

The following Motion has been submitted by Councillor Lynne Doherty:

We are all conscious that, whilst extreme occurrences such as the recently reported murder of Sarah Everard in Clapham are thankfully rare, the issue of street harassment generally has been brought into sharp focus. Although West Berkshire has low violent crime rates, many residents may share the anxiety of not being able to walk alone without concern for their safety.

Whilst predominantly affecting women, many people will have experienced street harassment at some point in their lives and may have felt obliged to use avoidance tactics - such as crossing the road, circumventing public spaces, and even not going out alone.

The Government's Crime and Justice Taskforce has said it will take immediate steps following the recent high profile event to give further reassurance to women. Among the proposals is an additional £25m for better lighting, CCTV and a pilot-scheme which would see plain-clothes officers in pubs and clubs. This is to be welcomed.

The Executive recognises that:

- Street harassment is harassment in public areas such as streets, shopping centres, public open spaces and public transport.
- Street harassment may involve sexual harassment, including unwanted sexualised comments, provocative gestures, vehicle honking, being whistled at, stalking, persistent sexual advances, and even being subjected to indecent exposure or touching by strangers.
- Street harassment may also involve other actions or comments and can also frequently include homophobic and transphobic slurs, and verbal abuse referencing race, religion, class and disability.

The Executive proposes that the Council creates the role of a Safer Streets Champion, to be notified annually (with other Champions) at the Annual Meeting of Council, and that the Safer Streets Champion should:

- work with our communities to understand their concerns and receive suggestions for how we want to address street harassment;
- work in partnership with Thames Valley Police to explore a potential bid for Safer Streets Fund funding;
- work closely with the Public Protection Partnership, Thames Valley Police, Town Centre managers and others to challenge and eradicate street harassment in our district;
- seek to develop better public awareness of what constitutes street harassment and unacceptable behaviours; and
- work with our three West Berkshire MPs to seek further powers for the Police to be able to take appropriate action where street harassment is witnessed or reported.