

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00, Tuesday, 12 March 2024

Women's Safety in Public Places – Actions Update

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 note the content of the report, which outlines activities undertaken by the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership (WSPP CIP) to work with partners within and outside the council to contribute to Edinburgh's Park Lighting Guidance, to the recruitment of the Nighttime Coordinator and to the endorsement of the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign.
 - 1.1.2 note that these workstreams are ongoing and still in progress, with work expected to continue through 2024 until they are concluded. Consequently, the report presents the work undertaken to date, as well as the work expected to be undertaken in the coming months.

Amanda Hatton

Executive Director of Children, Education and Justice Services

Contact: Rose Howley, Chief Social Work Officer and Service Director

E-mail: rose.howley@edinburgh.gov.uk

Women's Safety in Public Places – Actions Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines the ways in which the relevant officers involved in leading the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee, Lighting, and Community Safety work together to embed principles enhancing Women's Safety in Public Places (WSPP) in all community safety and improvement activity.
- 2.2 The report specifically focuses on actions allocated to the WSPP Community Improvement Partnership (WSPP CIP) by the Policy and Sustainability Committee around supporting the new Park Lighting Guidance, as well as the joint work taking place on Feminist Town Planning, the endorsement of the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign and the recruitment of the Nighttime Coordinator.
- 2.3 It demonstrates the close working relationships between officers involved in the relevant workstreams, as well as the commitment for this level of partnership work to continue until those workstreams are completed.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership (WSPP CIP) was formally created in January 2022 in response to council motions calling for improvements in this area in 2021 (for details on the relevant motions, please see section 10 of this report).
- 3.2 The WSPP CIP consists of partners from the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland and the voluntary sector. It reports to the [Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee \(ESEC\)](#) bi-monthly, to the [Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership](#) quarterly, and provides annual progress reports to the [Policy and Sustainability Committee](#).
- 3.3 On 23 May 2023, the following actions were added to the Policy and Sustainability Committee's Rolling Action Log:
 - 3.3.1 'To agree to liaise with officers designing the above lighting guidance and feed any relevant responses as outlined in paragraph 5.3 of the report to address concerns and inform innovative solutions as far as possible' and

3.3.2 'To request that the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership engage with the officers and external agencies involved in the work around feminist town planning, a night-time coordinator post, and the Get Me Home Safely campaign, as this project progressed to ensure women's safety in Edinburgh was embedded across all these strands of work'

3.4 This report outlines how the WSPP CIP is working in partnership both with a range of divisions within the Council as well as with external partners to implement those actions.

4. Main report

Edinburgh Parks Lighting Guidance

- 4.1 Officers responsible for developing the Parks Lighting Guidance and for Women's Safety in Public Places met to discuss the incorporation of information gathered through the Women's Safety in Public Places consultations into the future strategy for lighting the city's parks and open spaces.
- 4.2 On 11 May 2023, a report was submitted to the Culture and Communities Committee on '[Guidance on Park Lighting](#)'. The report recognises that some people, and women in particular, might find parks intimidating, especially after dark.
- 4.3 It further recognises that lighting is only one piece in the puzzle of preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and improving their safety and their perceptions of safety in public places. This is because some of the key factors that [women identified](#) as contributors to feeling unsafe included the behaviour of men, young people, public drinking and antisocial behaviour, which require a different approach.
- 4.4 The report to the Culture and Communities Committee also included a report by Calvium, titled '[Park Lighting: Illuminating existing paths in Edinburgh's parks](#)'. In the Calvium report, a review of all 149 parks in Edinburgh categorised them in order of need for additional lighting based on their connections to local destinations, transport links, SIMD information, number and use of connecting paths and perceptions. Based on the work by Calvium, a prioritised list of parks and open spaces in Edinburgh will be assessed for additional lighting. However, it is envisioned that over time all parks and open spaces will need to be evaluated and revisited periodically to ensure they meet the guidance.

Edinburgh as a Feminist City

- 4.5 The 'Edinburgh as a Feminist City' motion was tabled by Cllr. O'Neill and supported by [Full Council on 4 May 2023](#). The motion calls for learning from other cities who have adopted a feminist town planning approach to be implemented in Edinburgh and for a Cross-Party Short-Life Working Group (CPSLWG) to be formed to coordinate this work. The aim of the motion is to create a safer and more inclusive Edinburgh for women, girls and people of marginalised genders.

- 4.6 The officer group concerned with this work includes colleagues from Planning and Equally Safe and has been meeting since June 2023. The Planning Committee approved the creation of the SCLPWG on [15 November 2023](#).
- 4.7 The Lead Officer for Equally Safe and Women's Safety in Public Places is also a member of the Feminist City Officer Group as well as the Feminist City CPSLWG. This enables for up-to-date information exchange and regular communication between all stakeholders in improving women's safety including Police Scotland's 'E' Division, a range of Council divisions and partners in the third sector.

'Get Me Home Safely' Campaign and Edinburgh's Nighttime Coordinator

- 4.8 The Lead Officers for the ESEC and for Community Safety have been working closely together since 2022 as part of the developing work on women's safety in public places. The ESEC Lead Officer is also responsible for leading the WSPP CIP, while the Lead Officer for community safety is responsible for the implementation of the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign and for the recruitment of the Edinburgh Nighttime Coordinator.
- 4.9 In ongoing conversations about the progress of the work, the Lead Officers have a mutual understanding of, and opportunities to input into, each other's work. They also work closely with stakeholders, including Police Scotland and third sector organisations.
- 4.10 At the time of writing this report, the recruitment of a Nighttime Coordinator was agreed by the [Finance and Resources Committee's meeting on 25 January 2024](#). The ESEC Lead Officer and the Community Safety Lead Officer are committed to working together to ensuring that women's safety in the nighttime economy is a key priority for the nighttime coordinator once they are recruited.
- 4.11 Further, as the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign has now been endorsed by the Council, the Licensing department and trade unions are now involved in its implementation. Once the nighttime coordinator is in post, one of their responsibilities will be to bolster the campaign with employers in the nighttime economy to improve the safety of workers.
- 4.12 Given the existing close working relationship between the leads of the two key workstreams mentioned in this motion, partnership work will be continuing in this area, ensuring that women's safety remains a priority across them.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 As a next step in this process, AtkinsRealis are currently carrying out work in the parks and open spaces identified as highest priority in terms of additional lighting. Their work involves environmental visual audits and discussions with local residents, elected members, and community councils and groups to discern the specific needs of the communities.

- 5.2 For each site, a final lighting proposal will be compiled following the completion of this work, following consultation with key stakeholders within the Council and with the WSPP CIP.
- 5.3 The lead officers for community safety and women's safety in public places will continue to work together to ensure that women's safety is embedded within any community improvement activities.
- 5.4 This report focuses entirely on the actions assigned to the WSPP CIP as per the Policy and Sustainability Committee's Rolling Action Log. A fuller report on the activities of the WSPP CIP in the year 2023-2024 will be presented at the Policy and Sustainability Committee's next meeting in May 2024. The Park Lighting Guidance and update on progress of the programme will be reported separately to Culture and Communities Committee as part of its reporting on parks investment.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 At this stage, there are no additional financial implications for partnership working between the WSPP CIP and the review of the Parks Lighting Guidance or for the WSPP CIP's involvement in the work on 'Edinburgh as a Feminist City'.
- 6.2 Any financial impacts incurred in the process of developing Edinburgh's lighting approach in parks and open spaces (as well as a wider lighting approach to streets, etc., as part of developing a Public Lighting Strategy, for example) will be incurred by the relevant division within the Place Directorate.
- 6.3 However, it is anticipated that in due course, any additional costs required to increase lighting levels in Edinburgh will be covered by the appropriate division with reporting made to the relevant Committee.
- 6.4 Future financial impacts may include re-apportioning existing budget within the Planning Service to resource additional work. Full details of any impacts will become clear as work progresses, and they will be detailed to the relevant Committee.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The work to increase Women's Safety in Public Places is expected to have a positive impact across all equality areas and for people with any protected characteristics. Evidence strongly suggests that when public spaces are made safer for women and girls, they tend to become greener, more welcoming, and safer for everyone in the community.
- 7.2 As this work is still in progress, specific changes and proposals will not be made until the work on the Park Lighting Guidance is completed and recommendations are made on proposals to improve lighting in specific locations. As a result, an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has not been carried out in the context of this

report, but individual IIAs will likely be carried out once specific proposals for change are made.

- 7.3 However, with regard to Equality and Poverty specifically, there is overwhelming evidence to show that VAWG and wider gender inequity of access to public spaces and resources adversely impacts women's and girls' life chances. [UK-based research](#) confirms that women's concern for personal safety often precludes them from full and meaningful inclusion in public spaces, further limiting their ability to be involved in activities that would improve their overall physical and mental wellbeing, support income generation and enhance their overall participation in public life.
- 7.4 Research by the [West Midlands Combined Authority](#) further confirmed that women and girls turn down opportunities in employment and training due to limited transport and travel options and feelings of unsafety contributes to a loss of an estimated 3.7% of GDP.
- 7.5 The same research indicates that making public spaces safer for women and girls will have considerable social, health, and financial benefits through reducing the wider inequalities women experience in society.
- 7.6 With measures that improve women's safety in public places, including the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign and the recruitment of a nighttime coordinator, it is expected that women and girls will feel safer and more included in using outdoor spaces for recreation, travel, commuting and exercise. Consequently, as more women feel safer traveling to and from work, this will help reduce poverty or the risk of falling into poverty.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 The work on improving Women's Safety in Public Places in Edinburgh is expected to have a positive environmental impact, provided that any innovative lighting solutions strike a balance between improving safety and mitigating environmental risks. Potential examples of how this can be achieved include motion-activated lighting or [bat/wildlife-friendly lighting](#) in parks and open spaces.
- 8.2 A positive impact is anticipated in reducing emissions. During the Women's Safety in Public Places consultation, women told us that they would rather use a private vehicle than travel actively to a location or use public transport due to safety concerns. As women and girls start to feel safer in Edinburgh's public spaces, it is anticipated that the perceived need to use a private vehicle may reduce.
- 8.3 An impact that will need to be assessed is the need for additional and improved levels of lighting. Lighting contributes to increased feelings of safety; however, it may also have unintended consequences including an energy impact as well as a potential impact on wildlife and biodiversity. The Park Lighting Guidance will consider these issues when consulting with residents and stakeholders of local parks and open spaces that have been identified as requiring improvements as well as with the WSPP CIP. Part of this consultation will consider innovative solutions

such as solar or wind-power, motion-activated lighting, and bat-friendly lighting as potential alternatives to mitigate environmental and biodiversity risks and costs.

- 8.4 No environmental impacts have been identified as part of the work to recruit a Nighttime Coordinator, from the endorsement of the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign, or from the joint work involved to implement those.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The work around Women's Safety in Public Places has involved considerable consultation with Edinburgh communities, and particularly with women and girls. Through formal consultations in the summer of 2022 and winter 2023, women and girls told us that:

- (a) Between 73% - 80% have experienced some form of harassment, abuse or violence while in a public space.
- (b) The top 3 factors women identified as key contributors to not feeling safe included lighting levels, the behaviour of men and the behaviour of young people.
- (c) Women and girls indicated feeling less safe in public places during hours of darkness

- 9.2 The work to increase Women's Safety in Public Places further supports the Council to progress a broad range of local and national priorities, duties and frameworks:

9.2.1 The City of Edinburgh Council's [Equality and Diversity Framework 2021-2025](#) makes a commitment to be 'more empowering of citizens, colleagues and partners'. Its key priorities include 'Inclusive Communities: People at risk of harm through poverty and deprivation, hate crime and discrimination, violence against women, children and young people or of becoming involved in crime are protected and supported' and 'Improved health, wellbeing and attainment for young people: Increasing the life chances of all young people by increasing attainment at school'.

9.2.2 The [Edinburgh City Vision 2050](#) promises that we will create a Fair, Pioneering, Welcoming and Thriving Edinburgh.

9.2.3 The City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan 2023- 2027 has 3 key priorities:

- (a) Create good places to live and work
- (b) End poverty in Edinburgh
- (c) Become a net zero city by 2030

9.2.4 The [Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2022-2028](#) also identifies 2 relevant priorities:

- (a) Priority 2: Access to work, learning and training opportunities
- (b) Priority 3: A good place to live

- 9.2.5 The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) places an onus on public bodies to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9.2.6 The [Fairer Scotland Duty](#) places a legal responsibility on public bodies to actively consider 'how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions'.

9.2.7 [Equally Safe](#), Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate VAWG has the following vision: 'A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it'.

9.2.8 The purpose of Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) includes:

- (a) Giving opportunities to all people living in Scotland
- (b) Increasing the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- (c) Creating sustainable and inclusive growth and
- (d) Reducing inequalities and giving equal importance to economic, environmental, and social progress

The relevant National Outcomes to this work include: Children and Young People, Communities, Culture, Economy, Education, Environment, Health and Human Rights.

9.2.9 Public Health Scotland (PHS) has identified [Scotland's public health priorities and violence against women and girls](#), with priority 1 being 'A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities.

9.3 Beyond the positive impact this work is expected to have on women and girls, it is expected that the impact it will have on men might be more complex. Although making Edinburgh safer for women and girls is very likely to make it safer for all residents, a number of men have been vocal, during the Women's Safety in Public Places consultations as well as during the #RespectHerSpace campaign, expressing feeling targeted and negatively portrayed. Others argued that men are more likely than women to be victimised in public places (which is statistically true) and they felt excluded from efforts to make Edinburgh safer.

9.4 To address these risks, officers relied on robust communications strategies and forward planning to address such comments and any complaints. The Women's Safety in Public Places consultation also involved one focus group exclusively for men, and invited responses from all residents-not only women and girls.

- 9.5 The workstream on Feminist City Planning further aims to make Edinburgh safer by design for all of its residents.
- 9.6 The work on the new Park Lighting Guidance is aimed to make parks safer places overall, for all members of the public and similarly, the work of the Nighttime Coordinator and the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign are aimed at all residents and tourists working in, or enjoying, Edinburgh's nighttime economy.
- 9.7 Lastly, there are currently no financial risks associated with the partnership work between the WSPP CIP and colleagues working on the Parks Lighting Guidance, the appointment of the Nighttime Coordinator, the 'Get Me Home Safely' campaign and the Feminist City CPSLWG.
- 9.8 However, it is anticipated that, as work progresses and projects are proposed and delivered, additional expenditure might be required which may involve a level of risk to the Council. As there is no concrete plans that require a financial investment at present, the WSPP CIP will bring any financial risks to the attention of the relevant Committee at an appropriate time in future.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 ['Women's Safety in Public Places'](#) motion by Cllr. Watt at the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 29 April 2021.
- 10.2 ['Creating a Safer First and Last Mile Journey for Women and Girls'](#) motion by Cllr. Osler at the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 26 August 2021.
- 10.3 [Guidance on Park Lighting](#): report to the Culture and Communities Committee on 11 May 2023.
- 10.4 [Women's Safety in Public Places initial report](#) to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 30 November 2021.
- 10.5 [Women's Safety in Public Places update report](#) to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 23 May 2023.
- 10.6 [Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership progress report](#) to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 1 November 2022.
- 10.7 [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- 10.8 The City of Edinburgh Council's [Equality and Diversity Framework 2021-2025](#)
- 10.9 [Edinburgh City Vision 2050](#)
- 10.10 The [Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2022-2028](#)
- 10.11 The [Fairer Scotland Duty](#)
- 10.12 [Equally Safe](#), Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate VAWG
- 10.13 Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#)

- 10.14 [Scotland's public health priorities and violence against women and girls](#): Priority 1: 'A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities'.
Navarrette-Hernandez, P.; Vetro, A. & Concha, P. (2021): Building safer public spaces: Exploring gender difference in the perception of safety in public space through urban design interventions. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Volume 214.
Available at:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0169204621001432> as accessed on 23 January 2024.
- 10.15 West Midlands Combined Authority (2022): [Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls](#).

11. Appendices

None