

Full Council

10 November 2020



Report of: Penny Gane, Chair Bristol Women's Commission (BWC)

Title: Annual Update: Work of Bristol Women's Commission 2019/2020

Ward: City-wide

Presenting Report: Penny Gane, BWC

Recommendation

- Note report and contribution to policy locally and nationally
- Continue supporting implementation of the strategic work and recommendations of the BWC
- Support the work of the Bristol Women's' Commission

Summary

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the BWC during November 2019 – October 2020

The significant issues in the report are:

The report sets out the work undertaken by the BWC in the priority areas of; Safety, Health, Education, Economy and Business. Special attention should be drawn to the work of the Economy task group, and Business and Women's Charter detailed in appendix 1.

1. Relevant action plans, policy and strategy

1. [European Charter of Equality for Women and Men in Local Life](#)
2. One City Plan
3. Bristol City Council Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy
4. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018
5. Women’s Health Plan 2019
6. Bristol City Council’s Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018-2023

2. Consultation

Internal

BWC has a cross party membership of Elected Members and is supported by Councillor Helen Godwin in her role as Cabinet member for Women, Families and Homes (lead member for Children’s Services). Ann James is the new lead BCC officer on the Commission. The Commission is supported by Cherene Whitfield, Equalities Officer.

External

Please see the list below of all the organisations which make up the Commission and its 5 task groups. The Commission has more than 70 external agencies participating across all the work of the Commission.

BWC has the following membership:

- Avon and Somerset Police
- Be on Board
- Bristol City Council (BCC) Councillors and Officers
- Bristol Women’s Voice (BWV)
- Business West
- City of Bristol College (CoBC)
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Fawcett Society
- First Group
- Mayoral Commission on Racial Equality (CoRE), Bristol Head teachers Forum,
- One City
- Trade Union Congress (TUC)
- Trinity Mirror
- University Hospitals Bristol (UHB),
- University of Bristol (UOB)
- University West of England(UWE)
- Volunteering Organisation Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration (Voscur)

Chair: Penny Gane, BWV

The commission has representatives on the Transport, Health and Well Being and Economy Board.

Members of the commission have also taken part in the Commission on Domestic Violence set up by Cllr Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor and Cllr Helen Godwin.

3. Context

- BWV has faced the same issues as many organisations during the pandemic in that we missed 2 meetings as commissioners attended to a new way of delivering services in their own organisations. During this period communications were continued via newsletters from the Chair. It has meant that task groups have had to reorganise or postpone some activities.
- The economic and social impact of the pandemic meant that greater numbers of women were subjected to violence and abuse, more women’s jobs were put at risk, many women’s mental health has suffered, women took a disproportionate share of the domestic burden due to closure of schools and nurseries, and women were and are hugely overrepresented in adult social care and nursing posts.
- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and the toppling of the Colston statue focussed attention on what we were already aware of and has been evidenced by the Bristol Women’s Voice City Listening Project (CLP), that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women experience particular inequalities in relation to access to services, health, employment and indeed, just feeling part of the city. These inequalities have been deepened by Covid-19.
- As a commission we are regrouping and prioritising actions for the recovery both economically and socially.

Progress 2019/2020

BWC meetings

This year BWC has hosted speakers including:

- One City- Andrea Dell and Ed Rowberry One City for Women: a workshop to identify ways our organisations can work together to address women’s inequality in the city and to ensure BWC agenda items are taken up by One City Boards. One City is now a member of the commission.
- Allan McLeod-Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) coordinator, BCC. SDG 5: Empowering women and girls
- Dr. Barbara Brown-Director BWV-CLP preliminary findings from powerful research funded by Government Equalities Office(GEO)
- Camilla Rigby contributed by newsletter during lockdown on her newly launched Women’s Work Lab - an employment training programme to offer workplace training and professional work experience aimed at socially disadvantaged and unemployed mothers.
- Paul Sylvester, BCC Head of Housing options, and Cllr Helen Godwin, Cabinet member for Women, Families and Homes- to discuss women’s safety in and following supported housing

Women and the Economy - Lead: Diane Bunyan BWV

Task group membership: UoB, UWE, TUC, BWV, Fairplay South West, Women’s Budget Group

- The task group’s main focus has been on continuing to advocate for the contribution of women to the local economy to be recognised and facilitated.
- Pre Covid-19 46% of those employed in Bristol were women. The CLP research was conducted prior to lockdown and the issues that are raised are not new. Women’s barriers to employment are:
 - The lack of flexible, affordable childcare
 - The need for flexible working, without the penalty of precarious and zero hours contracts
 - Lack of opportunities for advancement
 - The cost and inflexibility of public transport
 - Lack of access to training courses due to caring responsibilities, inflexibility of benefit conditions.
- These issues particularly impacted on Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, disabled people, older/ young women and single parents – 90% are women.
- Covid-19 has highlighted and broadened these pre-existing inequalities and women are in danger of losing any gains they have made over the years.
- The Task Group has used its place on the Economy Board to raise the need for the Recovery Strategy for the City to recognise and address the needs of women. This is now included in the Plan. The group has produced a practical, evidence- based report [Delivering an Inclusive Economy Post covid-19](#) proposing actions for employers and decision makers to support women in this crisis (Appendix 2).
- The group has participated in the consultations on the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Economic Recovery Strategy and contributed to the work of the Women’s Budget Group. The main aim and focus of the group’s activity are to show that the current growth model needs to broaden and recognise the value of women’s work and all forms of care if it is to be truly inclusive and sustainable.
- As far as the group is aware the childcare pilot proposed by the One City working group has not been progressed. It is believed that discussions have taken place with developers at Temple Quay and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA).
- The task group lead presented to the Economy Board on 8/9/20 along with Maud Perrier from UoB on the crisis for childcare and there is reference to it in the One City Economic Renewal Recovery Plan as well as the BWC document.

Women and girls’ education -Leads: Marian Curran, Principal St Brendan’s Sixth Form College, Laura Beynon Deputy Head Redmaids High School

Member organisations: Bristol Head teacher’s forum, CoBC, BCC

- The Task Group had been planning to put on conferences for girls, building on the success of previous conferences which brought girls together from across the city to learn about non-traditional careers and to exchange views on their schools and personal lives. Due to the pandemic this was impossible.
- The two new leads have begun to organise a programme including Leadership for Women in Educational settings. They are seeking potential mentors.

Women’s Health - Lead: Monira Chowdhury- CASS, Carol Metters- Next Link

Membership: BWV, Missing Link, Community Access Support Service, Self-Injury Support, Womankind, GPs, UoB, UWE and the Centre for health and clinical research.

- The Women’s Health Task Group has been very concerned about the disproportional impact of Covid -19 on different groups of women i.e. younger women working in health & care, disabled people, older women and particularly Black and Asian women.
- The task group members have been working on various projects and issues concerning those impacted by the pandemic:
 - increase of self-harm both for younger women
 - Women have returned to self-harming after decades
 - Older women and increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression.
 - Some members have produced additional resources and wellbeing tips for women
- During the pandemic partners and members have been running online health and wellbeing workshops for women on menopause and emotional wellbeing. The emotional wellbeing workshop for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic women had such a good turnout and demands for follow up support, that additional monthly online drop in sessions have now started.
- Prior to Covid -19 the group had responded to the developing Mental Health Strategy, starting to compile menopause good practice and making links with Bristol Health Partners and their HITs (Health Integration Teams).
- The priorities continue to be menopause, incontinence, poor mental health particularly suicide prevention and self-help and peri-natal & maternity health especially for Black, Asian Minority Ethnic women. Clearly the emotional wellbeing of women as a result of the impacts of Covid-19 will cut across all these themes. The other focus of the Group’s future work will be the health related outcomes of the BWV CLP.
- Members have met with Bristol Health Partners about the possibility of reviewing the HITs in terms of women’s health. The group is currently drafting an outline for the work which will be commissioned by Bristol Health Partners.

Women’s Safety - Lead: Anna Smith- CEO, One25

Member organisations: Fawcett Society, St Mungo’s, Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRISi), UWE, UoB, BCC, Bristol Drugs Project, Avon and Somerset Police, Probation, Services, Working Links, Somerset & Avon Rape & Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS)

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

- Last year Bristol had the second highest number of domestic homicides in the UK. BCC has agreed to bring together commissioners and decision makers to look at the proposal put forward by the Women’s Safety Task Group (WSTG) to undertake research into why there is such a high level of domestic homicides in Bristol. This research would aim to identify causes, patterns and what might be put in place to address any gaps in provision or weaknesses in pathways. This has been further delayed by Covid 19: however, the group hopes to secure a date for the first meeting

soon. A report analysing DHRs in London has recently been produced which highlights some of the issues the group is also concerned about.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee0be2588f1e349401c832c/t/5f633ee1e0e0be6ec5b858a1/1600339696014/Standing+Together+London+DHR+Review+Report.pdf>

Women’s Safety on Public Transport

- Highlighted by evidence in London of girls and women experiencing sexual harassment, including a high profile case of a lesbian couple being attacked on a bus, the group wanted to explore ways of counteracting this in Bristol. However, while there is anecdotal evidence, no structured research has taken place in the city. Now that the group chair has joined the Public Transport and Equalities Working group, this group is asking BCC to add a question in its questionnaire to the public to ask women and girls about their experiences on public transport. We hope this will bring forward the evidence they require.

Safely housing women in social housing

- The group are concerned that there are very few spaces for women in hostels which support women with complex needs. Without appropriate support these options can be more dangerous than the women’s current situation. The safety of housing options could be compromised either by the proximity of a perpetrator or by lack of support to those with an addiction. The emergency housing provided by BCC during lockdown has no doubt decreased their risk of contracting Covid -19. Support staff had to cover a large number of people in this scenario who are now being rehoused.

Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs)

- The group has individually (as organisations) and collectively objected to the licensing of SEVs, on the grounds that they discriminate against and endanger women. This relates both to those working in SEVs and as members of the public walking nearby who experience harassment from male customers. The group’s main objection is the normalisation of women’s status as sex objects which directly feeds the attitudes in society which are supportive of men’s violence against women. At the same time BCC supports projects elsewhere trying to address these attitudes in order to drive down violence against women. BWC and BWV have campaigned for a “nil cap”, effectively zero SEVs in the city. The outcome of this is unknown as the consultation is ongoing but last week we submitted objections to the proposed annual renewals of the licences of two clubs.

Women in Business Task Group - Lead: Zara Nanu Gap Square, a member of the Economy Board

Member organisations: Rolls Royce, OVO Energy, Destination Bristol, UWE, Shift Consultancy, Strategy Hive Ltd, Moon Executive Search, BWV, Structur3dPeople, Women’s Work Lab, Community of Purpose, Business West, KPMG, Gapsquare

This year the group has:

- Agreed to a broad definition of women in business to include women entrepreneurs.
- Ensured women are a strong part of the business world in Bristol. This objective will be focussed on the Kickstart Scheme going forward.
- Ensured businesses are aware of how they can create inclusive quality jobs for the city, being mindful of occupational segregation and gendered stereotypes in business

Next Steps

- Ensure young women have opportunities for quality jobs that can grow into leadership roles in businesses across the city
- Identify a Kickstart group with roles in childcare
- Run an event with employers on fair and Inclusive Kickstart jobs for young women, with a focus on diversity across occupations as well as talent
- Partner with some of the employers or Department for Work and Pensions to run events for young women (include mentoring, sponsoring, job coaching)
- Develop some guidelines for quality jobs for diverse Kickstart.
- Focus on women setting up businesses after Christmas.

Women in Business CIC

Lead – Jane Ginnever and Sandra Gordon

Business in Women Charter signatories: OVO, Burges Salmon, UWE, Moon Executive Search, Manor Community, National Composites Centre, Business West, Chickp Ltd, Hargreaves Lansdown, ADLIB, Flipper, Stephenson Law, Redington, Sawdays, Action M.E, Bishop Fleming, Pelican, BCC, Bristol Airport, TLT LLP, One Big Circle, Clarke Wilmott, GCP, Ian Williams, water2business, Rolls Royce, Simitive, Centre for modelling and simulation, SR2, Tech Talent Academy, Stride Treglown, Triodos Bank.

- The commission’s [Bristol Women in Business Charter](#) was launched by the Women in Business Task Group in March 2019.
- During lockdown the group continued with plans to establish and create the community interest company (the Bristol Women in Business CIC) to operate the Charter on the 1st April 2020. This is a not-for-profit, community-serving business.
- Almost 40 companies, employing over 20,000 people have now signed up to the Charter Companies set their own targets on the goals of the Charter so that all signatory companies can make measurable progress on gender equality.
- The progress that has been made: **See Appendix 1**
- Signing the Charter has helped leaders at every level bring gender equality to the fore.
- Being a Charter signatory is a very public declaration to stakeholders that a company is working actively to make progress on gender equality.
- There are 4 Charter Ambassadors who are active advocates for the work of the Charter and its goals within the local business community.
- The Charter brings companies together to share their experience and knowledge and learn from each other through regular events. The group has been able to host 2 online events, including one on the impact of Covid on gender equality.
- The group aims to increase signatories by 50% this year, and continue developing a platform from which they can interact and share ideas with each other.

4 Proposal - Bristol Women’s Commission budget

The budget for the commission is provided by the Mayor’s office which has enabled us to employ a Communications freelancer to bring our work together. This will include a new website presence with links to our published reports and our actions.

7. Summary of Equality Impact

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The commission works to address disparities experienced by women, this document sets out how the commission supports the work of the council in supporting it comply with their Public Sector Equality Duty commitment.

8. Financial

- a) **Revenue** – The Women’s Commission request continuation of funding of £5,000 funding

Appendix:

Appendix 1: Actions taken by Signatories to the BWV

Actions taken by signatories to BWC Women in Business Charter

- Bristol Airport Ltd, use gender neutral recruitment practices to achieve their target (for the year) of 35% female applicants, investing in specialist software
- Bristol City Council has used workforce data and a new interactive HR dashboard to identify and begin to address diversity gaps in progression, pay, recruitment and flexible working.
- One of smaller signatory companies, ADLIB, has appointed 2 women to its Board
- Burges Salmon has introduced a career focus training programme to improve transparency,
- One of the smallest signatories, Chickp, which employs just 4 people has implemented new unbiased onboarding processes and on-the-job training
- OVO Energy is working to increase the number of women appointed to their technology roles, revamping the recruitment process and building in checks for gender-bias. As a result women are now 21% of new hires to tech roles.
- Pelican Business Services launched a campaign (#LetsMoveMore) to support internal moves and career progression. This included a management job swap across the whole business, which challenged many traditional stereotypes.
- GCP Chartered Architects have added more women to their senior management team and Ian Williams Ltd have further enhanced their family friendly benefits including their maternity and paternity leave provision.