

Cheltenham Borough Council
Council – 18th October 2021
Safety of Women at Night

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| Accountable member | Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member Safety and Communities |
| Accountable officer | Darren Knight, Executive Director People and Change |
| Ward(s) affected | All |
| Key/Significant Decision | No |
| Executive summary | <p>The council and its partners have been concerned about the safety of women at night for a number of years now.</p> <p>This summer, The Home Office made a specific pot of funding available to address the issues faced by women at night to which we agreed we would make a bid into.</p> <p>To support the bid, the council undertook a survey that ran from 5 August to 20 August 2021 on the council’s website to help understand how safe women feel in the evening and at night in Cheltenham’s town centre. The survey was well received and provides some concerning data about how safe women feel at night.</p> <p>This report updates Council on the findings of the survey, the contents of the bid to the Home Office and future next steps including how we communicate the results of the survey.</p> |
| Recommendations | <p>Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes results of the survey as set out in section 2; 2. Notes submission of the grant application to the Home Office as set out in section 3; 3. Requests that Cabinet consider the proposals to progress a range of projects, set out in para 7.2 onwards, should the bid not be successful. |
| Financial implications | <p>There are no financial implications on the council’s general fund from the decisions recommended in this report.</p> <p>If the grant application to the Home Office is successful, this will be managed in line with the Council’s constitution</p> <p>Contact officer: Martin Yates Business Partner Accountant Business Support Services</p> |

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| | <p>Cheltenham Borough Council Martin.Yates@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel : 01242 264115</p> |
| Legal implications | <p>If the grant application to the Home Office is successful, the council will enter into a legal agreement with the Home Office.</p> <p>Contact officer: One Legal Legal.Services@onelegal.org.uk</p> |
| HR implications (including learning and organisational development) | <p>There are no HR implications as a result of this report</p> |
| Key risks | <p>Given the results of the survey, if the council is not seen to be leading action on keeping women safe, there is a risk of reputational harm</p> |
| Corporate and community plan Implications | <p>Keeping women safe at night in our town centre will support two of our corporate plan priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing the revitalisation and improvement of our vibrant Town centre and public spaces • Delivering services to meet the needs of our residents and communities |
| Environmental and climate change implications | <p>None identified as consequences of the decisions recommended in this report.</p> |
| Property/Asset Implications | <p>None identified as consequences of the decisions recommended in this report.</p> |

1. Background

- 1.1 The council and its partners have been concerned about the safety of women at night for a number of years as the reports of sexual harassment, abuse and intimidation have increased.
- 1.2 Extensive work has been undertaken with Partners to seek to make our Night Time Economy safe for women and girls. This has seen a number of projects implemented including awareness raising projects in partnership with GRASAC, our local rape and sexual abuse centre and implementing the Ask for Angela scheme, along with external validation through the Purple Flag scheme.
- 1.3 This Partnership approach has strengthened our determination to push forward with new projects and this summer, the Home Office has made a specific pot of funding available to address the issues faced by women at night to which we agreed we would make a bid. This would build in and grow the work already being done.
- 1.4 To support the bid, the council undertook a survey that ran from 5 August to 20 August 2021 on the council's website to help understand how safe women feel in the evening and at night in Cheltenham's town centre. The survey was well received and provides some concerning data about how safe women feel at night.
- 1.5 The report is timely given the national interest in the safety of women at night following Sarah Everard's horrific murder, the conviction of Wayne Couzens and the fact that least 81 other UK women have been killed in circumstances where the suspect is a man since her murder. That is 81 since the tragic death of Sarah Everard.
- 1.6 Given the results of the survey, we also need to consider what elements of the bid can proceed if the Home Office turn down our bid – for instance, we may be able to secure funding from our partners to develop the pledge or elements of the communications plan.

2. Safety of women at night survey:

- 2.1 The survey had a very good uptake with 638 responses – 95% of which were female. Out of these responses:
 - **72% of respondents** told us that that they don't feel safe at night, rising to 75% not feeling safe during race week.
 - **39% of respondents** have experienced some form of sexual assault.
 - **30% of respondents** told us that they get regularly sexually harassed.
 - **15% of respondents** told us that they are on occasions experiencing more serious crimes such as stalking and exposure.
 - **33% of respondents** told us that these unwanted behaviours are happening regularly in pubs and clubs and 25% are experiencing these regularly on the street.
 - Despite the frequency of unwanted behaviours, **34% of respondents** are not telling anyone about their experiences.
 - When asked why respondents are not reporting, the overwhelming majority cite a lack of confidence that they would be taken seriously.
 - **94% of respondents** told us that they have changed their behaviours following their experiences.

2.2 In terms of what we should be doing - respondents told us that all parts of the night-time economy need to take the issue of sexual violence seriously. Women in particular are telling us that they do not want to be blamed or asked to change their behaviours, instead they want to see a culture created where sexual harassment is unacceptable which would also see men being educated about the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

3. Contents of the bid

3.1 The contents of the bid were informed by what our survey respondents told us they want to happen to make them feel safer at night.

3.2 **All parts of the night-time economy need to take the issue of sexual violence seriously:**

3.3 We will use funding from the Home Office's Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) fund to develop and implement a public pledge for women's safety that key public sector partners along with night-time businesses and third sector organisations will sign and commit to taking action to keep women safe.

3.4 We expect the pledge to cover commitments in the four following areas:

- Raising awareness across the organisation of the impact of sexual violence
- Training for staff and decision makers
- Developing and implementing appropriate reporting and recording processes
- Supporting joined-up communications around the safety of women at night (see below)

3.5 **Take action to implement our pledge and demonstrate we are taking sexual violence seriously:**

3.6 A pledge is nothing without a firm commitment to take action. We will use SWAN funding fund to deliver the following:

- We will work to **incorporate the pledge within our licensing policy** – so that we make signing and implementing the pledge a condition of granting a licence.
- We will work with the University to **create a charter mark and accreditation programme** and award this to licensed premises that have committed to the pledge and taken action to across the four areas.
- We will work with the University and GRASAC to **deliver a programme of training** – we will focus our training on the management and staff of licensed premises, councillors, officers and staff of VCS organisations

3.7 **Creating a culture where sexual harassment is unacceptable**

3.8 On the back of the pledge, we want to develop a communications plan that will highlight the impact that sexual crimes have on their victims, and create a whole town culture change to the way we view sexual crimes. Men in particular will be encouraged to reflect that inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable, and they will be given the confidence to constructively challenge the behaviour of others.

3.9 **Put more feet on the ground in the town centre at night to help keep women safe and to reinforce the message that sexual harassment is unacceptable**

3.10 Cheltenham is lucky to have three organisations that work really hard to promote the safety of all users of the night-time economy.

- Cheltenham Guardians Safeguarding Team
 - Cheltenham Street Pastors.
 - University Student Community Patrol
- 3.11 Many respondents to our survey acknowledged how much more safe they feel knowing that they are present in our town centre at night and asked that we look to expand their capacity wherever possible. Through the bid and our ongoing work we are looking to support our three NTE organisations; with the street pastors and student community patrol potentially receiving funding if the bid is successful.
- 3.12 **Educating men about the impact of their behaviours and to take on more responsibility for policing themselves**
- 3.13 We intend to support our plan with some specific education work in local schools and youth groups with groups of young men and women around the themes of healthy relationships and consent.

4. Financial details of the bid

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| All parts of the night-time economy need to take the issue of sexual violence seriously: | |
| Develop a public pledge for women's safety | £20,000 |
| Take action to implement our pledge and demonstrate we are taking sexual violence seriously: | |
| Incorporate the pledge within our licensing policy | 0 |
| create a charter mark and accreditation programme for licensed premises | £13,250 |
| Deliver a programme of training | £20,250 |
| Creating a culture where sexual harassment is unacceptable | |
| develop a communications plan – whole town culture change | £65,000 |
| Put more feet on the ground in the town centre at night to help keep women safe and to reinforce the message that sexual harassment is unacceptable | |
| support our three NTE organisations | £15,000 |
| Educating men about the impact of their behaviours and to take on more responsibility for policing themselves | |
| education work in local schools and youth groups | £10,400 |
| Total | £143,900 |

5. County-wide bid

- 5.1 In addition to the Cheltenham bid to the Home Office, partners in Gloucestershire, via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) have made two applications to previous rounds of the safer streets fund. The good news is that both these applications have been successful. In total the county will receive £1,061,478. The funding will be used for:

5.2 Countywide bid (£517,050):

- Anonymous reporting app and 18 mobile CCTV cameras for districts / local areas to use where hotspots are identified. In addition, the OPCC will be purchasing laptops for the CCTV and relevant airtime agreements.
- Bystander intervention 'train the trainer' training to challenge poor behaviour as it occurs
- Boost leadership programme in schools to prevent unhealthy cultures from developing
- Communications activity

5.3 It is good that Cheltenham will benefit from the county-wide bid, in particular the roll-out of the anonymous reporting app and the mobile CCTV cameras.

5.4 Gloucester City bid (£544,428):

- Additional and upgrades to existing CCTV cameras and lighting around Gloucester Park to address safety concerns of people identified through the recent survey
- Community engagement / building focusing on VAWG in Gloucester Park
- Sex worker outreach programme enhancement

6. Governance

6.1 The approach to supporting the safety of women at night is very much of interest to our partners – and we have worked with the Police, University, Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC) and Cheltenham Safe to develop the bid.

6.2 We will work through the Cheltenham Communities Partnership; which acts as Cheltenham's community safety partnership to ensure that there is multi-agency support for the project, and to promote the benefits of the project to its member organisations.

6.3 We will also continue to work within county-wide partnerships that are working to reduce to the risks around sexual violence including the Gloucestershire Sexual Violence Partnership and Safer Gloucestershire

7. Next steps

7.1 If the bid is successful, the table below sets out the key milestones:

Key milestones

| Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Development work with key partners to refine the four areas of pledge | Announcement of outcome of bid Uni to develop the charter mark and accreditation programme | Consultation with licensed premises operators to co-create the charter mark & accreditation programme GRASAC and the Uni to develop the training programme for licensed premises | Accelerate activity on the development of the charter and move to finalise | Commence programme of consultation with licensing committee members and ENTE businesses and their representative groups | Full implementation of the comms plan ahead of race week Bring forward amendments to the council's licensing policy |

- 7.2 If the bid is not successful, we would suggest the following commitments are taken forward:
- 7.3 Develop the public pledge for women’s safety – we will use officer time to develop the pledge, similar to how we have successfully secured 70 organisations to sign up to the No Child Left Behind community agreement,
- 7.4 Incorporate the pledge within our licensing policy
- 7.5 Develop the communications plan to create a culture where sexual harassment is unacceptable. We see this element as being so critical to the safety of women at night that we will use officer time, plus time given by our partners to make this element happen. We might not be able to deliver all elements of what was envisaged but we will be able to make a difference.
- 7.6 We will also work with county-wide colleagues to implement the activities set out in para 5.2
- 7.7 In addition, as members will know, each year Gloucestershire participates in the 16 days of action against gender-based violence; starting on the 25th November (International day for the elimination of violence against women) and ending on 10th December (Human rights day).
- 7.8 This year, the reclaim the night march, on 25 November, will be held in Cheltenham and more information will be issued to members nearer the time to encourage participation.
- 7.9 Members may also like to consider the value in a members’ seminar on the subject – we have a commitment from Gloucestershire Police that they would be happy to attend and we could also invite other partners including GRASAC and the University.

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| Report author | Contact officer: Richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264280 |
| Appendices | 1. Risk Assessment |
| Background information | |

| The risk | | | | Original risk score (impact x likelihood) | | | Managing risk | | | | |
|---|--|---------------|-------------|---|----------------|-------|---------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Risk ref. | Risk description | Risk Owner | Date raised | Impact 1-5 | Likelihood 1-6 | Score | Control | Action | Deadline | Responsible officer | Transferred to risk register |
| | Given the results of the survey, if the council is not seen to be leading action on keeping women safe, there is a risk of reputational harm | Darren Knight | 20.8.21 | 4 | 3 | 12 | Reduce | Report to council with the summary results of the survey Commitment to take forward work regardless of the outcome of the bid | October November | Richard Gibson | |
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| <p>Explanatory notes Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical) Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability) Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p> | | | | | | | | | | | |