

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

15 December 2022

Subject: **Members' Safety**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services**

SUMMARY

This report outlines the work the Council has undertaken around Members' safety and presents Guidance for Members' Safety.

This Guidance advises Members on points to consider when undertaking their role as a Councillor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council agrees:

- (a) the Members' Safety Guidance as detailed at Appendix A to this report; and
- (b) that a mandatory all-Member training session is held.

INTRODUCTION

1. Elected Members have a fundamental role in democracy by maintaining visible relationships with the constituents they represent.
2. Whilst Councillors are not employees of the Council and therefore not necessarily subject to the same policies and procedures which govern the employment relationship, the risks faced by Councillors should be recognised when they are carrying out their duties.
3. This report outlines the work undertaken by the Council in recognising those risks to its Councillors when carrying out their role and whilst no guidance or systems are failsafe, the recommendation of approval of a Guidance document which is presented to aid all Councillors in recognising and managing risks to personal safety, seeks to work towards providing suitable and appropriate mitigation measures in supporting Members in their role as an elected Member.

BACKGROUND

4. Past tragic events including the murders of Jo Cox, MP in 2016 and Sir David Amess, MP in October 2021 have reignited the debate locally and nationally about the safety of Councillors within their communities.
5. As part of the LGA's Civility in Public Life Programme which seeks to address intimidation, standards of public and political discourse and behaviour in public office and provide support and advice to councils and councillors, in October 2021 the Local Government Association (LGA) launched a call for evidence of abuse and councillors which aimed to understand the impact on local government and councillors.
6. The Call for Evidence asked respondents to share their personal experiences of abuse and intimidation and were asked about triggers of abuse and impacts of abuse personally and more widely.
7. In June 2022 the LGA published 'Debate Not Hate: The impact of abuse on local democracy' which set out the findings to date of that Call for Evidence and made seven recommendations.
8. In line with the work being carried out by the LGA at a National level, the Council held an all-member workshop on the 23 February 2022 chaired by the Head of Democratic Services.
9. The purpose of the workshop was to understand how Fareham Borough Councillors felt about their safety when carrying out their role, to gauge what support the Council could offer and, within that confidential environment, to share any experiences Councillors felt they could to aid a better understanding. This included incidents of intimidation and/or abuse (face to face or online).

COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS

10. Whilst the Council does not have a statutory duty of care to Councillors under employment law as they are not employees, it does have a duty to anyone who may be affected by our work.

11. This duty is covered when Councillors undertake their statutory role for the Council when undertaking approved Council duties.
12. This will include ward representations but not party-political activity/visits.
13. The Council will continue to aid and training to councillors as to how to carry out their role safely.
14. In support of that ongoing assistance, it is recommended that an awareness session in respect of Councillor safety would benefit Councillors and support them carrying out their role. It is recommended that to ensure all Councillors benefit from this, the session is mandated for all Councillors to attend.
15. In consideration of its obligations, the appended Guidance before Members today for approval sets out some practical tips and advice to aide them carry out their role safely.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

16. As part of the LGA's Civility in Public Life Programme, a series of webinars have been held which councillors were encouraged to attend.
17. These sessions have covered personal safety for councillors and handling online abuse and intimidation.
18. The Local Government Association has guidance documents available and Members have been recommended and are encouraged to read further available guidance online such as the [Local Government Information Unit](#) "Personal safety for Councillors". This document appended to this report as a more comprehensive guidance document for Members.
19. Further recommended documents include the [Local Government Association](#) "Practical advice for handling physical abuse and personal security" and "Practical advice for handling online abuse". More generic safety in the workplace advice is also available at the Suzy Lamplugh Trust website.
20. Whilst the appended Fareham Borough Council drafted Guidance gives recommendations for councillors to consider for their safety, the Council does recognise that there are times when Officers and Councillors attend Community Action Team (CAT) meetings and the role the Council has in assessing any risks associated to these meetings.
21. As part of the ongoing support to councillors, the risk assessments already in place for the CAT meetings have been expanded to include a more comprehensive risk assessment for councillors attending those meetings.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

22. It is possible that in the future, external training could be provided to Members and if that is necessary there will be a cost implication which is unknown at this time.

RISK ASSESSMENT

23. Potential risks arise to Members when carrying out their role and the purpose of this

Guidance is to aide those Members and to try to minimise risk.

CONCLUSION

24. It is important that Members feel safe when carrying out their role as a Councillor and this document seeks to help Councillors consider and assess their safety with confidence when carrying out their work.

25. The further awareness session will further help Members assess and consider their safety whilst carrying out their role.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Members' Safety Guidance

Appendix B – Personal Safety for Councillors [LGiU Guidance](#)

Background papers:

None

Reference papers:

[Debate Not Hate: The Impact of abuse on local democracy](#)

[LGA Guidance: Practical advice for handling online abuse](#)

[Further LGA guidance documents](#)

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust - [Personal Safety at work | Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Samantha Wightman (01329 824594)