

17th May 2023

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
Sent via e-mail



Dear Cllr Thorne,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 MAY 2023 – REVISED
CARDIFF & VALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL
VIOLENCE STRATEGY 2023 - 2028**

On behalf of Committee Members, a sincere thanks, to you, and everyone present, for attending our meeting and facilitating considerations on the revised strategy put before us.

We wish to echo the comments made by yourself, and the external present, as we too, find the strategy to be incredibly comprehensive, strongly aligned to legislation and local policy, and full of insightful statistics, which significantly highlight the importance of this issue, and its prevalence.

We welcome that this strategy is described as a 'living document' and will therefore continue to be updated to reflect policy drivers and local developments. In line with this, we offer our comments for your reflection and consideration. We trust the comments raised by Welsh Women's Aid at the meeting, will also be taken forward by yourself and officers for further reflection.

Lessons Learnt

We note the strategy is a revision to its predecessor, agreed by this Council's, and the Vale's, former Cabinet in 2018, and the achievements attained since the initial strategy, are detailed on the 'Journey so Far' page of the strategy. However, we feel an analysis of the 'lessons learnt' for the region since the initial strategy, and how that learning has informed this revised strategy, would be a significant tool of evidence for Welsh Government, and the public, knowledge, and awareness. As such, we would strongly encourage that being incorporated into the strategy.

Financial & Resource Requirements

We concur with the comments made regarding the importance of strong, effective partnership working in this field. Yet, given the emphasis placed on providers and partners in delivering and achieving this strategy, and the financial and resource challenges those partners and

providers face, this raises key concern around deliverability. Although we note the commitment made by yourself and officers toward ensuring this strategy is deliverable, and the endeavours the council will make, we are of the view, the strategy, and / or its Implementation Plan should detail, or more strongly acknowledge, the financial and resource requirements that may be required of partners for this work to be achieved.

We recognise the majority of funding comes from outside streams (such as Welsh Government's Housing Support Grant, Home Office & the Police and Crime Commissioner), however if this strategy evidences the financial and resources required, it may help improve and strengthen the financial resources being allocated toward addressing this issue.

Safety in the Workplace & Trade Unions

During the meeting we raised concern that, regardless of the significant focus on addressing this issue, distinguished organisations, one of which is listed as a statutory partner in the strategy, have they themselves had significant issues regarding their workforce experiencing serious VAWDASV related issues.

We therefore strongly advise the strategy and / or its Implementation Plan, consider how it can lead, or encourage, organisations to undertake a thorough self-examination, and assess their internal frameworks for reporting VAWDASV and the subsequent support on offer. Upon our reflection toward the end of the meeting, we were also of the view how it would be positive for the council, to lead from the front, and undertake its own self-examination and audit of internal process (if not already done).

We note the comments made by yourself that given its significance, this piece of work may be best addressed through a national perspective. Although this is understood, and we would welcome you taking this discussion to Welsh Government counterparts (highlighting the resource this work would inquire), we do feel the strategy, or its Implementation Plan, could assist by placing more onus, particularly on its statutory partners, to look within and ensure addressing this issue is deeply embedded.

Further, given the statistic provided in the strategy, that 4 in 5 women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in Wales, and the emphasis on the importance of partnership working discussed at the meeting, we would strongly encourage you to form formal partnership arrangements with Trade Unions on this matter.

Although we were informed Trade Unions are involved, as they are briefed and updated as part of the council's Workplace Strategy, we feel a strong, partnership relationship dedicated toward addressing this issue is required with Trade Unions and we would urge this to be taken forward to help progress work around safety in the workplace, and the auditing frameworks mentioned in the paragraphs above.

Perpetrators

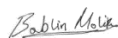
We noted the profound statistics detailed in the strategy, which highlighted the number of rape incidents that occurred in England and Wales in 2015/16 and 2019/20, and how little of those incidents were charged. From this, we then explored and stressed the importance of a victim, or survivor's, trust, and confidence to engage with the criminal justice system.

We note these concerns are shared by the relevant partners themselves (such as the police and probation service), and there are many varying reasons why instances of VAWDASV issues do not get charged, which may not fall to responsibility of the police, such as the victim or survivor not wishing to pursue their case. We note the assurance at the meeting the strategy recognises and commits itself to raising the profile of the police, the links with the Community Safety Partnership and the overall commitment toward working to address this issue.

Our final thanks to all who attended the meeting for facilitating such an important discussion. We hope you found the discussions at the meeting, and the observations captured in this letter of use.

To confirm, no response to this letter is requested.

Yours,



COUNCILLOR BABLIN MOLIK

CHAIR, COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc. Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Group Leaders

Jane Thomas, Director Adults, Housing & Communities

Natalie Southgate, Partnership Delivery Manager

Dawn Jeffery, Director of Business Development and Operations

Cardiff Council Chair of Governance & Audit

Tim Gordan, Head of Communications & External Relations

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