

## MOTION – PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Proposer:

Councillor Mark Hood

Councillor Stuart Jeffery

### **Background Information – provided by the Green Group**

Kent County Council recognises the important and disturbing issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within our community. Violence against women and girls is a widespread and persistent problem, with serious consequences for those affected and the community as a whole, as it presents a barrier to safety, wellbeing and equality. It includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, and occurs in many forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, spiking and harassment.

Here in Kent 1 in 5 crimes reported to police are domestic abuse related and 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse. Violence against women and girls has risen by 37% in the last five years and the National Police Chiefs Council describes it as a ‘national emergency’.

We also know that these are significantly under reported incidents with many women and girls being unlikely to come forwards or afraid to report what has happened to them. Kent County Council is committed to ensuring that women and girls feel safe and supported in all aspects of their lives, especially in public spaces and at night. The Don't Disrespect campaign which raises the issue of increasing misogyny among young men is an example of the proactive work which needs to continue. We understand the vital importance of tackling violence against women and girls as part of our broader commitment to ensuring safety and equality for all members of our community. In light of an increase in VAWG incidents, the Council should consider taking further action.

Motion:

This Council resolves the following:

1. Call on the Executive to develop a broader and comprehensive VAWG Strategy which should include the introduction of public awareness campaigns and bystander training to challenge problematic behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. This strategy should outline concrete steps to increase the safety of women and girls, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.
2. Promote a Women's Night-Time Safety Charter through effective working with District and Borough Councils and Kent Police. This activity should support engagement with local businesses, especially bars, pubs, and taxi services, encouraging them to commit to safer practices, including better training for staff and drivers to ensure women's safety.
3. Call on the Executive to work with the District and Borough Councils, via mechanisms such as the Kent Community Safety Partnership, to encourage the use

of Licensing Tools to enhance the safety of women and girls across the whole of Kent. This includes implementing additional measures such as improved driver safety checks, the introduction of clear driver identification signage in taxis, and ensuring safe transportation options are readily available for women at night.

4. Call on the Executive and responsible Senior Officers to make women's safety central to our responses to planning applications as a statutory consultee. This should include ensuring that the safety of women and girls will be a key consideration in Kent Highways responses to planning applications, ensuring that public spaces are designed with safety in mind. This includes improved lighting, more accessible public transport routes, and the creation of safe public spaces that encourage women to feel comfortable and secure in all parts of Kent.

5. Agree an ongoing commitment to be a White Ribbon Accredited Organisation and agree to promote the opportunities for any Members to serve as a White Ribbon Champion.

6. Note a key White Ribbon UK message; that it is vital to promote the concept of men and boys working to end violence against women.

7. Recognise that this ongoing accreditation will demonstrate our commitment to tackling violence and abuse and fostering an inclusive culture of respect and equality in the community.