

STATEMENT PS 08**Submitted by Penny Gane****Title: Bristol Women's Commission Statement**

As Chair of Bristol Women's Commission, my role - and that of my fellow Commissioners - is to ensure that gender equality is embedded into decision-making here in Bristol. An official mayoral commission established 8 years ago, we remain the only women's commission of its type in the UK, comprising all the key agencies in the city and, working alongside you, have achieved a great deal to improve the lives of women and girls in the city.

We are once again urging the Council to support a nil-cap for Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol in order to meet its commitments under the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life - the charter which led to the founding of the commission in order to deliver on its aims and in line with its own One City Plan aim to rid the city of domestic abuse and gender inequality.

As outlined in the Charter, the elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving equality of women and men. As a long-time signatory, Bristol City Council has committed itself to 'counter and, so far as possible, prevent prejudices and practices which are based on the idea of the superiority or inferiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men'; and to 'recognise that gender-based violence arises from the idea, on the part of the perpetrator, of the superiority of one sex over the other in the context of an unequal relationship of power'.

SEVs profit from and contribute to this gender inequality and the Council should not be sanctioning this. It's not only Bristol Women's Commission, Bristol Women's Voice and other women's organisations providing support to survivors of sexual and domestic violence who agree. Results from last year's [Citizens Panel survey](#) question: "Do you agree or disagree that sexual entertainment venues complement Bristol's entertainment offer?" revealed that the majority of those who voiced an opinion disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Later, you will hear more about the Citizens' Assembly which was set up to help 'create a better future for all in Bristol' post Covid-19, you'll learn more about the Council's own equality journey and will be appointing a new member to the licensing committee. All of these items are relevant to this issue and by speaking to you tonight, we wanted to ensure that you realised how important introducing a nil-cap on SEVs is as part of the city's drive for gender equality.

There has been local press coverage about the proposed nil-cap, always from the perspectives of strip club owners or the small number of women who worked in the clubs which have been closed for much of 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Understandably, the sex industry's main concern with the nil-cap proposal is it limiting the earning potential from SEVs. And it's right that, should the nil-cap pass, any women directly affected be supported to find more work. But this isn't about employment, it's about deciding whether or not a locality is an appropriate place to have a SEV - we say there are no appropriate places for this.

Our position focuses on a bigger conversation around changing the behaviours of men and boys in order to make our city a safer, more equal place to live for all women and girls. A nil-cap on SEVs is part of that broader aim. It won't solve the problem on its own, but it will be a significant step towards doing so. We are now awaiting the launch of a consultation, after which the proposal will return to the licensing committee. We urge councillors to consider the interests of all women and girls in Bristol and seize this opportunity to become the largest UK city (along with Exeter, Swansea, Blackpool and 10 London boroughs among others) - taking a tangible step to tackle gender inequality and make the city a fairer, safer place to live for all women and girls.

Penny Gane, Chair Bristol Women's Commission