

Full Council

8 November 2022



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

Director; Tim Borrett, Director Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Title: Annual Update: Work of Bristol Women's Commission 2021/2022

Ward: City-wide

Member Presenting Report: Penny Gane Chair, Bristol Women's Commission

Recommendation

- To note the report
- To ensure Bristol City Council continues to support the Bristol Women's Commission to deliver on its programme of work
- To continue to support the Women's Commission

Summary

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by BWC during November 2021 – October 2022

The significant issues in the report are:

The report sets out the work undertaken by the Women's Commission in the priority areas of; Safety, Health, Education, Economy and Business.

Relevant Policies

1. European Charter of Equality for Women and Men in Local Life
2. One City Plan
3. Inclusive Growth Strategy
4. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Women’s Health Strategy
5. Bristol City Council’s Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018
6. Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse

Consultation

1. Internal

BWC has a cross party membership of Elected Members and has been supported by Cllr Helen Holland in her role as Cabinet member Adult Social Care & Integrated Care System, Women and women’s safety.

The Commission currently has no lead officer from BCC and no dedicated Equalities Officer.

2. External

Please see the list below of all the organisations which make up the Commission and its 5 task groups. More than 70 external agencies are participants in the work of the Commission.

BWC has the following membership:

Bristol City Council (Councillors and Officers), One City, Bristol Women’s Voice (BWV), University of Bristol (UOB), University West of England (UWE), City of Bristol College (CoBC), Avon and Somerset Police, Trade Union Congress (TUC), Business West, University Hospitals Bristol (UHB), Volunteering Organisation Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration (Voscur), Bristol Headteachers, Be on Board, Task Group leads on Economy, Health, Business, Education, Safety.

Chair: Penny Gane

Vice Chair: Anna Smith

The Women’s Commission is a City-wide partnership established to address multifaceted inequality faced by women and girls in the City of Bristol

The Women’s Commission has five task groups: Women’s Safety, Women’s Safety, Women in Business, Women and the Economy and Women and girls’ education. A further Task and Finish group in addition to its five Task Groups worked on a Councillor survey.

The commission has representatives on the Economy and Skills Board and Transport Board and several commissioners are on other boards relating to their own sectors

Three members of BWC are on the steering group set up by the PCC and Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police tackling VAWG on a regional basis including a review of the Force itself.

Bristol Women’s Commission has hosted a full programme of speakers throughout the year and enabled follow up actions to support speakers in their work.

Context

This annual report summarises the activity of Bristol women’s Commission since our last report to Full Council in November 2021.

This has been a challenging year on many fronts and the prospects for the next year are somewhat gloomy. Pressures have impacted particularly acutely on women in a whole range of ways. It is clear that the challenges women face are increasingly widespread and entrenched. It is vital that decision makers and service providers take account of mounting evidence to this effect if there is to be progress in improving the lives of women in our city.

The Women’s Commission seeks to draw councillors’ attention to some of the issues women are facing:

Women’s Health

Chronic pain & resulting fatigue impacts significantly and adversely on women’s long term health while access for women into health services is more difficult and takes much longer. Women from particular ethnic groups and from socio-economically deprived areas continue to face poorer outcomes and inequity from maternity services. It is now acknowledged that better training is needed for medics on women’s health and especially menopause.

Women and the Economy

Nationally there are 165,000 vacancies in the Care Sector while 830,000 are unable to work due to caring responsibilities. 45% carers could take on more hours if organisations provided more flexible work. Bristol has one of the highest costs of childcare in the country.

Education

As ‘Everyone’s Invited’ (naming 22 Bristol schools), the Ofsted report and the rise in documented spiking cases have shown, there is a profound problem with sexual entitlement and harassment among boys and young men which needs serious attention and resource

Women’s Safety

Widely available violent pornography is the norm and feeds into a culture of sexual entitlement and the objectification of women. Faith in police and the CJS are at a very low ebb, for good reason although we are fortunate in A&S to have leadership that appreciates this and is committed to changing it . Migrant and minoritised women and girls continue disproportionately to face multiple barriers to reporting, support and justice. Public awareness campaigns informed by expertise in the women’s sector such as the Bristol Rules and the anti-spiking campaign are critical drivers for attitude and behaviour change, but were funded by one-off pots of money and need to be sustained and led by the sector. As we enter recession and potentially even deeper cuts to the public purse, economic abuse and the lack of resource to leave abusive relationships will contribute to a potentially worsening situation for the most economically vulnerable women.

Women in Business

The average UK pay gap is 15.4% in favour of men. The South West average is 16.6% with women paid 83p for every £1 earned by male counterparts.

2021/2022 Progress

1. Women and the Economy –

Leads: Diane Bunyan, Sue Cohen

Task group membership organisations:

Policy Advisory Committee Women’s Budget Group, Fair Play South West; Family Policy UoB, Health and Social Care- City of Bristol College, Stepping Up, Co-produce Care CIC, Bristol Women’s Voice, Carers’ Support Centre, Parenting in the Pandemic Project, Equity, plus involvement of Employment Skills and Learning Bristol City Council and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, North Bristol NHS

The Economy Task Group have continued with their focus on placing care at the centre of growing the economy in Bristol post-Covid. In this process we have brought together a wider range of individuals and organisations to join the Task Group in sharing evidence, best practice and challenges.

The Task Group has collated research, evidence and data that underlines ways in which investing in childcare and social care helps to further well-being and a fairer, better-functioning, and more sustainable economy. This evidence has informed the group’s lobbying, networking and awareness-raising, for example at the City Gathering in July and on the One City Economy and Skills Board and its Task and Finish Group of which the group’s lead, Sue Cohen, is a member. The Task Group is focusing on ensuring better opportunities for under-represented groups to access jobs and improve equality of opportunity in the city.

The Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy led by the Women’s Budget Group has placed the vision of a “Caring Economy” at the heart of women’s economic equality. Bristol Women’s Commission picked up the mantle with The Caring Economy for Bristol Event October 17th held in South Bristol Skills Academy sponsored by the City Of Bristol College, Fair Play South West, Bristol Women’s Voice, the University of Bristol, and the Women’s Equality Network. The Event brought together: childcare and social care providers paid and unpaid; tutors delivering care qualifications; city council policy makers; grassroots groups and women’s groups; Parenting in the Pandemic community researchers; political representatives; Receivers of care; representatives from March of the Mummies; University researchers – All came together in solidarity with one another to further a Caring Economy for Bristol. Roundtables were held on Childcare; Training and Skills; Pay and Conditions; Paid and Unpaid Care and Investment in the Caring Economy. Bristol Women’s Commission will be working to ensure that the outcomes of the day feed into the One City Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy with its priorities to: 1. Reduce poverty and inequality; 2. Increase the city’s resilience and environmental sustainability; 3. Enhance economic and social wellbeing in every community. All the evidence highlights ways in which investing in the caring economy would help put these admirable priorities into practice.

The group has modelled this approach on that adopted by the ‘**Just One Day**’ plan developed for the Liverpool region and adopted and reported on annually by the Liverpool region and the City Council.

2. Women’s Safety

Lead: Claire Bloor, CEO SARSAS

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

Womens Safety on Public Transport

Progress is slow but the group is ensuring that they are represented at key meetings including representation on the One City Transport Board and the VAWG on Public Transport Steering Group to ensure women’s voices are heard. This includes:

- focus on taxi driver training – with oversight of training to determine if it is fit for purpose
- focus on First Bus - meeting with the head of national equality and diversity at First Bus to look at actions they can take to prevent sexual harassment on buses, in collaboration with SARI
- Working with the public transport safer and equalities group – coordinated by SARI.

Night-time Economy

Womens Safety Task Group will be represented on the Night Time Economy Advisory Panel and the Purple Flag Group. For the latter people will be walking around the city one Thursday or Friday night to see how safe/accessible it is as part of a self-assessment process.

Sexual Entertainment Venues

The group been unsuccessful in its call for a nil cap

Strategic Response to VAWG

The group has had initial meetings with representatives of Bristol City Council to discuss the development of a VAWG strategy that is broader than the current Domestic Abuse Strategy. The response has been positive.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

The group continues to request a view of the DHR recommendations and responses. Some data has been provided but there is difficulty determining patterns.

Three WSTG members sit on DHR panel meetings and on the Bristol Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Group.

Safer Places for Women and Girls Statement

Following the Avon & Somerset Police ‘Enough’ event in May, a Safer Places for Women and Girls Statement has been agreed that asserts that women and girls have the right to live their lives free from fear and harassment wherever they live,

study, work, and travel. Not just in city centres but also in rural villages, market towns and in online spaces. When keeping communities safe, agencies in Avon and Somerset are stronger and more effective working together in partnership. **Appendix 1.**

The steering group and working groups across Avon and Somerset continue to work towards the goals established at the Summit.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

From 25th November to 10th December 2022 BWC will join the national 16 Days of Activism where organisations can join forces to amplify the messages across the period.

Women in Business Charter: Lead Sandra Gordon, Director Women in Business Charter

Women in Business 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.

Signatories to the Women in Business Charter have continued to make progress on all aspects of gender equality for the last 12 months:

The CIC signatories now include 38 employers with more than 35,000 employees in the Bristol area
The CIC has put on 5 events over the last year-all on-line

The group has seen the continual impact of the pandemic and the pressure experienced by a variety of its signatories on their workforce. Organisations have tried to ensure they were well placed with their progressive practices and inclusive culture to respond in a flexible and engaging way.

The CIC has seen organisations restructure and downsize their businesses, which have impacted on their future plans, ambitions and cause them to refocus and to rebuild. The knock-on impact seen by some organisations has been disruptive to both financial plans and the delivery plans for the ED&I agenda for the year, and thus they have had to adapt to different plans other than that set out to initially achieve. The restrictions in growth plans significantly prevented opportunities for progression within organisations which have had a direct impact on women and the gender pay gap. Despite the ongoing challenges many signatories have made significant progress with gender equality this year against all the odds.

Some examples of the many new initiatives:

- ‘Ovo Engender’- with support from the Chair of Retail Board and COO; challenging gender inequalities and setting up workshop coaching for aspiring female leaders. Also reviewing parental leave
- Pelican surveyed parents about childcare needs and offered tailored solutions plus fully flexible working for all non-operational colleagues and menopause awareness for line managers
- Hargreaves Lansdowne has a female chair and 3 female board members. They have signed the Women in Finance Charter to increase numbers of women in senior positions

- Stride Treglown have further reduced their core working hours to enable more flexibility and Bishop Fleming have been actively promoting flexible working through intranet posts by those people around the firm who have positive experiences of working flexibly, including senior leaders.
- SR2 - Socially Responsible Recruitment has increased the number of women at senior levels by 50% and on the board.
- Burges Salmon have seen success through actively managing the pipeline of individuals put forward for partnership each year, and in a three-year period 48% of partner promotions were female. 48% of Directors are now female and 71% of Heads of Business Services are also female.

See Appendix 2 for full report

Women’s Health

Chair-Monira Chowdhury, North Bristol NHS Trust

Membership-North Bristol Trust, Healthwatch Bristol, Womankind, Bristol Health Partners, UWE Incontinence, UWE Nursing & Dorothy Hospice Care, Karin Smyth MP, Bristol GP, BWV, Next Link, Self-Injury Support, volunteer, BWC Chair

The Health Task Group has continued to meet regularly with presentations on key women’s health related topics including BNSSG Maternity Transformation Programme on Maternity Equity & Equality (Charmaine Lynch),

Perinatal Pelvic Health Service (Mel Danaher)

The membership of the group has increased and constructive links have been made between different organisations and initiatives occurring locally and regionally e.g. the work of the Bristol Health Partners Health Integration Teams, Healthwatch Bristol women’s project. Following the group’s response to the govt consultation last year resulting in the group’s work being included in the national vision for women’s health, the group has continued to take an active interest in the development of the national Women’s Health Strategy to link it to local developments. The group has continued to request a refresh of the chapter on Women’s Health in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and are now pleased to be supporting the development of this work-which will be finalised by the time of this report- led by Public Health.

Women and Girls’ education

Membership- St Mary Redcliffe & Temple, Orchard, North Star Academy Trust, Cabot Learning Federation, St Brendans, Oasis Brightstowe, RedMaids High, Cotham School, Notton House Academy, St Bede’s, Badminton, Cajigo, University of Bristol, City of Bristol College, University of West of England, Bristol City Council

Co chairs Head Teachers Marian Curran, Laura Beynon

It has been a difficult year for members to get together. However the group has continued its initiative developing female leaders: A second cohort of aspiring female leaders has been matched with mentors.

An in-person girls’ conference for Bristol schools took place in the summer organised by the students themselves. The focus was on Equality and Diversity

The group made good headway on PSHE resources including on consent and coercive control.

The group has widened its membership with three new schools joining the Task force.

The task group is part of the new Sexual Harassment in Educational Establishments group led by Bristol University and including UWE, city of Bristol College, Schools, Bristol City Council, Avon and Somerset Police.

New leadership: Marian Curran and Laura Beynon have now stepped down as chairs whilst remaining on the group and Kaye Palmer Greene from CEO North Star Academy is co-chairing together with a representative from the Higher/Further education sector

Task and finish Group- Women’s Representation on Bristol City Council

Membership-commissioners

As Part of the follow- on work of the Representation Task Group it was decided to look into retention of women councillors. The commission carried out a survey of councillors who stood down at the last election and candidates in 2021

All parties agree that there needs to be an increase in women’s participation within political structures and that this is necessary for a fully functioning democracy. However, this consensus is rarely accompanied by structural change to enable women to participate on an equal basis. The Women’s Commission’s survey of women council candidates and council leavers in 2021 revealed a number of negative experiences. Two main reasons were:

1. Time – balancing the new role with work/family and other responsibilities
2. Culture – occupying political space too often leads to abuse and hostility, as well as internal political cultures sometimes being excluding.

Of those with caring responsibilities more than 75% said that their ability to be available to meet those responsibilities was affected. Women turned to relatives and friends to help them

In an increasingly digital world, people expect their elected representatives to be available 24/7, either via social media or in publicised mobile numbers and email address

Women in public life have always faced sexism and misogyny – but the digital online world means that this exposure is now 24/7. Political parties also need to be aware of cultures in their own parties which may have not changed for years.

There are actions the council could take to support councillors and that individual political parties can take as well. If there is serious commitment to a diverse and inclusive political structure within our city, then a programme should be agreed

The report made a series of recommendations which were sent to party whips. The commission has received a very full and largely positive response from party whips and welcomes ongoing discussions for improvement via councillor representatives on the commission.

50-50 Campaign

BWC were asked to speak at the 50-50 event held at City Hall in October at which Mayor, Marvin Rees and Deputy Mayor, Asher Craig spoke about the council’s 50-50 Cabinet. The Chair, Penny Gane, outlined the 50-50 initiative which hugely contributed to the great increase in women councillors at Bristol City Council from a very low base of 28% to above 40% in the following years. Another factor which has radically changed candidates’ awareness of women’s issues across the board is Women’s Hustings of Mayoral candidates, Metro Mayoral candidates, Police and Crime Commissioner and MPs.

International Women’s Day

BWC supported the in-person IWD event at City Hall this year with over 1,000 attendees.

BWC chair Penny Gane joined Deputy Mayor Asher Craig, Cabinet member Adult Social Care & Integrated care, Women and Women’s Safety- Helen Holland and the PCC Mark Shelford on a panel about women’s issues in Bristol.

Penny Gane also delivered the key-note speech on the work of the commission to a national government event organised by Dept of Levelling Up and opened up to representatives from every government department. The Government Equalities Office were well represented.

Bristol Women’s Commission Comms

The commission has continued working with a communications freelancer to share the work of BWC, raise its profile and expand both reach and impact.

This month (November) a new standalone Bristol Women’s Commission website will be launched (bristolwomenscommission.org) to provide a dedicated space to share the work of the task groups. A new blog will also be launched with contributions from high-profile guest writers planned in the coming months. This will enable BWC to dive deeper into issues impacting women and girls and inspire others to take action.

The number of people - including key audiences such as national and local leaders - engaging with us via BWC social media channels (Twitter and LinkedIn) continues to grow thanks to targeted posts, including live Tweeting of the bi-monthly full commission meetings.

The communications focus for the rest of the year includes planning and delivering a collaboration with One City for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in November/December involving partners across the city; and delivering a communications campaign for International Women’s Day in March.

BWC meetings

This year BWC has hosted the following speakers:

Date	Speaker(s)	subject	outcome
23.9.21	Dr.Lisa Brodie	Re-engineering inclusion	Partnership with Cajigo to help get

			message out to schools
25.11.21	UN EVAW Day Nikki Watson- Deputy Chief Constable A&S Police	Plans to tackle high levels of violence against women and girls in Bristol	A&S Summit in May 2022. Chair and commissioners on steering group and task groups.
27.1.22	Prof. Candy McCabe UWE	Chronic pain and hidden long term illnesses	Now part of health task group and has contributed to govt consultation
27.1.22	Karin Smyth MP Shadow minister for Health and Social Care	Overview of women’s health in S Bristol	Karin is now formally a member of the Health Task Group and her office has been linked to various local women’s organisations and women’s health initiatives
24.3.22	Anne James BCC	Afghan Resettlement Scheme	91 Ways offer to drop off food or find a way they can cook own food CoBC offered catering facilities College Green kitchens offered to cook food during Ramadan Also fundraising for coats and shoes
19.5.22	Erica Rushton	Liverpool City region; ‘One Day’- an economic plan designed by women	Has provided mode inspiration I for our campaign on the Caring Economy Includes bringing together up to 60 women from across the city and across the

			sectors in Oct 2022 to campaign for BCC and WECIL investment in childcare and social care in economic strategies.
14.7.22	Never Have I Ever campaign	Campaign on sexual harassment	SARSAS and Sexual Violence Reference Group looking at partnership opportunities with the campaign
14.7.22	Mark Cleland, British Transport Police	Women’s Safety on train network	Members of WSTG attending transport meetings to ensure this issue is fully explored and action taken by transport providers
14.7.22	Disabled Women Take Action	Toilet Campaign	Wrote to Mayor and appropriate councillors. Response that scheme being improved but no reopened toilets.

Conclusion

Bristol Women’s Commission brings together partners across sectors and agencies. The range of issues tackled by the five task groups and commissioners is vast. It will take more than the combined efforts of all these women to bring about the scale of change that is needed to improve women’s equality in the city. Decision makers need to ensure policies for change are embedded at every level to tackle the issues laid out in this report.

Penny Gane, Chair Bristol Women’s Commission 19th October 2022

Appendices:

Appendix 1: VAWG Summit Statement

Appendix 2: Annual Impact Report 2021-2022; Bristol Women in Business CIC

