

Council notes:

- Sexual violence, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse remain endemic in the UK, highlighted recently by the appalling murders of Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard, and sisters Bibba Henry and Nicole Smallman.
- According to national crime statistics, on average one woman is killed by a man every three days.
- A 2021 YouGov national survey on behalf of UN Women UK found that among women aged 18-24, 97% said they had been sexually harassed, while 80% of women of all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces.
- The ONS reported that last year alone 618,000 women were victims of a sexual assault or an attempted sexual assault by a man.
- A recent OFSTED review into sexual harassment in schools has found that sexual harassment, including online sexual abuse, has become 'normalised' for children and young people
- Local Charity, Dignify, has conducted a study of more than 1,000 pupils, aged 14-18, from across South West Hertfordshire into the use and perceptions of porn by young people. Their research found that 55% of young people surveyed had viewed porn and 58% felt that people who use porn are likely to objectify others.
- The UK has failed to ratify the Istanbul Convention, a treaty creating a global framework for protecting women from violence.

Council recognises:

- There are a number of organisations in Watford including Watford Women's Centre and Dignify which are working to reduce violence against women, sexual violence, sexual harassment and domestic abuse and support victims.
- White Ribbon is the leading charity in the UK with a mission to end male violence against women and is part of the global White Ribbon movement which arose from a campaign started by men in Canada in 2004.

Council believes:

- Everyone, regardless of identity, has the right to live their life free from fear of violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment and domestic abuse.
- Male violence against women and girls is part of a broader culture of misogyny in society and ending it must be a top priority for all levels of government.
- The Conservative Government is failing to properly tackle continuing violence against women and girls in our society.
- More focus should be placed on changing men's behaviour than on women taking action to make themselves safer.

Council resolves to:

1. Work towards White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies which have already done so.

2. As part of this, mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year and encourage participation among Councillors, Council staff and local organisations.
3. Ask the One Watford group, to look into how the Council can support local and national campaigns for the end of violence against women and girls, as well as the promotion of healthy relationships.
4. Support the work being done in local schools and colleges on (educating students, about issues of equality, respect for others and healthy relationships).
5. Ask Mayor Peter Taylor to write to the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to
 - Improve and reform the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum, including age-appropriate education on consent.
 - Give Local Authorities the duty and the necessary funding to provide the tools and services needed to address the issues raised within this motion
6. Call out all forms of sexual objectification and all its negative outcomes and encourage others to do the same. Championing the wellbeing of everyone, particularly of women and girls, and encouraging the education of everyone, particularly of men and boys.
7. Keep a watching brief on the reported growing rise of sexual abuse and violence against individuals from other diverse groups and to immediately raise any issues with the police and to bring forward proposals to address the problem with the relevant agencies.

Proposed by Cllr Dychton

Seconded by Cllr Ezeifedi