

Brighton & Hove City Council

Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

Agenda Item 22

- Subject:** **Gender Equality**
Deputation referred from the Public Engagement meeting held on the 12 July 2022
- Date of meeting:** **15 September 2022**
- Report of:** **Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources**
- Contact Officer:** **Name: Anthony Soyinka**
Email: anthony.soyinka@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- Ward(s) affected:** **All**

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To receive the following deputation which was presented at and referred from the public engagement meeting held on the 12 July 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee responds to the deputation either by noting it or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter which may give consideration to a range of options and writes to the deputation spokesperson setting out the committee's decision(s).

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 To receive the following deputation:

Gender Inequality in Brighton & Hove

Gender inequality is clearly a major issue internationally, nationally, but also here locally.

The disastrous US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v Wade has garnered a lot of international media attention, but abortion is still criminalised in England, Wales and Scotland under the Abortion Act 1967 unless specific exceptions and tests are met and abortion services are yet to be commissioned in Northern Ireland.

In the justice system, recent data shows that almost 1,800 rapes were reported in Sussex last year, but only 50 cases went to trial and only 22 men were convicted. There is so more to be done to counteract violence against women and girls (VAWG), and to stop women and girls being killed, raped or physically assaulted in their homes and on the streets. That includes rethinking how we educate our children before sending them out into the world.

In health, recent NHS data shows over a third of women in Brighton & Hove missed smear tests and cervical screenings last year, despite cervical cancer killing hundreds of women every year. This can be down to fear, lack of understanding, and NHS pressures. We need greater public health awareness to help people receive the healthcare they need.

In the economy, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, the pandemic, the benefits cap and the cuts to universal credit. Extortionate childcare costs unfairly impact women, preventing many who want to work from doing so. Period poverty has escalated and there are charities providing red boxes in schools and food banks, but there is more the council can do to tackle period poverty.

What we need to see is the Council working with organisations across Brighton & Hove to set up a Gender Equality Strategy, to focus on issues such as Health, VAWG and Safety, Economic Disadvantage and Education. We need investment in public health awareness campaigns to address gender health inequalities.

We need a proper Night Time Safety Charter to support vulnerable people in our bars and clubs and streets at night. We need funding to tackle period poverty, and more places for those in need to access free sanitary products.

We need gender equality training and education in our schools, so boys are taught about patriarchy, misogyny and VAWG from a young age and the next generation of men can be better allies in the struggle for equality.

We acknowledge the positive work being done by women's organisations across the city, and we recognise and applaud their efforts. We are also proud of Brighton & Hove's reputation as an inclusive, diverse city. However, the gender inequality issues we face in this city are not just reflective of the national picture, in some areas they are acute and they are worse.

For this reason, we hope that the council will respond to this deputation in good faith, and honestly engage with the specific issues we have raised, and not try to distract by focusing on work being done in parallel areas.

Signed:

R Wilkinson

R Baylis

T Burden

B Sankey

J D Allen

P Palmano

L A Pumm

