

Corporate Issues & Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 September 2021

Subject: Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy

Report of: Bev Hughes, Deputy Mayor for Police, Crime and Fire.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to outline to the Corporate Issues & Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee the development of the Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy, and its progress towards approval by the Combined Authority and final publication.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the content of this report and approve passage to the Combined Authority Meeting on 24th September.

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BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

Equalities Implications:

A full Equality Impact Assessment is being finalised to be considered by the Combined Authority and published with Strategy.

Through the engagement that has taken place during development and from the public consultation, it is clear that at the current time there are distinct needs for older people, those with disabilities and people from ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ communities that are not being fully met. One of the ambitions of the strategy is to vastly improve service provision. There is a need to ensure that the needs of these distinct groups are taken into account in order that these gaps are not widened, rather that they are closed. This will be addressed within the EIA.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –

None identified.

Risk Management:

Detailed action plans will be developed from the strategy, which will all feature a risk management log.

Legal Considerations:

None identified.

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

Costs have been incurred in respect of consultation and publication of the strategy, which have been met by the Deputy Mayor's Investment Fund.

The strategy makes broad commitments about developments of service provision, including commissioning arrangements. In financial terms such developments will be facilitated by existing funding envelopes. The strategy refers to potential innovations, which will be considered for funding from the Deputy Mayor's Investment Fund.

Financial Consequences – Capital:

None identified.

Number of attachments to the report:2

- Draft Greater Manchester Gender-Based Violence Strategy.
- Gender-Based Violence Strategy Consultation – Report on the findings.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

As well as this Committee a paper will be considered by Health Scrutiny Committee on 8th September.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The development of this strategy commenced in late 2018.
- 1.2 The length of time it has taken to develop the strategy demonstrates the complexities of the issues that must be tackled. In this period several drafts of a strategy have been prepared, which following dialogue with stakeholders led to further work being required.
- 1.3 The outbreak of COVID-19, as has been common across all sectors, meant that resources had to be diverted to deal with immediate and ongoing implications. In the context of gender-based violence this was particularly the case in maintaining and adapting services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 1.4 In October 2020 intense work was able to recommence. This work was supported and enhanced by a small team from the University of Manchester led by Professor David Gadd. This has meant that we have been informed by the most up to date academic research and have been able to establish links nationally and internationally in respect of best-practice. For example, links have been established with academics and professionals in Western Australia, who are widely regarded as leading the way internationally in tackling aspects of gender-based violence.
- 1.5 The Mayor approved a draft strategy in March of this year.

2. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 From the inception of this programme of work it has been the intention to design a strategy with appropriate engagement and input from stakeholders. This has included stakeholders within GMCA, other agencies and sectors, and in particular Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) organisations and those representing women and girls who have experienced violence.
- 2.2 Prior to October of last year such engagement had taken place with in excess of 40 agencies and organisations. This engagement ranged from one-to-one conversations to group round-table sessions.
- 2.3 Since October of last year, further engagement has taken place with a further 46 individuals representing stakeholder agencies and organisations.
- 2.4 In addition, there has been consultation with the Women and Girls Equality Panel and members of the Race Equality Panel. Consultation continues and has also led to more specific engagement with VAWG organisations, both large and small, with the Disabled People's Panel, Older People's Network and Youth Combined Authority.

3. THE DRAFT STRATEGY

3.1 Development of Original Published Draft

- 3.1.1 At the commencement of development, the working title of the work was 'Violence Against Women and Girls.' This was in recognition of the prevalence of gender-based abuse perpetrated against women and girls, with a recognition that the vast majority of perpetrators are men and boys. Despite the title, an explicit acknowledgement was made that recognised men and boys could also be subjected to such abuse.
- 3.1.2 During the development work it became clear that whatever the title, it would be contested. For any strategy to be successful, it must be able to engage men and boys. Specifically, it must recognise the prevalence of domestic abuse, the negative results this has for the development of children and the effects this can have on their characters and behaviour in adulthood. There was thus concern that the title would be exclusionary, in particular to boys. In addition, members of the LGBTQ+ community are subjected to gender-based violence based on gender stereotypes and assumptions.
- 3.1.3 Taking this into account the title of the strategy was altered to 'Gender Based Abuse.' In ongoing engagement this title too was contested. It is clear that there is no consensus and thus to seek as much balance as possible the title of the initial draft strategy published was 'Gender Based Abuse – Greater Manchester's Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls.'
- 3.1.4 Following the approval of the draft document by the Mayor, with purdah approaching it had been the intention to publish immediately after the mayoral election for formal public consultation. However, following the tragic abduction and murder of Sarah Everard, and the public reaction to it, the Mayor made the decision to publish early, the intention being to socialise the strategy with our communities and seek initial feedback. Publication took place on 17th March and responses were invited between then and 18th April.
- 3.1.5 The draft strategy consists of 8 key chapters namely:
- Tackling Gender-Based Violence (change of to violence described further below).
 - Changing the Story.
 - Mobilising Greater Manchester.
 - Supporting Victims and Survivors.
 - Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People.
 - Responding Effectively to Perpetrators.
 - Improving Policing and Criminal Justice.
 - Integrating Health and Social Care.

3.1.6 The strategy includes the commitment to establish a new Gender-based Violence Board with the core task of developing and overseeing the implementation of the strategic plan and establishing the key milestones to be achieved over the next ten years.

3.1.7 The Board will include victims and survivors with lived experience of gender-based violence as members. The Deputy Mayor will co-chair the Board with a survivor of gender-based violence appointed annually. The involvement and experience of women and girls with lived experience of violence will be central to how the strategy is delivered.

3.2 Initial Feedback

3.2.1 As indicated previously, the original draft was published on 17th March by the Mayor at his regular press conference. This was supplemented by a communication plan, where members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback via the GMCA website.

3.2.2 63 responses were received from individual members of the public, academics and organisations/groups representing particular interests.

3.3 Amended Draft

3.3.1 Following consideration of this feedback, the following amendments were made to the strategy:

- Title changed to ‘Gender-Based Violence Strategy.’ This title has been settled on as it is widely used nationally and internationally, and underpinned by international conventions. Further, the accompanying international definition fits with the issues that we seek to tackle.
- A commitment has been added to work with organisations that are experts on and work with ethnic minority communities, to improve assessment procedures in respect of rehousing so that social, emotional and economic needs are considered, as well as the potential risk of hate crimes.
- A commitment to collect data on gender-based violence and local demand for services to meet the needs of all communities and demographic groups.
- Links to be established across local authority areas for the provision of housing, care and support for survivors of domestic abuse through a Greater Manchester Housing Reciprocal.
- Commitment to Violence Against Women and Girls Sector Shared Core Standards in respect of commissioned services and development of Greater Manchester Advocacy Framework.

- Commitment to development and support of teachers to ensure best practice is shared and celebrated.

4. FORMAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The formal public consultation phase was launched, together on 22nd June at the Mayor's press conference and closes on 1st August.
- 4.2 The consultation consisted of an on-line questionnaire on GM Consult, where a copy of the amended draft strategy and supporting documents, including easy read versions, were available.
- 4.3 The questionnaire sought views on the title of the strategy and accompanying definition, the priorities defined in each chapter, as well as providing opportunity for free text responses.
- 4.4 The on-line consultation was complemented by 12 focus groups with people of various demographics and backgrounds, or various sectors, such as employers. A series of one-to-one interviews also took place with people who have lived experience.
- 4.5 150 responses were received and taken with the focus groups and interviews the results can be summarised as:
 - 75% agreed with the title as Gender-Based Violence and the accompanying definition. This was 100% for the focus groups. That said, suggestions were made about clarifying that constitutes gender-based violence.
 - 81% agreed that the priorities identified are the right ones.
 - The importance of continuous training for professionals.
 - An over-focus on policing and criminal justice in comparison to services for victims and survivors.
 - Lack of detail around funding commitments and how success would be judged.
 - The need for public engagement to focus on population level behaviour change.
 - Focus required about safety on public transport, pornography, sex work and training for employers.
 - The need to focus on the distinct needs of older people, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minority and ethnic minority communities.
- 4.6 As a result of the consultation exercise a finalised draft has been prepared that has several amendments to it.

5. PUBLICATION

- 5.1 It is envisaged that the finalised strategy will go before the Combined Authority on 24th September, with publication following immediately thereafter, subject to approval.