

This report is public	
Response to Motion: Supporting young women's community action for safe public spaces	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	6 January 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Robert Parkinson
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	10 December 025
Report of	Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Tim Hughes

Purpose of report

To respond to the motion raised at full council in October 2025 requesting Executive to consider supporting young women's community action for safe public spaces.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To be supportive of the principles identified in the motion set out in 2.1 below.
- 1.2 To continue to support the initiatives identified in the motion through its Community Safety Team, through partnerships such as the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership and the area oversight groups, through engagement with organisers of community initiatives, specifically those referenced in the motion, and by using our communication channels to promote and support these initiatives.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The motion proposed at full council in October by Councillor Dr Kerry Thornhill was as follows:

“Young women in Cherwell District have reported long-standing concerns related to their right to be free and safe in public spaces, especially after dark. In 2025, local women have started organising, both formally and informally, to put a stop to gender-targeted harassment and assaults. Some emerging initiatives include: young women who work at night clubs organising to make their industry better at preventing harassment and assault, young women setting up peer support networks in the community, and women seeking the creation of dedicated spaces in town centres for peer support for young women and LGBTQ+ residents and visitors.

Community action from young women leaders is commendable. It benefits all of society, and it deserves strong support from Councils.

Cherwell District Council recognises that our goal to promote a thriving night-time economy must be inclusive of young women's safety and freedom in these spaces. We will ensure young women leaders are consistently engaged as stakeholders in implementing this aspect of the 2042 Local Plan.

Cherwell District Council pledges to encourage local businesses and other private sector stakeholders to support and sponsor young women's community initiatives for safety.

Cherwell District Council will identify low cost out-of-use sites that are suitable for proposals from women-led initiatives for the community benefit, and ensure these sites are financially accessible for community-based initiatives."

- 2.2 Cherwell and its town centres are predominantly safe places to be. In the twelve months to end of 2025 Q2 (12 months ending) Cherwell had recorded 64.65 crimes per 1000 people. This had decreased from 67.90 crimes per 1000 people in the last equivalent period. (source: LG Inform). This ranks Cherwell 28 out of 51 in all local authority districts in the South East. Waverley had the lowest number of offences 37.06 crimes per 1000 people in this quarter with Crawley having the largest number at 112.19 crimes per 1000 people offences. This represents a low crime level compared to other boroughs/local authority districts in England and Wales. Our town centres attract large numbers of people who choose to come during the day or for an enjoyable night out. There is a strong tradition of partnership working with voluntary organisations and businesses ensuring that our night-time economy is vibrant and that safety is considered and promoted wherever possible.
- 2.3 Through our interactions with businesses and other stakeholders we will garner support for any initiatives that aim to increase women's and LGBTQ+ individuals safety in and across our district.
- 2.4 Through partnerships such as the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership and the area oversight groups, we will engage with organisers of community initiatives to help identify suitable locations for their women and LGBTQ+ support activities. We will also use our communication channels to promote and support these initiatives.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	This report does not have any financial implications. The Community Safety Team operate within existing budget. If the Council ceases to receive funding from the Community Safety Partnership fund, via OCC, then the activities that are funded through this income stream will need to be reviewed and potentially terminated. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 10 December 2025
Legal	The item was referred from full council and continues to support existing work carried out by the Council.

	<p>As such there are no legal implications arising directly from this report.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 10 December 2025</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk implications arising as a direct consequence of this proposal.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 10 December 2025</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	x			<p>Overall, the proposal seeks to have a positive impact to groups within the protected characteristics, gender, sex and age.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 10 December 2025</p>
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact				<p>This initiative primarily focuses on community safety and also presents opportunities to embed sustainability, addressing indirect environmental considerations in a proactive way.</p> <p>Repurposing out-of-use sites may involve energy use for lighting and heating; incorporating energy-efficient measures can mitigate this. Increased evening activities could lead to additional car journeys, but promoting safe walking and cycling routes can offset emissions. Events and promotional activities may generate waste; adopting digital-first communication and providing recycling facilities will minimize impact.</p> <p>Hitesh Mahawar, Climate Change Programme Manager, 10 December 2025</p>
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A

Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Community Leadership - Strengthen community collaboration and resilience			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council has a small Community Safety Team that works with partners in addressing the issues highlighted in the motion with regards to young women's safety.
- 3.2 Cherwell District Council recognises that a thriving night-time economy must ensure that all those who participate in our wide and varied cultural offerings should feel safe and included.
- 3.3 The community safety team already promote schemes with businesses such as Ask Angela (<https://askforangela.co.uk/faqs/>) and Safe Spaces <https://www.safeplaces.org.uk/member-schemes/cherwell>.

4. Details

- 4.1 In order to assist those who may be vulnerable, or threatened, Cherwell District Council supports and promotes the Safe Places Scheme. Through the scheme businesses/partner premises can register to become a "Safe Place". To become registered on the scheme the premises/business commits to offering sanctuary and to help and support if someone is anxious, scared or believes they may be at risk.
- 4.2 This is a scheme run by Safe Places National Network which businesses can sign up to. We currently have 8 registered businesses in Banbury (one of which is 24 hours), 16 in Bicester and 5 in Kidlington. The Community Safety Team are committed to getting more businesses involved focusing particularly on businesses which are open later into the evening/early hours.
- 4.3 Alongside the other Oxfordshire local authorities, we fund a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) co-ordinator who is working with officers at Cherwell to develop specific VAWG initiatives.

- 4.4 With the co-ordinator, the community safety team will be supporting the development of a women's centre, creating and delivering consistent messaging around VAWG across schools and the development of a tool to identify VAWG services to enable better signposting to victims or those who feel threatened.
- 4.5 Cherwell District Council's taxi driver safeguarding training requirements also plays a role in protecting vulnerable people, including young women, when using licensed vehicles. All taxi and private hire drivers are required to complete safeguarding training as part of their licensing conditions. This training equips drivers to recognise signs of exploitation, harassment, and abuse, and to understand how to respond appropriately and report concerns to the relevant authorities. By ensuring that drivers are aware of their responsibilities and the procedures for safeguarding, the Council helps create a safer travel environment, reducing risks for individuals who may be vulnerable, particularly during late-night journeys or when travelling alone.
- 4.6 The Cherwell Community Safety Partnership places a strong emphasis on improving safety within the night-time economy. Recognising that vibrant evening and late-night activities should not come at the expense of individual wellbeing, the Partnership is committed to working collaboratively with local stakeholders to identify and implement new initiatives that enhance public safety. This proactive approach will involve exploring innovative measures and strengthening existing practices to ensure that residents and visitors feel secure and supported when enjoying Cherwell's night-time offer.
- 4.7 We will reach out to the proposer of the motion through our community safety team to obtain the details of the individuals and initiatives referred to in the motion submitted, including those who are supporting women. We will invite the organisers to attend a future Cherwell Community Safety Partnership meeting to share the details of the initiatives with partners to see how partners can support the activities being carried out and give them greater visibility and impact.
- 4.8 The motion requests that "low cost out-of-use sites that are suitable for proposals from women-led initiatives for the community benefit, and ensure these sites are financially accessible for community-based initiatives are identified by the council". We will ensure that community safety colleagues will liaise periodically with our Property Team to understand what council owned/controlled spaces are available and where suitable spaces become available share this information with organisers. We will commit to engaging with the organisers to understand their needs and see how we can assist them in finding suitable physical spaces.
- 4.9 There are a number of new initiatives being delivered in Cherwell that support the objectives of the motion these include:
- Princess Diana Park Space - Cherwell District Council and Banbury Town Council, working in partnership, will fund an area within Princess Diana Park to be made into a space designed with girls and young women in mind. Inspired by Make Space for Girls, this initiative addresses research showing that girls are far less likely to use parks after age 10 due to exclusion and safety concerns. Following consultation with girls at events such as Summer Fest and working with the charity Women in Sport, the designated area will create a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment featuring quiet zones, creative installations, and active play beyond competitive sports. Key features include informal seating, group swings, a revolving disc, a music post with mobile

connectivity, a patterned hard surface for dance and creative expression, visually appealing backdrops, exercise equipment with phone charging, and appropriate safety surfacing.

- Banbury Community Insight Profiles - Cherwell District Council working with Oxfordshire Public Health have designed insight profiles in the areas most in need in Banbury (Ruscote, Grimsbury and Neithrop) highlighting what needs in the local area are being expressed <https://data.oxfordshire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/community-insight-profiles/>. As part of this project there is funding available for grants in Banbury. This includes £60,000 from April 2026 which we will facilitate and encourage groups to make bids towards including projects focussed on women and girls.
- DCMS Youth Funding - Working with Oxfordshire County Council there has been a grant awarded to Oxfordshire to focus on Youth Provision specially around Youth Voice, training and the provision of opportunities. The funding is from the DCMS and will have a focus on Banbury due to a recent needs assessment highlighting the need for youth provision in the area. The funding coming to Banbury will be £94,500 which will be held by Cherwell DC and facilitated through Banbury Youth Partnership and a newly formed panel to ensure grants are distributed to youth organisations in Banbury. We will include a focus on women and girls within the grant process.

- 4.10 We will ensure that the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership is reflective of our community including young women leaders by ensuring their representation in the partnership. This will ensure we are able to get the necessary engagement with relevant stakeholders in ensuring that women's safety and freedom is a key focus in promoting a thriving night-time economy.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 No alternative options have been identified.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 To make contact with the organisers of the initiatives referred to in the motion to see how support might be provided. The promotion of the work already underway to make it more visible and easier to connect with for voluntary schemes or businesses will highlight the depth and consistency of the work already delivered by the team.

The council recognises the value and importance of community led initiatives in this space and will provide advice and networking opportunities for groups to benefit from as needed.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
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Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	None
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
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Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Interim Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, Nicola Riley