

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACES AND PLACES

REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND HEAD OF SOCIAL POLICY

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update to the Panel on progress made to date on the actions arising from the composite motion approved by Council on 25 May 2021.

B. RECOMMENDATION

To note the terms of the report and that a further update will be presented to the meeting of the Panel on 1 October 2021.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Legislative provisions which will facilitate the development of initiatives to improve safety for women in public spaces will be reviewed once the analysis of incident data and best practice has been undertaken.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Reducing crime and improving community safety
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Recommendations to progress actions identified via consultation with community partners may have budget implications and these will be called out in future reports to PDSP.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII	Other consultations	Consultation will be undertaken with women in

West Lothian, community groups, Police Scotland and the Violence against Women and Girls Committee.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

At its meeting on 25 May 2021, Council approved a composite motion which recognised that the onus of keeping women safe should not rest with women and that a wider conversation is needed around the safety of our public places and spaces. A copy of the composite motion is set out in Appendix 1.

Officers were instructed to conduct a consultation with women in West Lothian and organisations/agencies working with local women; to include but not limited to:

- General concerns about safety in public places and spaces
- Concerns about particular areas
- How fears may manifest in changes to their own behaviour

Officers were also instructed to engage with community partners to determine interest/support in the consultation and to consider the following and any ongoing work that may result:

- Relevant literature on VAWG in public spaces;
- Examples of good practice, worldwide, in terms of policy interventions to alleviate or prevent VAWG in public spaces;
- Examples of policy development in other local authorities in the UK, aimed at the alleviation or prevention of VAWG in public spaces;
- The number of reported incidents of a) physical violence, b) sexual violence and c) sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces during the past 5 years in West Lothian;
- The geographical spread, that is, where do most incidents occur
- Demographics, in terms of age, in relation to any reported incidents
- Time frame, in relation to any reported incidents;
- Any particular locus which is of particular concern in relation to any reported incidents.

In the first instance council further instructed that officers should report back on the possible legal powers available to the Council and responses from community partners. Other actions were also set out requiring a further report to the Panel on 1 October 2021.

D.2 Progress to Date and Planned Actions

In the period following the Council meeting on 25 May 2021, officers have undertaken a number of actions in progressing the requirements of the composite motion. A summary of the progress to date and planned actions is set out below:

- Legislation

Officers have confirmed that, whilst community safety is a matter for Police Scotland in terms of enforcement, there are various legislative provisions which will support/are available to the council in terms of ability to consider making public spaces safer places for women. The council engages with women across West Lothian in terms of every day service delivery, in accordance with the powers set out in the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated

legislation. In delivering those services we can determine whether we should develop initiatives either on our own or with partners to support women in public spaces. A review of the data around incidents and trends etc will inform the areas of concern and that in turn will allow us to consider specific legislative provisions which will facilitate the development of initiatives to improve safety for women in public spaces.

- Consultation

Officers have started preparations for conducting consultation with women in West Lothian and with organisations/agencies working with women. The council will engage with Community Planning partners, the Violence against Women and Girls Committee and Womens Aid in promoting the consultation and analysing the responses to the consultation. The council's equality officer will support equality groups to engage in the consultation. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the Panel.

- Review of reported incidents

The council already gathers and holds data on gender based violence. These data sets will be reviewed to identify statistics relating to violence against women in public spaces and places. Police Scotland and Health data will also be reviewed, along with DASAT referrals, complaints/enquiries relating to the council's open spaces, licensed premises and national information available in relation to violence against women.

Officers will review this data to identify any trends or patterns in terms of geographical spread of violent incidents against women in open spaces, demographics in terms of age and any particular locus which is of particular concern. The outcome of that analysis will be reported to the Panel.

Officers will also identify any gaps in data capture and seek to develop reporting mechanisms to ensure that all relevant data and information in relation to violence against women in public spaces is being captured.

- Review of good practice

Officers will conduct a review of good practice and examples of policy development across local authorities and will consider what policy interventions can be introduced to alleviate or prevent violence against women in public spaces. For example, officers will consider the impact of the "ask for Angela" campaign introduced in England in 2016 that is used by bars and other venues to keep women safe from sexual assault by using a codeword to identify when they are in danger or are in an uncomfortable situation. Officers will also consider the UN Women's global initiative, [Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls](#),

The above actions will be progressed in order to provide a further report to the Panel on 1 October 2021, which will include a review of consultation feedback, Community Planning Partner views, officer advice and any recommendations, with a view to a report to the Council Executive on 26 October 2021.

E. CONCLUSION

Consultation with women and womens groups in West Lothian on concerns about safety in public places and spaces, analysis of data on reported incidents and a review of good practice will support the development of recommendations on

actions which could be taken to improve the safety of women in public places in West Lothian.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

West Lothian Council meeting 25 May 2021 – Agenda item 19

Appendices/Attachments: 1

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Julie Whitelaw
Head of Corporate Services
18 June 2021

Jo Macpherson
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Agenda Item 19 – Women’s Safety in Public Places and Spaces - Composite Motion – Cllr Kirsteen Sullivan and Cllr Moira Shemilt

Council notes that the recent murders of Sarah Everard and Julia James have brought into sharp focus the safety fears and concerns of women across the country in going about their daily lives.

Council agrees that the onus of keeping women safe should not rest with women and that a wider conversation is needed around the safety of our public places and spaces.

Council instructs officers to conduct a consultation with women in West Lothian and organisations/agencies working with local women, to include but not limited to:

- general concerns about safety in public places and spaces
- concerns about particular areas
- how fears may manifest in changes to their own behaviour

Council also instructs officers to engage with community partners to determine interest/support in the consultation and to consider the following and any ongoing work that may result:-

- Relevant literature on VAWG in public spaces;
- Examples of good practice, worldwide, in terms of policy interventions to alleviate or prevent VAWG in public spaces;
- Examples of policy development in other local authorities in the UK, aimed at the alleviation or prevention of VAWG in public spaces;
- The number of reported incidents of a) physical violence, b) sexual violence and c) sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces during the past 5 years in West Lothian;
- The geographical spread, that is, where do most incidents occur?;
- Demographics, in terms of age, in relation to any reported incidents;
- Time frame, in relation to any reported incidents;
- Any particular locus which is of particular concern in relation to any reported incidents.

Council further instructs officers to:

- Report to P&R PDSP on 18th June on possible legal powers available to the council and responses from community partners
- Further engage with community partners after consultation has closed to discuss approach
- Report to P&R PDSP on 1st October to review consultation feedback, community planning partners’ views, officers’ advice and officers’ recommendations to include but not limited to the following:
 - actions that could be taken to improve the safety of women in public places in West Lothian
 - any partnership measures/initiatives that could be put in place to increase safety and improve the confidence of women when going out alone
 - recommendations for how safety considerations can be embedded into planning and design of public spaces
- Report to Council Executive on 26th October with recommendations including any budget required to implement decisions.