

## Agenda item 5

### For decision – For Frome Town Council to seek White Ribbon accreditation

Authors: Cllr Anne Hills, Lucy McMahon, Marketing and Communications Lead and Holly Pickering, White Ribbon Champion

#### Summary

Frome Town Council's International Women's Day forum in March 2025 focused on improving safety for women and girls in the town, exploring issues such as safety after dark, misogyny among young people, bystander action, and support for survivors of abuse.

Building on this, a working group led by Cllr Anne Hills has developed actions for White Ribbon Day 2025, including awareness campaigns, recruiting White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions, delivering bystander training, and visible community activities.

The group is also asking Frome Town Council seek White Ribbon Accreditation.

#### Background

Frome Town Council ran a community action forum on International Women's Day (8 March) called "Accelerate Action: A safer future for women and girls in Frome." It was facilitated by Cllrs Carla Collenette, Fiona Barrows, Tracey Ashford & Anne Hills, in collaboration with statutory and voluntary organisations, including Somerset Domestic Abuse Service and Avon & Somerset Police, and Frome College among others.

The forum addressed violence against women and girls under several themes: How Frome might be made to feel safer after dark for women and girls; How can we tackle misogyny among young people and educate boys effectively; How men can actively support the prevention of violence against women and girls and intervene when necessary; and ways to support women affected by abuse, challenge the culture that enables domestic violence, and improve reporting/conviction rates.

The aims were twofold - to generate tangible, practical local actions that the community could take to improve safety in Frome and to gather and share information about what is already being done locally by services, organisations etc., so everyone understands what exists and what gaps there might be. This led to the resource:

<https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/A-Safer-Frome-for-Women-and-Girls-Single-pages-Web.pdf>

## White Ribbon Accreditation

One of the four areas of discussion at FTC's International Women's Day event in March was the role of men as allies, the positive impact of bystander action and of a collective refusal to accept or stay silent about misogyny in any form.

White Ribbon UK is the leading charity in England and Wales dedicated to engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls. Their mission is "to end men's violence against women by addressing its root causes, such as harmful attitudes, behaviours, and systems related to rigid gender norms and harmful expressions of masculinity that perpetuate gender inequality and gender-based violence."

Cllr Anne Hills has been working with Holly Pickering and others and supported by Lucy McMahon since March to take actions from this strand of work forward and as discussed at the council meeting on 27 August, they have created a number of objectives to achieve that aim by White Ribbon Day 2025, on 25 November.

Those aims include:

- Display White Ribbon posters in gents' toilets across Frome's pubs, bars and cafes
- Sign up 50 people as either White Ribbon Ambassadors (men) or White Ribbon Champions (women) by 25 November. They'll be in touch about how you can get involved!
- Hold a group session on Sun 26 October from 3pm to 5pm to promote and share White Ribbon info and offer Bystander Training
- Decorate the Boyle Cross Christmas tree with white ribbons, to round it all off for 2025.
- And ask Frome Town Council to seek White Ribbon accreditation thereby leading by example

Whilst the first four actions are community-based, seeking accreditation is a commitment that the group led by Councillor Anne Hills are asking Frome Town Council to make.

## Why FTC should seek White Ribbon Accreditation?

White Ribbon is the leading national campaign to end men's violence against women and girls. Accreditation for Frome Town Council would be more than a badge. It is a public commitment that Frome Town Council takes this issue seriously, is prepared to lead locally, and will work alongside community partners to create a culture of safety and respect.

Accreditation shows that FTC is not only acknowledging the problem of violence against women and girls but is also willing to be proactive in tackling it. As a council that has already convened a forum on this issue, accreditation gives weight and structure to that work. It reassures residents that FTC's concern is genuine, ongoing and accountable.

The White Ribbon programme sets out practical steps councils can take – from staff training and policies to community engagement. This framework will help Frome Town Council to channel energy into actions that are proven to make a difference. It provides measurable standards, making it easier to track progress and maintain momentum.

Frome Town Council would be able to speak with added authority when calling on partners – police, schools, health services, sports clubs – to play their part. It signals that we are not just campaigners in name but have committed to recognised national standards. This could potentially build stronger partnerships across Frome.

Accreditation reassures women and girls in Frome that the council prioritises their safety and wellbeing. It also gives men and boys in our community a clear invitation to be part of the solution, encouraging allyship and cultural change.

White Ribbon links local action to a national and international campaign. The scheme is for organisations that are committed to its objectives. Acceptance isn't guaranteed: there is a process to be followed and there is some admin involved, but the fact that it isn't automatic, or permanent, ensures that it is meaningful. By joining, FTC will share best practice, gain access to resources, and continue Frome's profile as a town that is progressive and proactive. It is therefore recommended that FTC should seek accreditation and show its commitment to combatting gender-based violence and the attitudes and behaviours that underpin it. The group having set the modest objectives set out above will then be able to leverage those resources, to expand their objectives in 2026 and beyond.

#### Recommendations

1. FTC to seek White Ribbon accreditation and show its commitment to combatting gender-based violence and the attitudes and behaviours that underpin it.
2. Commit to £495 a year for three years to enable the application, which will be delegated to Marketing and Communications Lead, Lucy McMahon