse act 2021 to outline current provision of domestic abuse and violence services along with refuge provision.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 None

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Head of Legal and Democratic Services has approved this report. Director of HR has approved this report in (planned) absence of Director of Finance

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Appendix 1

The motion:

It reads:

Council:

- 1. Believes everyone should have the right to be safe from violence and harassment on our streets.*
- 2. Recognises that the killing of Sarah Everard has, again, brought the issue of behaviour towards women and girls and their safety to the forefront.*
- 3. Acknowledges it's not just women who are at risk but that any individual may be vulnerable to attack for various reasons.*

It also notes:

- 4. There are already many excellent initiatives and campaigns by local and national organisations aimed at safeguarding the welfare of individuals e.g. 'Got Ya Back' and 'Ask Angela'*
- 5. Violent incidents are thankfully rare in B&NES and our police force already work closely with Council officials to combat sexual harassment and other types of aggression.*
- 6. However, every occurrence of intimidation or attack is one too many.*

Council therefore:

- 7. Resolutely rejects behaviour and actions which may cause women and girls from any background to have to modify their activities in order to feel safe.*
- 8. Champions the right of women and girls to be protected from violence and harassment in public places within B&NES.*
- 9. Believes that this principle should be embedded in our Council strategies going forward.*
- 10. Supports schemes such as 'Ask Angela' and calls on licensed businesses to participate and to take active steps to ensure harassment and sexual intimidation is taken seriously through participation in this scheme.*
- 11. Calls on Council departments and other bodies responsible for public spaces e.g. housing associations, parish councils, transport providers, to improve the security of public spaces by encouraging them to review lighting (in streets, car parks and parks) CCTV provision and other pertinent means to improve safety.*
- 12. Calls on schools, colleges, universities and youth organisations to renew their efforts to promote a 'safety and respect for all' agenda amongst their students.*
- 13. Requests an update on progress on these matters to Council on 18 November 2021.*

Appendix 2

Response to Cllr Romero's correspondence:

Thank you for contacting us about the Safety for Women resolution made on 22nd July 2021. We have discussed the resolution at our equality, diversity and inclusion colleague group and I am responding on behalf of Curo.

We support the resolution and are committed to protecting women and girls from violence and harassment, both inside and outside of their homes.

In a typical year Curo supports between 200 and 240 women who have been victims of male violence.

We are committed to making our public spaces as safe as possible. We have recently installed additional CCTV to our city centre estates at Rosewell Court, Ballance Street and Snow Hill having listened to residents' concerns and worked in partnership with them to agree the most effective locations. Our Estates Partnership Board, a resident engagement group, act as advocates for our estates, and we encourage our estate management to be resident led. Our estates team quality assures all our external and indoor communal spaces bi-annually as a minimum.

We have committed to spending £1.16 million per year, for the next 9 years, on improving the look and feel of our estates with safety being a key priority.

In response to the resolution, we would like to raise two points that we think merit further consideration by the Council;

1. The problem is not one of women's safety, but of male violence toward women. We would urge the Council to consider what steps they are taking to ask why men perpetrate such crimes and how schools, childrens' and youth services can help prevent boys growing up into men who are violent.
2. When designing new estates, we can find ourselves at odds with planning preferences to limit lighting. We understand the driver for this is to protect the night sky from light pollution and preserve Bath's world heritage status, however we feel at times this is prioritised to the extent that it would compromise the safety of people using those spaces at night. A recent example of these conflicting priorities would be our Woodland Walk at Mulberry Park.

It is worth noting that paragraphs 99-103 of the Charter for Social Housing Residents (The Social Housing White Paper) sets out the government's plans for the Decent Homes Standard. It states; *"We are mindful that the design of a neighbourhood or estate, and the homes within them, can also be a factor in local levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Landlords are expected to keep homes secure and protected from entry by intruders. But we recognise that we can go further. Physical measures such as CCTV, alley-gating and good quality lighting can all be effective in keeping neighbourhoods safe and secure. We want to explore how we can go further in using the Decent Homes Standard to keep residents secure and help tackle anti-social behaviour"*.

Therefore, we are likely to see lighting of shared spaces included within the standard, with compliance a regulatory requirement for social housing providers.

We will be sharing the resolution with our Leadership group to ensure that our strategies and plans support the resolution and that any potential conflicts are mitigated.

Appendix 3

Summary of bid to home office fund

Summary

The safety of women and girls is a B&NES Council focussed initiative, full Council passed a resolution to this effect on 21 July 2021

Our programme will comprise 3 main targeted approaches designed to comprehensively support potential victims of sexual violence and to bolster their confidence in services specific to improve reporting of such incidence:

- The whole population of B&NES
- Specific vulnerable or potentially vulnerable women, Women living a street-based lifestyle and female students
- Safety of women in the NTE, bars including student Union bars, taxi drivers, NTE taxi Marshals and improving the Safe Space to encourage women who face a risk or perceived risk to access it.

B&NES wide

- Design and deliver a comprehensive **Media Campaign** and resources, raising awareness of the role everyone can play – including a press campaign, “out of doors” posters (e.g., at bus stops, bus and train stations) outdoor Ad Vans, targeted social media and utilise community radio stations across B&NES, targeted and significant leaflet drops.
- **Taxi Driver Awareness raising and identification to impact on safety** this will impact on the safety of all users. However, the focus is on ensuring taxi drivers are able to provide support as appropriate. The package to include: adapting existing materials to create and deliver an innovative package for taxi drivers, the owners/manager of taxi companies based on the Bystander principles on women’s safety, to help identify possible indicators of different types of abuse, and how to respond or report concerns. The same resources will be used to support Taxi Marshal awareness.
- **Taxi Marshals** Pre-Covid B&NES had a comprehensive virtual NTE team including, in effect acting as a team with joint street briefings and co-ordinated activities. This virtual team includes the police, the Street Medics, the Street Pastors, and the Taxi Marshals. As set out above the loss of revenue and the reduction of NTE activities dictated that limited resources be diverted to daytime and Covid related activities. Of course, whilst we are seeing a recovery of the NTE, we have some way to go before revenues recover. This funding will allow a phased reinstatement of the Taxi Marshals to be put in place in line with this recover.

Focus on women’s safety in the NTE

- **‘Be the Change’** Working with the Student Community Partnership, both Universities and Bath College, create & deliver a co-training package for University & FE staff. It will build on the University’s old #neverok campaign and

SARSAS's previous 'pause-play-stop' which now be badged 'Be the change' and align with Bath Spa University's major strategic project on Sexual Violence and Mental Health. FE colleges and schools year 10-11 will also be targeted. With greater emphasis on bystanders, in addition to helping the community spot problematic behaviour and respond, it focusses on the behaviour of male perpetrators rather than giving women advice for e.g., about how to dress.

- **Improving & promoting the 'Safe Space' facility to make it more accessible to women and girls** Youth Connect South West (YCSW) are leading on this. Specifically, to improve the facility to enable women and girls who may feel unsafe and or vulnerable to use the space with confidence.
- In addition to plugging into the resources already described as appropriate a specific package for NTE staff, additional Marshals who will assist in promoting the following of Safer Places primarily those focussing on promoting positive behaviour: **Surveillance:** places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked **Ownership:** places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community **Activity:** places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times
- Creation of a new post, as identified by the research above* to **address the identified drivers of violence and provide support for vulnerable women living a street-based lifestyle.** The work would provide specialist, trauma informed groupwork and 1:1 for women who are leading a street-based lifestyle would be very welcome. The focus could be around supporting women to stay safe, including entering/encouraging healthy relationships. For example, a woman recently asked us to purchase a bodycam for her to keep it in her sleeping bag as a deterrent to the male rough sleepers who, she feels, are assaulting her whilst she is asleep.