



Subject:	Response to Consultation on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill
Date:	24th September, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officers:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to bring to the Committee's attention The Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill which was introduced into the Assembly on 5th July 2021. A copy of the Bill can be accessed here .
1.2	The Committee Stage of the Bill will commence in September 2021 and the Committee for Justice is seeking comments and/or views on the Bill from interested parties by 24th September. Whilst Council officers have not identified any objections to the Bill nor any evidence that would inform the content of the Bill, it is recommended that the Council submit a brief response recording its support for the provisions of the Bill.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the attached report summarising the provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill; and • approve the attached Council response in paragraph 3.3 below.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill gives effect to the Justice Minister's desire to improve the operation and effectiveness of the justice system. At its core are two key aims, which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) to enhance public safety by implementing certain elements of the Report of the Gillen review of serious sexual offence cases and from a review of the law on child sexual exploitation and sexual offences against children; and b) to improve services for victims of trafficking and exploitation.
3.2	<p><u>Summary of Main Provisions</u></p> <p>The main provisions within the Bill include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions arising from the Gillen Review of serious sexual offence cases to exclude the public from all serious sexual offence hearings and to introduce anonymity for defendants' pre-charge • Provisions to give effect to the outcome of a review of the law on child sexual exploitation and sexual offences against children to include live streamed images in the definition of exploitation for sexual purposes and to create a new offence of adults masquerading as children online • Provisions to create a new offence of up-skirting and down blousing alongside a number of other sex offence adjustments to ensure the law operates as intended in these areas • Provisions to adjust the modern slavery strategy and improve services for potential victims of slavery and exploitation <p>All of the major components proposed for inclusion in the Bill have been the subject of public consultation exercises while a number of the more technical and procedural improvements were the subject of targeted or specialist consultation.</p>

3.3	<p><u>Council Response</u></p> <p>The Committee for Justice is now seeking comments and/or views on the content of the Bill itself.</p> <p>Officers have not identified any issues with the content of the Bill nor do we have any evidence to submit in relation to the content of the Bill. However, it is proposed that the Council submit the following brief response welcoming the provisions within the Bill.</p> <p><i>“The Council has reviewed the content of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and are supportive of the provisions outlined in the Bill. We particularly welcome the inclusion of live streamed images in the definition of exploitation for sexual purposes and the creation of a new offence of adults masquerading as children online and also welcome the broadening of the definition of the abuse of power definitions, these are long overdue”.</i></p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs assessment implications</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>