

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 7 APRIL 2021

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OR THE CHAIR OF A COMMITTEE SUBMITTED UNDER PART 4 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES, PARAGRAPH 10.4 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Question for the Leader

Question from Councillor Walker

“Following the murder of Sarah Everard, how will the council work to ensure that violence against women and girls is no longer seen as the norm and victim blaming is stopped.

If you look at the following figures for the UK from Action Aid, street harassment and violence against women and girls is endemic within the UK and North Devon is not immune to this:

- 80% of women of all ages have been sexually harassed in public, 90% of these women will not report it as they don't believe it will make a difference
- 97% of young women have suffered the same
- 1 in 2 women are sexually harassed in the workplace
- 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime
- 1 in 5 women will be raped in their lifetime
- 2 women a week are killed by a current or former partner and 3 women a week take their own lives following domestic abuse

During lockdown domestic violence, particularly against women we know has been on the increase and support will be needed as we come out of lockdown. Are we prepared for the increase in this type of support as it is needed?”

Councillor Worden's response

“Thank you Councillor Helen Walker for your question. I am pleased to report the following:

A number of our housing officers have recently received specialist training on this issue in light of the anticipated increase in need. They will be our specialist caseworkers moving forward. We also now meet with the Women's Refuge in Barnstaple on a weekly basis to jointly plan for the care and ongoing support of victims of domestic abuse.

We are working with DCC and other housing authorities in Devon to implement the Domestic Abuse Bill. This places a new duty on DCC to assess the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.

A strategy must be published by August. There is a requirement to report annually to the Secretary of State on this work.

This will be informed by a needs assessment and a new Domestic Abuse partnership Board will also be established. DCC has been provided with £1.4m, each housing authority has been awarded £32k to implement these new responsibilities.”