

**Press release from the Fawcett Society Bristol Local Group
For immediate release – 4 May 2012**

Reflections on the Yes Vote in the Mayoral Referendum

Having a Mayor will be a huge change for the city. It is also an opportunity for improvement and a chance to reform the public and political life of Bristol in order to ensure the views of all the people of Bristol are heard and represented.

Women are half the population in Bristol, but while only 23% of Bristol's elected councillors and 1 in 5 national MPs are women there is still a lot of work to do for equal representation of women and men in public and political life. Bristol's Counting Women In Campaign [1] [2] will be working during the coming months to ensure that the issues that affect women are central to this electoral campaign. We want to see those (female or male) who hold power using it well for women and girls.

We are expecting each mayoral candidate to tell us and the voting public:

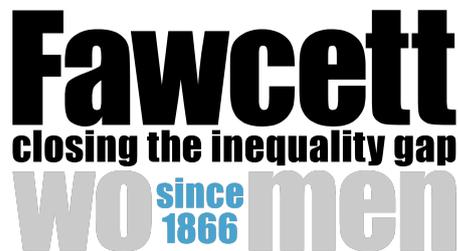
- How they will ensure there will be a better balance of women and men in positions of power and influence [3]
- How they will make their policies more women-friendly
- How they will deliver on issues that affect women [4]
- How they will earmark money to address the disproportionate impact of cuts in public spending on women [5]
- How their behaviour and standards will demonstrate that they will listen to all residents, including all women, equally.

A spokesperson from Bristol Fawcett said:

“With a turnout rate of only 24% overall, but as low as 9.9% in some wards, it is clear that candidates and political parties have to work hard to get people to see why this election will matter. Having candidates who reflect the population, i.e. both women and men, and talking about the issues that affect women and their families in everyday life will help. These steps are critical for increasing voter participation and political credibility as well as for delivering services and policies that will be fair to all.”

The campaign representative outlined why achieving 50:50 representation of women and men in public and political life matters:

“It is less than a century since women in the UK were given any right to vote, or to stand for political office, to take up civil professions or to take up public office. While the laws that prevented women from being visible and active in public life have been dismantled, the legacy of a bygone age still influences today's models of “leadership”, policy-making and the setting of priority policy areas. These hierarchical models are known to lead to poor performance when it comes to capturing or even recognising the knowledge and experience of people who are traditionally excluded from the corridors of power. Our vision for a feminist politics is one that recognises women as over 50% of the population, that recognises the



strengths and benefits of collaborative decision-making and that conceptualises leadership as power to enable rather than the exercise of power over others.”

ENDS

Notes:

1. Bristol’s Counting Women In campaign is coordinated by Bristol Fawcett, working with other individuals and women’s groups in Bristol. For more information on Bristol Fawcett and the Bristol Counting Women In campaign see:
www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/CountingWomenIn
Twitter: @wearstheshoes
Blog: <http://wearstheshoes.wordpress.com/>
2. Bristol Fawcett is a local group of The Fawcett Society. Fawcett is the UK’s leading campaign for equality between women and men. Fawcett is part of the Counting Women In coalition (www.countingwomenin.org) working with Centre for Women & Democracy; Electoral Reform Society; Fawcett Society; Hansard Society; Unlock Democracy. The aims of this national campaign are:
 - Change political culture – Charter for Equality
 - Political parties do more to recruit and promote women
 - Media must treat women in public life with respect
3. 50% of the population has a right to a 50% say at the top table in Britain’s public and political life:
 - Only 1 in 5 MPs are women, a 4% increase since 1997
 - Only 23% of elected Councillors of Bristol City Council are women
4. According to Bristol Women’s Voice (www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk) the top issues that women want to see action taken on are:
 - Caring Responsibilities
 - Employment & skills
 - Health
 - Transport
 - Safety & violence
5. The disproportionate impact of public sector spending cuts – both nationally and locally – was clearly identified in the Bristol Fawcett report, Cutting Women Out in Bristol, published 3rd November 2011. This report is downloadable here:
<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Economy.html>