

DRAFT – FOR VIEWS

Summary proposed next steps Civility in Public Life pan-UK programme

January 2020

Programme

This section sets out proposed joint deliverables that the four Associations (LGA, WLGA, COSLA and NILGA) could collaborate on, with indicative timescales.

Raising the profile of the issue

Deliverable	Details	Timeframe
Shared statement on intimidation of councillors	A statement or joint letter for all Governments to highlight the pan-UK and cross-party concern about intimidation of councillors and its impact on local democracy.	w/c 23 March 2020 (before England local elections pre-election period begins)
Round table event on intimidation/civility in public life	Attended by representatives from each of the Associations and their corresponding government department or spokesperson. Other invitees could include Crown Prosecution Service, Police, organisations such as the Jo Cox Foundation, etc. Purpose would be to raise the profile and gain support for improved interventions to stop public intimidation of public figures.	End May 2020 Proposed location – Manchester (AGMA have been undertaking a special project to develop protocols to better support councillors and officers experiencing intimidation)
Councillor and senior officer survey across the nations	To understand the nature, severity and impact of intimidation, as well as examples of support and good practice. Provides a baseline for measuring the impact of the work.	4 week availability - to close with the England local elections pre-election period. Out 27 February 2020. LGA has working draft.
Social media campaign #debatenothate #grasnidcas (Cymraeg)	To raise the profile of the impact that intimidation and abuse of councillors has and to promote alternative methods of engagement with councillors.	To launch at an Association's annual conference. E.g. LGA annual conference beginning July 2020.

Support and guidance for councils

It is proposed that the LGA engage the organisation "[Fix the Glitch](#)" to help develop resources for councillors and councils to address intimidation and threats online.

Deliverable	Details	Timeframe
Online intimidation and abuse statement (bilingual) for use on councillor social media and council websites	The development of a model 'rules of engagement' that councillors and councils can place on their website that sets out the expected behaviours from those looking to engage with councillors and the council on social media. It aims to indicate to the public what acceptable online engagement is and to empower councillors and councils to protect themselves online.	Launch w/c 23 March 2020
Review of LGA/WLGA guide on handling intimidation	To ensure it is updated with any new developments and is available for councillors and candidates before the next local elections.	W/c 23 March 2020
Development of detailed resources for councillors and councils on handling online intimidation and abuse; including digital citizenship, online safety and security; rights, etc.	Resources that can be held on the Associations websites and also used as part of training programmes.	Launch at LGA annual conference 30 June 2020
Training pack for associations to use with councillors on personal safety and security	To help councillors mitigate the risk of physical assault, violence, stalking, intimidation, threats and unwanted attention, etc	W/c 18 May 2020 – shortly after England local elections
Guidance for councils on developing an informal 'duty of care' ethos towards councillors	To set out information for councils on how they can support their councillors, with the aim of mitigating concerns over political interference, etc.	July 2020
Training pack for Associations to use with councillors on conduct/debate/civility	The LGA are exploring this to complement the work they are doing on the review of the English code of conduct and there could be transferable resources. <i>Any LGA resources would need to be adapted to reflect the Welsh Code of Conduct as well as Local Resolution Processes</i>	September 2020
Guidance on dealing with social media-spread misinformation	To support councils in tackling the loss in public trust when statements that	October 2020

	are untrue are widely circulated on social media	
Wales Specific - Guidance/Support for Group Leaders and the proposed new duty to promote standards	Working with WG to develop guidance to support Group Leaders in promoting high standards, including setting expectations, constructive and positive group culture, challenging poor behaviour and providing support where necessary.	April 2021

Government (s) lobbying

Online harms white paper	This White Paper sets out plans for a new system of accountability and oversight for tech companies. This includes a new regulatory framework for online safety. This will be overseen by an independent regulator. The LGA has responded to consultation highlighting the issue of intimidation of councillors, alongside its position regarding online child sexual exploitation and counter-extremism. This provides an opportunity for lobbying for greater safeguards to protect councillors from online intimidation and abuse.	Determined by UK Government
Cabinet Office 'defending democracy' programme	The Cabinet Office is working on a 'defending democracy' programme, which includes the intimidation and safety of politicians as well as the spread of misinformation. Covers electoral security and protocols.	Determined by UK Government <i>WLGA to approach Welsh Government and National Assembly about adopting/adapting a similar scheme?</i>
Cost to councils and councillors	There will be a cost implication to councillors and councils in terms of the additional security arrangements needed, time spent dealing with intimidation and harassment, installation of panic alarms, additional security, etc. Also in terms of days lost due to impact	Costs can be asked as part of survey work. Deliverability dependent on results of research and survey. The Independent Remuneration Panel in Wales has confirmed that costs for members' personal security measures is legitimate expenditure.

	on mental health and mental health overall..	
New or extended criminal offence for intimidating a person in public office?	To be explored and debated further.	

Summary of key dates

England

- Thursday 7 May – local elections
- Tuesday 30 June – Thursday 2 July – LGA annual conference

Wales

- 26th June - WLGA AGM
- End of September/End of November – WLGA Annual Conference
- 14th-18th October – Democracy Week