

TITLE	White Ribbon Motion
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 20 January 2022
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To have a clear, comprehensive and inclusive programme of work which aligns to the council's Equalities Strategy and the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the update and agree the recommendations of the Equalities Working Group as follows:

- 1) Council explore how it can improve communications to residents on what it is doing to support domestic violence victims;
- 2) Council Officers explore whether there is a more comprehensive accreditation to certify at which level the Council is performing when it comes to domestic violence provision;
- 3) The Leader of the Council to write to the Home Secretary in support of making public sexual harassment a specific offence and impress the need for wider cultural change and write to the four MPs that cover Wokingham Borough and PCC to encourage them to also support this;
- 4) The Executive Member for Children's Services to write to local schools on how they're upholding the Department for Education's September 2021 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' policy on public sexual harassment.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At the November 2021 Council Meeting motion 469 submitted by Cllr Hare was considered and put to a vote The particulars of the Motion are set out below.

The motion was referred to the Council's Equalities Working Group, who have further considered the points when they met on the 6th January 2021.

The Equalities Cross Party Working Group have made several recommendations:

- The Council to explore how it can improve communications to residents on what it is doing to support domestic violence victims.
- Council officers to explore whether there is a more comprehensive accreditation to certify at which level the Council is performing when it comes to domestic violence provision.
- The Leader of the Council to write to the Home Secretary in support of making public sexual harassment a specific offence and impress the need for wider

cultural change. Write to the four MPs that cover Wokingham Borough and PCC to encourage them to also support this

- The Executive Member for Children's Services to write to local schools on how they're upholding the Department for Education's September 2021 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' policy on public sexual harassment.

Background

At November 2021 Council meeting Motion 469 submitted by Cllr Hare was considered and put to a vote. The particulars of the Motion are as follows;

- Seek White Ribbon Accreditation for the Organisation within the next 6 months and encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women. As part of this Wokingham Borough Council will appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador for White Ribbon.
- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment of women a crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to make street harassment a specific crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the four MPs who cover the Borough, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime and encourage elected members and residents to sign the petition.
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling physical, mental, emotional or spiritual harassment of female pupils or staff, separate to their bullying policy and ask them to include education to prevent public sexual harassment, as part of their PSHE education.

Amendment

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Motion was amended by Laura Blumenthal as follows:

Wokingham Borough Council resolves to refer this matter to the cross-party Equalities Working Group at its meeting in January 2022, to examine the benefits of the actions below, and to report back to a future Full Council meeting.

- Seek White Ribbon Accreditation for the Organisation within the next 6 months and encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women. As part of this Wokingham Borough Council will appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador for White Ribbon.
- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment of women a crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to make street harassment a specific crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the four MPs who cover the Borough, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime and encourage elected members and residents to sign the petition.
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling physical, mental, emotional or spiritual harassment of female pupils or staff, separate to their bullying policy and ask them to include education to prevent public sexual harassment, as part of their PSHE education.

Analysis of Issues

Equalities Working Group Update

The motion was referred to the Council's cross party Equalities Working Group, who have further considered the points when they met on the 6th January 2022.

Following a detailed meeting and discussion with the White Ribbon organisation involving the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Equalities Working Group and the Community Safety Lead and Mark Gwynne the Interim Head of Insight, Strategy and Digital Change. It has been highlighted that the foundation of the work undertaken by the White Ribbon organisation work focuses on helping organisations that are at a starting point with changing their culture around domestic abuse. They can also provide assistance to organisations that are having difficulty adopting and implementing cultural change in this workspace.

Through a programme of work delivered over the last 2 years, Wokingham Borough Council is well advanced in its cultural change journey in relation to domestic abuse and therefore has considered the scope of White Ribbon accreditation and its fee in detail. Against the context of the work set out and currently underway through the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Networking Group, it is felt that progressing White Ribbon accreditation would be both limited and not add adequate value for residents. However, the Council will explore with White Ribbon the benefits of potentially engaging them as a training facilitator as part of the Council's monthly domestic abuse training programme for frontline staff.

Furthermore, it is felt exploring accreditation that is more comprehensive and wider reaching would be advantageous and reflect the inclusive principles of the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24.

The Council's programme of work and progress on delivery is of a high standard, however it would benefit further from increasing and improving communications in relation to the scale and range of work being undertaken by the council and local stakeholders. This was discussed by the Group and it was agreed that communications and marketing should be increased to give residents information and advice on local services and activities that are being carried out. This would allow for essential information on support and help to be disseminated as well as helping to build confidence with victims and survivors in relation to the council's commitment.

In addition to the already comprehensive work and training being rolled out. The council is also introducing trauma informed training for staff to spot signs of domestic abuse. The new training will help Council Officers to identify behaviours in domestic abuse victims that show trauma. This type of training was a key recommendation from the domestic violence charities who took part in shaping the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Council is also currently designing Equalities training for staff and Councillors. This will cover bystander training and allyship which will educate staff and Councillors on how they can step in safely when coming across someone being harassed or discriminated against. This will complement the Council's established domestic abuse training to include public harassment, including public sexual harassment.

Focusing on education around the circumstances of victims from different backgrounds and developing practical skills, the training will complement existing monthly coaching for frontline staff and will help foster safer stronger communities.

The Equalities Working Group have made several recommendations:

- The Council to explore how it can improve communications to residents on what it is doing to support domestic violence victims.
- Council officers to explore whether there is a more comprehensive accreditation to certify at which level the Council is performing when it comes to domestic violence provision.
- The Leader of the Council to write to the Home Secretary in support of making public sexual harassment a specific offence and impress the need for wider cultural change. Write to the four MPs that cover Wokingham Borough and PCC to encourage them to also support this
- The Executive Member for Children's Services to write to local schools on how they're upholding the Department for Education's September 2021 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' policy on public sexual harassment

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	None	None	None
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	None	None	None
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	None	None	None

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty

A full equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24. It has also been undertaken as part of the full Community Safety Strategy 2021-24. Therefore an EqlA is not required.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

There will be no impact on the Councils' carbon neutral objective as a result of this decision.

List of Background Papers
Motion 469 considered at the 18 November Council meeting

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