

## **Appendix 1: Details of motion provided to full council, 4 December 2024**

### **Background:**

Maidstone Borough 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.

Recent statistics highlight whilst there has been some improvement, there is still more work that could be done. Between November 2022 to October 2023 there were 3703 reports to the police of Violence Against Women and Girls in the borough.

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.

Maidstone Borough 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. 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 these concerning statistics and incidents, the Council commits to the following actions:

**1. Developing a Broader VAWG Strategy:**

The Council will work towards developing a comprehensive strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, including the introduction of public awareness campaigns and bystander training to challenge problematic behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. This strategy will outline concrete steps to increase the safety of women and girls in Maidstone, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.

**2. Promoting a Women's Night-Time Safety Charter:**

The Council will support and promote a Women's Night-Time Safety Charter to improve the safety of women in public spaces after dark. This includes working with local businesses, especially bars, pubs, and taxi services, to commit to safer practices, including better training for staff and drivers to ensure women's safety.

**3. Leveraging Licensing Tools:**

We propose to explore the use of licensing tools, including taxi and bar/pub licensing, to enhance the safety of women and girls in the borough. This includes implementing additional measures such as improved driver safety checks, the introduction of clear signage in taxis, and ensuring safe transportation options are readily available for women at night.

**4. Making Women's Safety Central to Town Planning:**

The safety of women and girls will be incorporated into all town planning and development discussions, 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 areas of the borough.

**5. Achieving White Ribbon Accreditation:**

Maidstone Borough Council will work towards becoming a White Ribbon Accredited Organisation. White Ribbon UK promotes the idea of men and boys working to end violence against women. This accreditation will demonstrate our commitment to tackling violence and abuse and fostering an inclusive culture of respect and equality in the community.

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**Equality Impact:**

This motion aims to directly address the safety and equality of women and girls in the borough, with a focus on providing safer environments for all women, including those from vulnerable groups, such as women of colour, LGBTQ+ women, and those with disabilities. The proposed actions will ensure that women have equal access to safety and protection, free from violence and harassment.

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**Conclusion:**

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to ensuring that violence against women and girls is addressed with urgency and seriousness. By adopting a broader strategy, promoting a night-time safety charter, and making safety central to planning and licensing, we can create a safer environment for women and girls in our borough. We urge all council members to support this motion to work together in making Maidstone a place where women and girls can thrive.

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**Appendix: Links and References**

1. **White Ribbon Accreditation:** [White Ribbon UK Accreditation](#)
2. **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence:** [UN Women - 16 Days of Activism](#)
3. **National Policing Statement on VAWG:** [National Policing Call to Action on VAWG](#)
4. **Manchester Women's Night-Time Safety Charter:** [Manchester City Council - Women's Night-Time Safety Charter](#)
5. **Tonbridge and Malling's New Taxi Licence Plates for Women's Safety:** [Kent Online - Taxi Licence Plates](#)
6. **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council - New Signs for Taxi Service:** [New Taxi Signs](#)
7. **Plan International UK's Data on Violence Against Women and Girls:** [Plan UK Data on VAWG](#)