

COUNTING WOMEN IN: BRISTOL GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES 2015 BRISTOL EAST

WHAT HAVE THE CANDIDATES SAID ABOUT WOMEN'S INTERESTS & SUPPORTING WOMEN'S EQUALITY?

Bristol's political candidates need to address issues of concern to women in the run-up to election day in order to demonstrate that they will represent women's interests effectively and take action for women's equality after the election.

Every candidate standing in the 2015 General Election has been invited to attend a "Women's Question Time" for each of the four constituencies, hosted by Bristol Women's Voice, to set out their pitch to women and to respond to questions posed by women living and working in Bristol.

This report, by Bristol Fawcett, summarises and offers some thoughts on what the candidates for Bristol East said at the Women's Question Time Event on Tuesday 14th April 2015.

Obviously, this report is no substitute for learning more about the candidates and their parties' policies and commitments through their manifestos and events (and we have included links to all the candidates' web pages as far as we can find them). Neither is this a comprehensive report on everything the candidates have said on all issues affecting women, or about women's equality. This report can only capture the responses given to the questions raised on the day.

What we did ...

We attended the question time event and noted the candidates' statements and their responses to questions determined by Bristol Women's Voice in consultation with their members. We then compiled some brief comments on the following basis:

1. 'What the candidate said' is a summary of candidates' statements and responses given at the Women's Question Time event based on combining the notes of three non-political party affiliated Bristol Fawcett members present at the meeting. Sometimes candidates were asked for a personal view and sometimes they were asked to talk about their party policy.
2. Our commentary was agreed with full consensus by 4 members of the Bristol Counting Women In group – none of these members has a party political affiliation and none is active in any candidates' campaigns.
3. We were interested in the questions: Did the candidate demonstrate awareness of the issues as they relate to women? Were they knowledgeable about the current policy position? Did they demonstrate commitment to key policy changes as recommended by authoritative cross-party or non-party sources? Are their commitments likely to make a significant impact for women and are they party or manifesto commitments?

The candidates will have views, and their parties will have policies, that are not captured in this report and we strongly encourage all voters to investigate the candidates and their political parties' manifestos.

If candidates had said something relevant in response to an earlier question or during their opening statement during the question time event, we took this into account when commenting.

There are two parts to this report – the first part lists the candidates who did not attend the event, the second part reports on those candidates who attended in person.

Part one – those who did not attend

Candidate:	Abdul Malik http://www.libdems.org.uk/abdul_malik#
Party:	Liberal Democrats
<i>What the candidate said.....</i>	<i>Our comments.....</i>
The candidate did not attend the Question Time Event and did not respond to Bristol Fawcett's offer to brief all candidates	We are unable to provide any commentary for this candidate

Part two – those who attended in person

Candidate:	Kerry McCarthy http://www.kerrymccarthymp.org/default.aspx	
Party:	Labour	
	<i>What the candidate said.....</i>	<i>Our comments.....</i>
Opening Statement	<p>Came in on an All Woman Shortlist, and has been the MP for the last 10 years in Bristol East. Kerry agrees with All Women Shortlists to increase the number of women in politics.</p> <p>From family of 5 sisters with varied family needs Lawyer in past, but tired of picking up the pieces and wanted to make a change</p> <p>Shadow Foreign Office Minister</p>	
The costs of childcare are in the highest in the UK, how would your party address this?	<p>There has been a drop in Sure Start centres which not only supported people to work, but also support children from deprived families by giving breakfast clubs.</p> <p>We've seen a 30% rise in childcare costs Labour will extend childcare from 15-25 hours for working hours, and offer 8am-6pm childcare as part of schools.</p>	Context on child poverty issues and comprehensive answers to how Labour would address it
From speaking to your constituents, what are the most worrying health gaps for women?	<p>121 midwifery provision promised and mental health focussed, has been 'poor relation'.</p> <p>Labour will implement a National Care Service if get in</p>	Specific party solutions promised and solid understanding of gendered impact of issue.
Why is sexism not a hate crime? Why is no data collected on hate crime?	<p>Sophie Lancaster, murdered Goth. Worked with her mum to make attacks on subcultures hate crimes.</p> <p>Sexism and sexist abuse, when it's not assault, isn't on the radar at all. It's appalling.</p> <p>Online hate is also an issue for women.</p>	Aware of issues but no commitment to drive further.
What about sexual harassment at	<p>Zero hour contracts play havoc for people, they have to juggle more than one contract. Creates insecurity</p>	

work and employment rights?	in the workplace. Labour will drop fees for employment tribunals if they are elected	
Do you and does your party support the Nordic model for prostitution?	Personally supports and party supports. Rejects the view that people are exercising free right to work as prostitute, it's not what people would choose if they had enough choices. Labour tried to get Nordic model in before end of last term but had to take it out of final bill. Fishponds Rd has reduced number of women on streets from 300 to 100, mostly drug addicts who need help and to be taken through drugs court not penalised for work. One25 took 100 women off streets last year. CCTV and ASBOs helped to reduce kerb crawling around St Pauls / Easton	Strong knowledge of local area, involved in local community groups
How will your party ensure that all forms of violence against women is eradicated?	Shadow minister for VAW Community resolution is a retrograde step Needs cross agency view across Police, law, NHS and education. SRE – need to teach boys about consent and relationships in school as well as girls	Demonstrated good awareness and understanding of the issue; made personal and party commitment to measures or policies that authoritative non-party or cross-party political sources recommend.
How many of the Fair Play South West's Manifesto 'asks' do you agree with and will you sign up to the petition?	Labour will be publishing a women's manifesto to cover older women, women's security, flexibility, maternity, child care, decent hours, adequate pay, and representation. Want to support grass roots women not just FSTE directors. No to page 3 campaign has been effective, as has the Everyday Sexism campaign. Has been involved in the Rewind Reframe campaign tackling racism and sexism in music videos. Tackling at cultural level is important.	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address
FGM is an ongoing issue, what are we doing to prevent it?	Bristol is doing really well, Integrate and Daughters of Eve are two local organisations. We've had one prosecution attempt, but need some totemic prosecutions to make legislation work. Need 10 point plan not just across prosecutions	Evidence of deep understanding of issues facing women, demonstrating clear and strong policy / spend commitment that would make a significant impact
Final statement	Has a 10 year record of fighting for Bristol East, better than any man or any other candidate. 75% of the cuts have come from women's pockets, we need to get rid of this government	

Candidate:	Matt Gordon http://tusc2015.com/matt-gordon-for-bristol-east/	
Party:	Trade Union and Socialist Coalition	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	Stands for a party which provides an alternative to austerity and the cuts. TUSC are the fast growing political party Gender pay gap decrease is due to men's pay falling, rather than any improvement in women's pay.	

The costs of childcare are in the highest in the UK, how would your party address this?	Extending childcare won't help unless other barriers are removed. Extending the 15 hrs doesn't help people because the restrictions are tough around how you can use them (not all in one day, only in 3 hr sets) Nursery employees are treated poorly, and don't get paid enough.	Aware of the difficulties of logistics around using the 15 hours and how this doesn't work. No specific commitments to address the issue.
From speaking to your constituents, what are the most worrying health gaps for women?	Patients will be charged for using NHS under current government plans. Employees have been affected by job losses and pay freezes across the NHS	Did not identify gendered gaps or talk about women's health issues
Why is sexism not a hate crime? Why is no data collected on hate crime? What about sexual harassment at work and employment rights?	Sexism should be counted as a hate crime, and should be taken seriously. Mentioned LGTB groups. Services in this area have been cut which will increase the division in society. Further cuts will increase likelihood of violence. 300,000 women are sacked each year for getting pregnant. No-one chooses to go into prostitution, but due to the cuts women feel they have no options.	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
Do you and does your party support the Nordic model for prostitution?	TUSC and Matt personally support the model. Cuts are driving women into the profession, few people choose it as it is a dangerous life including violence with little protection. We need publically funded services to help society rebuild and end austerity.	Appeared to understand the issue from a policy perspective and referenced some existing or proposed policy or action. Did not demonstrate commitment to key policy change
How will your party ensure that all forms of violence against women is eradicated?	Women in these situations need the police and NHS to provide services, and these have all been cut. Disabled people have had their benefits slashed, and we have a culture of seeing claimants as benefit scroungers. Women's inequality is ingrained in our culture and is bigger than the issue of austerity. Need fundamental education about equality to create a society that suits all of us not just a handful.	No gendered analysis of issues, comments on disability and benefits.
How many of the Fair Play South West's Manifesto 'asks' do you agree with and will you sign up to the petition?	Agreed, signed. TUSC stand for a £10 minimum wage which would be addressed by the banks	Appeared to understand the issue from a policy perspective and referenced some existing or proposed policy or action. Did not demonstrate commitment to key policy change
FGM is an ongoing issue, what are we doing to prevent it?	Talked about cuts to legal aid Need to have services to support families through this and those services have been cut under this government	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
Final statement	Money is there in society, but through tax avoidance it's not shared out. TUSC offer an alternative to austerely, they stand for Trade Union rights, a new £10p/hr minimum wage, more affordable housing built by the councils not by privatised companies Stand for keeping NHS public, and renationalising gas & electric.	

Candidate:	Theodora Clarke https://www.conservatives.com/OurTeam/Prospective_Parliamentary_Candidates/Clarke_Theodora.aspx	
Party:	Conservative	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	<p>She's a small business owner, wants to improve lives for local people.</p> <p>Disillusioned with the culture of PMQs and shouting at each other in Westminster and wants to do things differently.</p> <p>She organised a jobs fair for Bristol. Unemployment has fallen by 35% under current government.</p> <p>Conservatives have promised to double childcare allowance over 5 years for 3-4 yr olds to 30 hrs a week.</p>	
The costs of childcare are in the highest in the UK, how would your party address this?	<p>We have the 2nd highest childcare costs in Europe after Switzerland which is not acceptable.</p> <p>Conservatives want to provide more wrap around care for longer to help women back into work.</p> <p>Denied Sure Start centres have been closed, this is scaremongering by Labour and there have been cuts but these have been back office cuts rather than closures</p>	Strong understanding of issue and parties commitment to measures or policies that authoritative non-party or cross-party political sources recommend.
From speaking to your constituents, what are the most worrying health gaps for women?	Volunteer sprained her ankle and she had to drive her to Southmead with a long wait. There is not enough health services in East Bristol.	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
Why is sexism not a hate crime? Why is no data collected on hate crime?	<p>Agree it's awful, spoke to someone who had suffered domestic violence whilst out canvassing, we need to provide support for women who experience it.</p> <p>Has done work with St Mungos who are a fantastic charity.</p>	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
What about sexual harassment at work and employment rights?	Some people like zero hour contracts, it gives them flexibility	
Do you and does your party support the Nordic model for prostitution?	<p>Unsure of Conservative party position on Nordic model.</p> <p>Party aims to reduce prostitution, to get women back into home and a stable family life. Met with local police, prostitution on Stapleton Road</p> <p>Not aware of Nordic model but she's open to all options that will get women back to work.</p> <p>We want to support women</p> <p>Need to crack down on porn online and Conservatives introduced legislation to support this</p>	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
How will your party ensure that all forms of	Forced Marriage has been criminalised under Conservative government	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of

violence against women is eradicated?	<p>Claire's Law has also been implemented to protect women from partners who conceal DV history</p> <p>Has visited St Mungos' mental health work</p> <p>Young women need role models no parity in pay in several industries. Same job, same pay. More directors called John in FTSE 100 than there are women.</p> <p>Works with young people as mentor, showing face as entrepreneur, encouraging young women to ink it's possible.</p>	appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
How many of the Fair Play South West's Manifesto 'asks' do you agree with and will you sign up to the petition?	<p>Transport awareness of how women use busses in a different way to men, often with multiple journeys in a day</p> <p>Doesn't agree with All women shortlists</p> <p>£10p/hr is unaffordable for small businesses such as mine</p>	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
FGM is an ongoing issue, what are we doing to prevent it?	<p>Major issue, needs to be addressed. Good starting point now FGM is illegal</p> <p>Need to be community conversations to allow girls to say when it's happened.</p>	<p>Appeared to understand the issue from a policy perspective and referenced existing action but without demonstrating commitment to key policy change.</p> <p>NB FGM has been illegal for some time, though no prosecution until last year. FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985, and since 2003 anyone taking a child out of the UK to be cut faces 14 years in prison.</p>
Final statement	<p>We need a strong MP who has worked before, someone who can represent Bristol East.</p> <p>Cameron can be trusted for another term in power, trusted with the economy.</p> <p>Would campaign for a minor injuries unit at Cosham hospital, and more affordable homes.</p> <p>If I'm your MP I will tackle youth unemployment, I work with young people.</p> <p>Will concentrate on vital local services. Transport, health, housing, services for children</p>	

Candidate:	Lorraine Francis http://www.bristolgreenparty.org.uk/lorraine-francis-for-bristol-east	
Party:	Green	
	<i>What the candidate said.....</i>	<i>Our comments.....</i>
Opening Statement	<p>Passionate about working with women and young children, has seen first-hand the impact of the cuts through her work.</p> <p>Green party has been welcoming to her and she wants to stand up and make a difference.</p>	
The costs of childcare are in the	Women should be treated fairly and everyone should have access to work.	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to

highest in the UK, how would your party address this?		women and some awareness of appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
From speaking to your constituents, what are the most worrying health gaps for women?	Overall wellbeing is important and deprivation has an impact on mental health The health services have been taken over	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
Why is sexism not a hate crime? Why is no data collected on hate crime?	Any equality is unacceptable. Green party is looking at their equality strategy. She interviewed a group of 'working girls' who felt they'd been marginalised by society as they were not counted as working.	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
What about sexual harassment at work and employment rights?	Worked on zero hours contract herself, income drops at short notice, people cannot plan, or take holidays. You need to be financially dependent to take an employer to a tribunal, this applies to all minorities.	
Do you and does your party support the Nordic model for prostitution?	Can't speak on behalf of others, has done local interviews with women. Green party is in support of legalisation of prostitution to decriminalise the whole process. Want to support women who told her they want it legalised. These women should be treated with dignity, and they have a right to have their say. About having better housing, fairer income, so women can choose not to work in the profession. Some women are trafficked and they continue to work on the streets because it's what they know.	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
How will your party ensure that all forms of violence against women is eradicated?	Equality is good FGM needs to be tackled, 14 or 15 is too late, PSHE is essential, Bristol Ideal is helping with this	Demonstrated some awareness of the issue as it relates to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address it but without evidence of commitment
How many of the Fair Play South West's Manifesto 'asks' do you agree with and will you sign up to the petition?	Green Party policy is around women currently being left behind. Fully embrace equality of pay, every citizen should have right to decently-paid jobs. Can't speak for your organisation. Don't know it. No representation of me as a black woman in the document.	Short on personal or party commitment to the range of policy recommendations made in the manifesto. Made key point concerning critical underrepresentation of black women in policy development and in political life.
FGM is an ongoing issue, what are we doing to prevent it?	There used to be a push within child protection to screen at risk families. For example schools will know when children miss school at key times of the year.	Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; no personal or party political commitments made
Final statement	This process has challenged me, and I will continue to develop my knowledge for women in Bristol East. The inequalities are deeply ingrained and will take time to remove, whoever gets in at the next election.	