

Subject: Item from Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee – Women in Local Government

Date of Meeting: 21 November 2019

Report of: Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law

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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Action Required of the Policy & Resources Committee:

The Tourism Equalities Communities & Culture Committee recommends that Policy & Resources Committee be recommended to:

- (1) Approve the proposals as set out in Appendix 1
- (2) Request officers to promote all roles, including senior roles, available for flexible working and part-time.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

TOURISM, EQUALITIES, COMMUNITIES & CULTURE COMMITTEE

4.00pm, 21 November 2019

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Robins (Chair, Grimshaw (Deputy Chair), Rainey (Opposition Spokesperson), Nemeth (Group Spokesperson), Ebel, Evans, Mears, O’Quinn, Powell and Simson

- 26.1 The Committee considered a report of Executive Lead for Strategy, governance and Law (Monitoring Officer) prepared in response to the decision of Full Council to explore options implement the recommendations of the Fawcett Society on women in local government.
- 26.2 It was explained that in July 2017, The Fawcett Society in partnership with the Local Government Information unit had published a report on women in local government entitled “Does Local Government Work for Women?” The report had looked at the representation and experiences of women elected to local authorities. It made a number of recommendations for improvement. In December 2018 the Policy and Resources Committee agreed a number of actions but some of the recommendations required further consideration.
- 26.3 The actions proposed in response to the outstanding Fawcett Report recommendations were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that these plans had been discussed by a cross-party group consisting of the Group whips.
- 26.4 The Chair noted that the following proposed amendment had been received from the Green Group:
To amend recommendation 2.2 and add recommendation 2.3 as shown in ***bold italics:***
- “2.2 That Members recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee that the proposals set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved, ***with the additional recommendation 2.3;***

That the Committee requests officers to promote all roles, available for flexible working and part time.” (Proposed by Councillor and seconded by Councillor Rainey)

- 26.5 Councillor Powell spoke in support of her proposed amendment stating that whilst the work completed to date and proposed going forward was commended, she was of the view that the council should be doing all that it could both to support women in the workplace and to seek to make them fully aware of the flexible working options available to them. Councillor Rainey stated that she concurred in that view and therefore seconded the proposed amendment.
- 26.6 The Community Works invitee, Anusree Biswas Sasidharan, welcomed the report and the work that had been undertaken to implement the outstanding Fawcett Society recommendations. A great deal of work had obviously been undertaken and that was to be commended.
- 26.7 The Executive Lead for Strategy, Governance and Law explained that the report related primarily to the appointment of elected Members. The Council had arrangements in place in relation to the appointment of officers and that appointment to some posts for instance some group appointments fell outside the direct remit of the council.
- 26.8 Councillors Powell and Rainey stated that notwithstanding the comments made, which were noted and understood they wished their amendment to be considered and voted on. Considering that it was very important to encourage and enable flexible working arrangements and to seek to ensure that potential female councillors and staff were fully aware of those possibilities.
- 26.9 Councillors Nemeth and Mears stated that they did not feel able to support the proposed amendments as though happy to support the report recommendations as they stood, if amended they would take them outside the remit of what the council could do. Candidates were chosen on merit and group leaders were not precluded from operating that on a job share or on the grounds of gender.
- 29.10 Councillor Simson whilst understanding the rationale for the wording of the proposed amendment struggled with it as currently worded especially as the report related primarily to elected members rather than officers. Councillor Simson stated that she might feel able to support an amendment to the amendment which referred to “all roles” without stipulating what those roles might be. That was tentatively suggested as an amendment to the Green Group amendment but was not agreed. The Committee then moved to a vote on the Green Group amendment.
- 26.11 A vote was then taken on the proposed Green Group amendment which was agreed by a vote of 7 with 3 abstentions. It was then voted on as the substantive amendment and was agreed by a vote of 7 with 3 abstentions.

26.12 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the Committee agrees the plans to address the outstanding Fawcett Society recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and

26.13 **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** – (2) That Members recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the proposals set out in Appendix 1 be approved, with the addition of (3) below; and

(3) That the Committee requests officers to promote all roles, including senior roles, available for flexible working and part-time.