

MEETING	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	19 NOVEMBER, 2019
SUBJECT	INTIMIDATING BEHAVIOUR AGAINST COUNCILLORS
PURPOSE	To present the latest guides from the Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) "Councillors' guide to handling intimidation".
RECOMMENDATION	Members of the Committee are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the guides from the Local Government Association (WLGA) "Councillors' guide to handling intimidation" • Consider raising their fellow members' awareness of the guides
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BACKGROUND

- 1 The Democratic Services Committee has discussed the need to try to ensure your own personal safety in your role as Councillor in a public position in the past. The Local Government Association (WLGA) has introduced guides previously, focusing mainly on personal safety and how to respond to intimidation on social media.
- 2 In a world where an increasing number of people involved in democracy (at a national or local level) state that they have suffered intimidation, the WLGA has updated its guides for Councillors. They include practical steps that Councillors and candidates can consider for their personal safety.
- 3 The guides define public intimidation as follows:

“words 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.”
- 4 Everyone will acknowledge that discussing, debating and having a different views is all part of healthy democracy. The guides state that *"abuse, public intimidation and threats are designed to undermine democratic decision making by generating fear in those who represent it."*
- 5 Therefore, it is timely that the committee looks at this matter in order to consider what steps individuals can take to protect themselves, their workplace (e.g. their

home) and the people around them and what to do if they feel intimidated. The full WLGA guide can be seen by clicking on the link.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation>

- 6 In addition, it is important for the Committee to consider how to raise awareness of these guides among their fellow members. Naturally, the guide will be placed on the members' portal so that all Members can access it.
- 7 There are seven main chapters to the guide, therefore consideration could be given to creating a programme of seven main messages to be published over a specific period of time. This will;
 - Avoid bombarding councillors with too much information at the same time
 - Encourage better awareness of every specific subject in turn
 - Provide seven opportunities to raise general awareness of the field

The seven "chapters" are as follows:

Message
General advice to deal with intimidation / introduce the project
Personal safety
Councillors and social media
Dealing with inappropriate behaviour on social media
The law
Supporting councillors
Communicating with citizens, colleagues and officers

The Councillors will receive information via the Rheadr news site, with Facebook and e-mail messages to direct them to those messages.

- 8 Members of the Committee are asked to:
 - Consider the guides from the Local Government Association (LGA) "Councillors' guide to handling intimidation"
 - Consider raising their fellow members' awareness of the guides