

Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	30 September 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Julie Matthews / Steve Price
Report author	Democratic Services Manager
Title	Personal Care and Safety for Members

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report contains information about personal care and safety for local elected members.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 The Committee is an appropriate forum to discuss current concerns relating to intimidatory and toxic behaviours affecting local democracy and to highlight the availability of advice and support.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That the Democratic Services Committee comments on the issues raised and offers guidance on the focus for a future member-training session on personal care and safety.

4. Report details

Personal Safety

4.1. An Electoral Commission report on the May 2022 local government elections in Wales stated that:

'A notable proportion of candidates responding to our survey said that they experienced some form of abuse or intimidation. In most cases this involved verbal or online abuse, and the majority of instances came from members of the

public. We also received reports of poor candidate behaviour from the police. We will work with Welsh Government and the wider electoral community to make sure we understand what is driving candidate abuse and intimidation, and to ensure this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency.'

4.2 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) recommends that members are mindful of the risks when for example:

- Visiting people in their homes
- Receiving callers to the councillor's home
- Holding surgeries
- Travelling, whether on public or private transport and when alone
- Communicating online

4.3 The WLGA signposts the following personal safety resources for members. The full website addresses are shown in the footnote below.

[Personal Safety guidance for Councillors \(Local Government Information Unit](#)

[Personal Safety Advice \(Susie Lamplugh Trust\)](#)

[Online Abuse Guidance for Councillors \(WLGA\)](#)

[Get Safe Online Guidance \(UK Government\)](#)

[Recognising the Terrorist Threat Guidance \(National Counter Terrorism Security Office\)](#)

4.4 Denbighshire's members can raise safety concerns with the Council's corporate health and safety and democratic services' teams or the Monitoring Officer. Local policing teams are contactable using the appropriate emergency (999) or non-emergency (101) numbers or via their online reporting portal in respect of concerns or reports of a crime relating to intimidation, abuse or harassment of councillors.

<https://lgiu.org/publication/personal-safety-for-councillors-2/>

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/personal-safety-advice>

<https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=1504>

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recognising-the-terrorist-threat/recognising-the-terrorist-threat>

Civility in Public Life

4.5 The Local Government Association and the WLGA are part of a multi-organisational programme of work entitled 'Civility in Public Life' aimed at promoting good standards for anyone engaging in public and political discourse. Civility in Public Life also seeks to understand the scale and impact of intimidation and abusive behaviour and to offer support to elected members.

Members' Code of Conduct

4.6 Serving councillors are bound by the statutory Code of Conduct, which sets out high standards of conduct including treating others with respect and consideration and prohibiting bullying behaviour or harassment. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has legal powers to investigate complaints that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct and may refer cases to the Council's Standards Committee to be heard. The Council also has a Members' Self-Regulatory Protocol to sit alongside the Code of Conduct and resolve problems that may not reach the threshold to be dealt with as a breach of the Code.

Personal Care and Safety Training

4.7 The Committee's views on the contents and arrangements for a member training session are sought.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 There is no direct contribution to the Corporate Priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. The costs of the member training session will be accommodated from within existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. An impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. None.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. A Statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. Incidents of violence towards elected members or candidates for elected office are rare but members can become the victims of written or verbal abuse owing to their public profiles and roles. The availability of information and support and the promotion of civility in public life are measures towards reducing the risks.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. No decision is required.