

Cabinet

05 December 2023

Public Questions (1 total)

1. Question from Ms Vikki Lax to Cabinet Member for Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood

Following the 2021 survey in relation to women & girls safety the Council committed to develop a pledge for women's safety and incorporate that pledge within its licensing policy, per the link below.

[Safety of women in the evening and at night-time - Cheltenham Borough Council - Citizen Space](#)

The minutes of the 18th October 2021 included a proposed action in March 2022 to "bring forward amendments to the council's licensing policy".

[Agenda for Council on Monday, 18th October, 2021, 2.30 pm - Modern Council \(cheltenham.gov.uk\)](#)

Can the member please confirm which amendments have been brought forward for inclusion within the council's licensing policy and when they were or will be incorporated into the policy.

Cabinet Member response

The Council continues to take the issue of violence against women and girls very seriously – not least by commissioning surveys like the one referred to in your question which is an ongoing project with the current "[Safety of Women and Girls in Cheltenham](#)" survey due to complete in February 2024. This includes the public pledge proposal and if respondents see this as a priority for change we will work through the multi-agency group to develop and launch the pledge. In the meantime we have amended licensing policies and undertaken a variety of steps to inform and improve our work wherever it can have an impact on the safety of women and girls.

Since the completion of the 2021 survey, the council has set up a multi-agency group that includes representation from:

- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)
- Gloucestershire Rape And Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC)
- Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
- Gloucestershire Police
- Cheltenham Borough Homes

- The University of Gloucestershire
- Nelson Trust
- Cheltenham Business Improvement District
- Victim Support

Through this group we have developed a range of projects and initiatives such as

- Working to successfully retain the town's Purple Flag status, which is externally and independently assessed, giving assurance that Cheltenham remains a safe and diverse evening and night-time economy to visit.
- Active bystander training
- Securing funding for additional CCTV equipment in high-risk areas
- Supporting the current international '16 days of action' to raise awareness of and campaign against gender-based violence.

As part of the 16 days of action campaign, the council is undertaking another survey on the safety of women at night within which we are asking people for their priorities in making change to improve the safety of women and girls. This survey specifically asks respondents to prioritise more actions we should be taking.

Out of 141 responses to date, respondents have identified the following as priorities for further change:

- Educating young people on positive relationships and appropriate behaviour
- A zero tolerance approach by pubs and clubs
- Improved lighting in the town
- Public statement/pledge

So the interim results of the survey show there is support for the pledge proposal amongst other practical actions. If confirmed in the final results we will work through the multi-agency group to develop and launch the pledge.

On our licensing work and policies specifically, we have worked to embed safeguarding in a range of licensable activities:

- We have adopted amendments to our taxi and private hire licensing policies to mandate safeguarding training, including refresher training, for all licenced taxi and private hire drivers.
- The same policy also reflects the new Department for Transport's statutory guidance on "fit and proper persons", making clear that licence holders should not be given the benefit of the doubt where their fitness to hold a licence is called into question
- In our alcohol licensing work and policies, we have delivered free bystander training to licensees, managers and door staff;
- Council licensing staff have also attended bystander training;

The pledge may well play a part in our future awareness-raising and education on this important issue but the council continues to prioritise the safety of women and girls in our licensing and other work and to deepen our partnership with domestic abuse and rape crisis organisations and others with frontline experience.

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