

Motion 1 - DELAYED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson

Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

Council notes that Wirral has seen 4,631 reported incidents of domestic abuse in 2018/19 and is particularly alarmed at rising levels of violence towards women and girls, especially with the knowledge that not all crime is getting reported.

Council is proud that Wirral has a zero tolerance to domestic abuse and of the support it offers victims of such abuse. It currently funds a women's refuge which offers a place of safety to local women and children at risk of the most extreme violence and possible death as well as exempting them from Council Tax. However, it is extremely alarmed that the Domestic Violence Bill was delayed after the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, prorogued Parliament, and welcomes the Supreme Court judgement that Boris Johnson's acts were unlawful. This Bill statutorily defines domestic abuse to include economic control – a devastating form of coercive control. The Bill will also boost the powers available to courts to block perpetrators from contacting those they abused. The Bill will help an estimated 1.2 million women and 713,000 men a year in England and Wales who are affected by domestic abuse. Any delay on this Bill will impact on our residents on Wirral who are living with domestic abuse on a daily basis. Council is hugely concerned that the tone and language of Boris Johnson in his response to Paula Sheriff's comments about Jo Cox which he called "humbug", were unacceptable on both a human and political level, and sought to trivialise violence towards women. Council further condemns the language used by the Attorney General Geoffrey Cox who said "when did you stop beating your wife?" during a recent Commons debate. The crass and misogynistic language around violence towards women by the Conservative Party shames us all as a civilised society. Council instructs the Leader to write to Boris Johnson and seek an assurance that Wirral victims of domestic abuse will not suffer through further delays to the Domestic Violence Bill and that his and his colleagues' language about violence towards women will be measured and befitting of enlightened and intelligent parliamentarians. Council invites all elected members to make apposite contribution locally by supporting the valuable work of Wirral Council, Wirral Women and Children's Aid, Involve Northwest, RASA Merseyside, Tomorrow's Women and the Freedom Programme, and to sign Women's Aid - 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Violence campaign and asks all members to sign their pledge.

<https://16daysofaction.co.uk/the-campaign/>