



B O S T O N

B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

REPORT TO:	STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE
DATE:	20 FEBRUARY 2020
SUBJECT:	COUNCILLORS' GUIDE TO HANDLING INTIMIDATION
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	N/A
REPORT AUTHOR:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

To consider a Councillor's Guide to Handling Intimidation published by the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association which sets out practical steps that could be taken to protect holders of public office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Councillors' Guide to Handling Intimidation be circulated to all Members and added to the Member Handbook.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To provide advice to Councillors on protecting themselves from public intimidation.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None.

REPORT

- 1.1 An increasing number of councillors and candidates are being subjected to abuse, threats and public intimidation, undermining the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate, and deterring people from putting themselves forward as local councillors. The growth of social media has provided an additional and largely anonymous route for individuals and groups to engage in such activity.
- 1.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has recognised the growing need among councillors for support related to intimidation and have jointly developed a Councillors Guide to Handling Intimidation, following advice from councils, councillors and national organisations such as the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and National Counter Terrorism Security Organisation. A copy of the guide is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.3 The guide is not designed to cause alarm, but to suggest some steps councillors could undertake to protect themselves as a person in a public position, and how to respond should an incident occur.
- 1.4 In the guide public intimidation is defined as “word and/or behaviour intended or likely to block or deter participation in public debate, which could lead to an individual wanting to withdraw from public life.”
- 1.5 The guide covers topics as set out below, legal and practical remedies including the nature of criminal offences involved and will be continuously updated with latest advice and information:
 - Intimidation on the telephone
 - Mental health
 - Personal safety and security
 - Ward surgeries
 - Dealing with a variety of behaviours
 - Home visits
 - Lone working
 - Personal callers to councillors’ private home
 - Home security
 - Attendance at meetings
 - Demonstrations
 - Travelling safety
 - Public transport
 - Reporting incidents
 - Social media
 - Online safety
- 1.6 It is recommended that the guide be circulated to all Members to ensure they have the knowledge to be able to protect themselves and how to respond to an incident should the need arise, and that it be added as a supporting document to the Member Handbook

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None.

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

The guide provides advice for Members on safeguarding themselves if subject to incidents of intimidation.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATION

No consultation undertaken.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A

Councillors' Guide to Handling Intimidation

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.