

GREATER MANCHESTER ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH & SKILLS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 9th October 2020

Subject: Update on the development of Greater Manchester Women & Girls' Equality Panel

Report of: Cllr Brenda Warrington, Portfolio Lead for Age-friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities, and Pam Smith, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Age-friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide Scrutiny Committee members with an update on the establishment of Greater Manchester Women and Girls' Equality Panel, and to provide the findings of research undertaken by ComRes research on the attitudes and experiences of Greater Manchester women during coronavirus pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Committee members are asked to:

1. Consider and comment on the establishment of and early priorities for, the Greater Manchester Women and Girls' Equality Panel
2. Consider and note the findings of the research undertaken of the experience of Greater Manchester women during coronavirus pandemic.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 The Greater Manchester Women's Voice Task & Finish Group was established to shape and develop work and understanding of gender inequality in Greater Manchester. The Group has brought together partners, with a commitment from senior leaders across

GM to collaborate, developing a shared work programme in support of achieving equality for women and girls across the city-region.

- 1.2 The Task & Finish Group has developed a shared evidence base which can be used for case making, to influence, and inform decision making. The Task & Finish Group has developed an action plan which aims to establish the necessary processes and practices to drive the changes required. The Group, and the current action plan, identified the need for the establishment of a Women and Girls Equality Panel as a fixed piece of GMCA infrastructure to develop a detailed action plan, focusing on priority areas for intervention in addressing gender inequality within GM policy making and delivery. The GMCA approved the formal establishment of the Panel at its meeting in July 2020.
- 1.3 Following a six week open recruitment, 138 applications for possible Panel members were received. A selection process has been undertaken, with the final Panel members selected agreed by the Mayor. Panel members were selected based on the strength of their applications and with consideration being given to ensure the Panel is as diverse in its make up as possible, giving a voice to a breadth of views and experiences of women and girls' across Greater Manchester.
- 1.4 The first meeting of the Women and Girls' Panel will take place on 19th October 2020. The Panel will be co-chaired by Cllr Brenda Warrington and Pam Smith, as Portfolio Leader and Chief Executive for Age-friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities Portfolio.

2. PRIORITIES AND OPERATION OF THE WOMEN & GIRLS' PANEL

- 2.1 The initial meeting of the Panel will be focused around the development of the way in which the Panel will operate, and begin to identify some of its early priorities. Evidence will be provided to the Panel detailing how gender inequalities are characterised in Greater Manchester, along with the latest data available to us from the ComRes research undertaken during lockdown (attached).
- 2.2 Work previously undertaken by the task & finish group identified four early priority areas, which will be reviewed by the Panel and consideration given to the current pandemic context, where priorities may have changed or become more or less urgent to respond to. The previously identified themes were:
 - Female representation in public life
 - Safety
 - Employment, business and the economy
 - Health

2.3 Reflection and evaluation of the conversation held at the first meeting will be undertaken following that meeting to shape the Panel's forward workplan, with a likely focus on future meetings responding to women and girls' inequalities arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

3. HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM THE COMRES RESEARCH

3.1 The full findings are attached to this report, some key messages arising from the Greater Manchester research are detailed below:

- Two in five women stated their mental health suffered due to lockdown
- The majority of respondents felt it was important for their local authority / combined authority to provide services during the pandemic, particularly health and wellbeing services
- Approximately half of respondents indicated they would use pop-up services
- Four fifths of women saw their job change and there has been an increase in those struggling to cover living costs
- 81% of respondents saw changes to their job in respect to location, role, hours, remuneration, furlough or redundancy
- Young, BAME, parents, low and medium income and renters were more likely to be struggling to cover living expenses
- 44% of respondents had given thought to upskilling or retraining in the field of health and social care
- 60% of respondents felt it was important for digital skills and support to be provided during the pandemic by their local authority / combined authority
- 46% of respondents stated they would be comfortable contacting their local authority / combined authority if they were at risk of domestic abuse, this is at least 9 point less comfortable than they would contacting family and friends (58%), domestic abuse charities (56%), or the police (55%).

3.2 The research was undertaken in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, with results comparable against the two city-regions. The results for both locations were very similar, with two notable variations:

- Impacts have differed by ethnicity - in the West Midlands, 13% of employed Black, Asian and minority ethnicity (BAME) women have seen their pay change compared with 5% of white women, and in Greater Manchester 14% of BAME employed women have experienced two changes in their work compared with 6% of white women
- A fifth of women in the West Midlands (21%) and Greater Manchester (22%) have been furloughed. More working class women (33%) are on the scheme than middle-class (14%) women in the West Midlands, and more low-income women (30%)

compared with higher income (19%) women had been furloughed in Greater Manchester.

3.3 It is intended to repeat the survey process later in the year to further develop our understanding and evidence base of the impacts and issues arising for Greater Manchester's women as the pandemic continues. This evidence will shape and inform the work and priorities of the Women and Girls' Equality Panel.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Recommendations appear at the front of this report.