

Public Document Pack

Standards Committee

**Wednesday, 15th January, 2020
Conference Room 1,
Blackburn Town Hall
6.00 pm**

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Date Published: 7th January 2020
Denise Park, Chief Executive

Agenda Item 2

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23 October 2019

PRESENT – Councillors, , Afzal, Casey, Fazal, Gunn, Hussain, McGurk, Pearson, Slater and Whittle.

OFFICERS - David Fairclough, Asad Laher, Graham Fawcett, Fiona Eastwood, Phil Llewellyn and Shannon Gardiner.

RESOLUTIONS

15 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Alan Eastwood (Independent Person), Stewart Wright (Independent Person) Daniel Wilde (Parish Councillor) and Paul Fletcher (Independent Person)

16 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th June 2019, be agreed as a correct record.

17 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

18 Members Training & Induction 2019/20 - Equality & Inclusion Workshop

Graham Fawcett updated the Committee on the development of an Equality and Inclusion Workshop to which all Councillors would be invited and expected to attend.

An outline plan on the Equality and Inclusion Workshop was brought to Committee for the Members to contribute to the design and content of the session to assure that matters from an Election Members perspective were fully covered by the training. The Committee also considered if it was appropriate for external consultancy support to assist in the development, presentation and delivery.

The Committee had identified the programme for 2019/20 should include, Corporate Parenting (held in September) Adult Safeguarding (November 2019), Local Government Finance (January 2020) and Equality & Inclusion (March 2020).

The Members of the Committee had agreed that a number of topics should be Mandatory for all members of the Council the topics included were Child Sexual Exploitation, Data Protection and The Code of Conduct. For Members who to sit or substitute on the Planning and Highways and Licensing Committee training would also be mandatory.

RESOLVED –

- To receive the update on work undertaken since the last meeting of the Committee
- To contribute to the development of the training.
- To agree the next steps for the production of the Workshop for delivery in 2020

19 Member E-learning Update - Information Management

The Members of the Committee were updated on the Member E-learning scheme. It was noted that 37 Councillors had registered to the online system and 14 Councillors were yet to sign up.

Discussions took place regarding the E-learning system and how it could be more accessible. It was suggested to look into making the E-learning into an App on Councillors phones or tablets. This would also be available for external and independent members.

When a Councillor has signed up to the E-learning they will then be automatically enrolled onto the Governance Course to complete. To date 6 Members had completed the course out of the 37 registered Councillors.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

20 LGA Councillors Guide to Handling Intimidation

A report was submitted to discuss the Local Government Association (LGA) guide to handling intimidation which was published on 4th July 2019. The guide covers topics such as how to handle abuse, both face-to-face, letters or online and the legal and practical remedies, including the nature of the criminal offences involved and the LGA have confirmed this will be continuously updated with the latest advice and information available.

The Monitoring Officer circulated the guide to all Councillors in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on the date of publication and advised that a review of the guide alongside our current local general advice to members be considered at the next Committee meeting.

It was discussed that Councillors are not employees of the Council and do not have the benefit of safeguards in employment legislation if they suffer intimidation. The Council does seek to support Councillors to undertake their duties safely and without fear. In undertaking activities as a Councillor they are protected by the same legislation relating to intimidation or threats as to any member of the public.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

21 Advice to Councillors - Request for References

A report was brought to Committee to review the current advice, last issued in December 2016, to Councillors who are requested to provide a reference and to also provide any proposals for change to the advice to be adopted by the Council.

It was noted that Councillors are often requested to provide references for various purposes and previous advice has been sought on how such requests should be responded to.

There are no legal obligations on Councillors to provide a reference nor are there any legal restrictions. Nevertheless, Councillors should not provide personal reference on any matters where the Council is involved in anyway; otherwise, there could be a potential breach of the code. Furthermore, councillors providing personal references are advised that the contents are honest and factual. Any responsibility, liability or any other consequence arising from providing a personal reference would rest entirely with the Councillor concerned, and not with the Council.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations for change be presented for agreement at full Council.

22 Complaints Update

The Director for HR, Legal & Governance updated the Members on complaints received regarding Members conduct under the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members.

It was noted that two complaints were received in June 2019 and further details were requested by the Monitoring Officer alongside the completion of the complaint form (a requirement of the Procedure). There were no completed forms received, so both complaints were closed.

A further complaint was received about a Parish Councillor and mediation was suggested however, this proposal was not progressed as the complainant did not agree.

In the absence of which the Monitoring Officer further considered in consultation with the Independent Person, if the complaint merited formal investigation and if this would be both reasonable and proportionate. In this context under paragraph 3.2 of the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct, where 'the Authority makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but it is rejected by the Page 19 Agenda Item 8 complainant, the Monitoring Officer can take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

The Monitoring Officers conclusion in this case, was that given there was an opportunity to resolve the complaint via local resolution and in the alternative the resources needed to investigate further would not be proportionate to the allegations; he had to conclude there was no overriding public benefit in carrying out a full investigation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.

Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.

MEETING: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

DATE:

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)



REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF HR & LEGAL & GOVERNANCE

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ON: 15th January 2020

SUBJECT: Personal Safety Guide for Councillors

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To approve a local Personal Safety Guide for Councillors incorporating a local Guide to handling intimidation to supplement the LGA Guide published on 4th July 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is asked:

1. To note the action taken to date following the publication of the LGA Guide in July 2019
2. To approve the local short Personal Safety Guide for members.

3. BACKGROUND

On 4th July 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) published its Guide to handling intimidation for Councillors. The Guide is available to download in full via the link below.

www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation

The guide covers topics such as how to handle abuse, both face-to-face, letters or online, and the legal and practical remedies, including the nature of the criminal offences involved and the LGA have confirmed this will be continuously updated with the latest advice and information available.

The Monitoring Officer circulated the link to the Guide to all Councillors in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on the date of publication and advised that the Standards Committee would consider a review of the Guide alongside our current local general advice to members. At their meeting in October 2019 the Standards Committee discussed the Guide and suggested that a shortened local Guide be produced to supplement the national guide. This has been drafted by officers and due to the General Election was circulated in draft form to all elected members to assist them in the event of any issues arising during the campaigning. It is now proposed that the Standards Committee consider recommending to the Full Council the formal adoption of the local Guide re-titled to Personal Safety Guide for Councillors to supplement that produced by the LGA.

Both Guides to be available on the Council's website for easy access.

4. RATIONALE

The Standards Committee's role and function includes oversight of the development of quality information being provided to members in their roles as decision makers and Ward councillors. It also includes the direct provision of related member development training and advice, promoting high standards in the conduct of council business. The national Guide in its introduction describes becoming and serving as a councillor as a responsibility, a privilege and a hugely rewarding undertaking, but also advises that we are aware that 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. The growth of social media has provided an additional and largely anonymous route for individuals and groups to engage in such activity.

The Guides are not designed to alarm, but to suggest some steps councillors and their council can continually undertake to protect councillors as a person in a public position, and how to respond should an incident occur.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications from the report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Councillors are not employees of the council and do not have the benefit of safeguards in employment legislation if they suffer intimidation. However, the council does seek to support councillors to undertake their duties safely and without fear or intimidation. Political parties may also offer direct support. In undertaking activities as a councillor, councillors are protected by the same legislation relating to intimidation or threats as to any member of the public.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Support to members by the provision of local advice and support is provided via existing resources in Governance Services and Human Resources (Health, Safety and Wellbeing) teams.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no equality implications as the Guide has been produced to support a healthy democracy and provide guidance to councillors supporting existing legislation designed to protect not only councillors but the general public as a whole and ensure that equality of treatment and access to advice and services for all are maintained.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Standards Committee was consulted through this report.

David Fairclough
Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: David Fairclough
Date: 18th December 2019

Personal Safety for Elected Members

Introduction

Our personal safety is something many of us take for granted, and it is only when a major incident occurs that we stop and think about our own vulnerability. The recent murder of MP Jo Cox will have caused even the most confident amongst us to take a step back to reflect on the way that we manage any risks associated with our role.

There have been very few major incidents involving violence toward local or national politicians, although when attacks do take place they are widely reported. There are no statistics to prove that public figures are at more risk than anybody else who is involved in carrying out a front-facing role.

Whilst most of the aggression councillors experience will usually sit at the 'low to modest' spectrum of unacceptable behaviour, severe abuse can tip into the legal definition of violence even if no physical interaction is involved.

We should all take time out of our busy schedules to reflect on the systems and processes we should have in place to help keep us safe, and to reduce any risks we may be exposed to in our councillor role.

Below is some information that has been compiled from LGIU and LGA guidelines. For more information, visit the government website: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/

General principles of personal safety

There are four broad principles to consider linked to personal safety:

1. Organic risk assessment
2. Gut feel
3. Early choices
4. Routine

1. Organic risk assessment

Organic risk assessment is more focused on assessing risk in the here and now, based on the signals we are picking up from our environment.

It is generally believed that a person who is new into a role is much better at identifying and assessing risk than somebody else who has been carrying out the same activity for a period of time who can sometimes become complacent.

2. Recognise and use your gut feel

No risk assessment can replace using our own senses to determine what feels safe, versus what feels wrong. This is often referred to as 'gut feel'.

Unfortunately, as adults we often silence our gut feeling in an attempt to intellectualise it. In personal safety terms, gut feel is one of the most important tools we have.

Remove yourself immediately from the situation if you feel unsafe, analyse later but your immediate safety is the priority.

3. Early choices

Early choices are conscious decisions we make about our personal safety that can help to protect us if we have a problem.

De-briefing people who have been involved in events where their personal safety has been compromised, and it is estimate that most, if not all, have expressed regrets about early choices they could have made – and didn't.

4. Routine

Routine is often described as the enemy of personal safety because it makes our behaviour predictable and reliable. Whilst reliability is often a prized characteristic, in safety terms it can make us vulnerable, particularly when an habitual activity is known to others.

Whilst it isn't always possible or practical to vary patterns a huge amount, when you are able to do so, change your routine so that you vary the time and places you do things.

Handling intimidation

Introduction

This document is not designed to alarm, but to suggest some steps you can undertake to protect yourself as a person in a public position, and how to respond should an incident occur.

The most important determining factor in deciding how to respond to intimidation is the impact it is having on you. Regardless of what others may think, if it is having an effect on you, then that is sufficient for you to take action.

Key points:

- Councillors are encouraged to keep a record of any intimidatory communication or behaviour
- Contact with unknown or anonymous individuals should be undertaken with care

General advice

Below are a suggested set of actions that you could undertake if you consider you are being subjected to intimidation:

- Make sure that your immediate safety is not at risk. Make sure you are safe.
- If possible, record or diarise the encounter or communication. In the case of an email or letter, you can copy or save it. A telephone call or face-to-face discussion and social media incident should be written in a diary as soon as possible after the event, recorded, screen-shot or saved. You can also take photos of damage or even a computer screen. Even if this is the first or only incident, others may also have been subjected to intimidation. A collective record is important if future action is

going to be taken. It is also important that incidents relating to the same individual or individuals should be recorded as such evidence could be critical should the matter gives rise to a criminal prosecution.

- Raise the incident with a view to discussing it or obtaining support from a nominated council officer and/or political group nominated person. This will also help you establish if others have been subjected to the same or similar intimidation.
- If a serious potential crime has occurred, it is advisable to formally report it to the council and/or to the police, particularly in the context of a serious threat to life or anticipated violence.
- If you are concerned about your personal safety, raise this with the council and the police so that there is a record of the impact the incident is having and review your own security and personal safety. This could include your personal or work activities and those of your family.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, councils have a duty to safeguard their staff against potentially violent persons and BwDC maintain a Caution list with names of such parties. This will enable you to ascertain if the individual or individuals who have intimidated them are on the Caution List, if not; ensure that that their name is added using the appropriate processes.
- Every situation will be different, and it will need a personal judgement about whether it is worthwhile to pursue the incident, ignore it or politely acknowledge.
- If the letters or emails continue further steps may need to be considered such as advising the individual that such abuse will result in a referral to the police and the stopping of further correspondence.

Shield Principles

In addressing public intimidation, the LGA has developed the following SHIELD principles:

Safeguard – where possible, protect yourself online and in person. For example, set out in any online biography or page that abusive, threatening or intimidatory communication or actions will be reported, utilise security features, take personal safety precautions and have a point of contact in the local police for any incidents.

Help – in any situation ensure you are safe before you take further action and get help if needed. If the threat is not immediate, you can contact officers at the council who have been given the responsibility to support you or someone with that role from your political group.

Inform – you can inform the individual or group that you consider their communication or action as intimidating, threatening or abusive. There is a growing movement of ‘digital citizenship’, which encourages the labelling of poor online conduct as a way of challenging such behaviour.

Evidence – if you consider that a communication or action is intimidatory, threatening or abusive, gather evidence. For example, photos, recordings, screen-shots, letters, emails, details of witnesses, etc.

Let people know – report the incident to your social media platform/officers/party contact/lead member/the police, depending on the nature and severity of the incident(s). Be prepared that the police

and courts will look to determine if the incident is intimidation based on the theoretical opinion of the average person.

Decide – determine whether you want to continue receiving communications from the individual or group and block or mute if on social media where appropriate. Decide if you want to pursue any action to inhibit the ability of the individual or group to approach you.

Specific safety tips

A number of safety tips have been compiled from a variety of sources including guidance from councillors, which have been shared during training sessions. They relate to the different activities councillors are involved in as part of their role and come from the Police and from personal safety agencies. Most of the approaches are simply common sense. The full list can be found at the end of this document.

You must always check the Caution list located on the Intranet [here](#) prior to any visit or meeting with someone not known to you.

Incident reporting

If you are involved in an incident, or have concerns around an individual's behaviour, it is important to report this to the Democratic Services team.

An incident report must be completed as soon as possible after an event, whilst memories are fresh and so that issues can be investigated and appropriate action taken. This should be forwarded to the Health and Wellbeing team.

If the incident involves acts of a potential criminal nature the Police Authority have created a helpful guide to understanding what constitutes criminal acts and how you can report this. You can access this information by clicking the link below:

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Joint-Guidance-for-Candidates-in-Elections.pdf

- This link provides information about common cyber attacks seen against those in politics, and suggests preventative measures <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-individuals-in-politics>. .
Key Contact Information: Report an incident - report.ncsc.gov.uk or incidents@ncsc.gov.uk ;
Enquiries: enquiries@ncsc.gov.uk

Social Media companies have also provided guidance on online security and how to report incident. This guidance can be accessed using the links below

- Online Security Information for Candidates (Appendix 1)
Key Contact Information: Twitter: [@govuk](https://twitter.com/govuk); Facebook: [ukpol@fb.com](https://www.facebook.com/ukpol@fb.com);
Google and YouTube: [ukpublicpolicy@google.com](https://www.google.com/publicpolicy)

Other sources of help

One of your key sources of help should be the council's safety procedures. These will include policies around Lone Working, and general support associated with safety in the councillor role.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is particularly well known for the quality of their advice. Their website is: <http://www.suzylamplugh.org>.

We also offer the following me-learning courses:

- Angry customers
- Assert yourself
- Challenging behaviour
- Dealing with Sensitive Issues
- Emotional abuse
- Handling complaints
- Handling difficult situations
- Managing challenging behaviour effectively
- Managing conflict
- Satisfying challenging customers
- Under pressure

These courses can be located on the Blackburn with Darwen Learning site [here](#) .

To view these courses go to the course library, select online courses and a list of all online courses will appear. The above courses can be searched for by using the search bar on the right hand side of the page.

And finally

Please remember, we live in a world where by far the majority of people are friendly and gentle, and where many kind acts go unnoticed and unreported.

Personal safety is about taking sensible steps to minimise risk, so that we are confident and comfortable in our councillor role.

Appendix 1

Online Security Information for Candidates

General Election 2019

Most social media companies provide advice about online security. This includes how to secure your account and how to report online abuse, intimidation and threats. Social media companies are taking steps to secure their platforms and users against misuse during the 2019 General Election.

Guidance and resources from platforms can be found here on the Internet

Association Website here:

<https://uk.internetassociation.org/blog/resource-for-parliamentary-candidates/>

Please also see specific guidance for candidates and their staff from Twitter, Facebook, Google and YouTube below.

Twitter

Safety is our priority; and more than 50% of Tweets we take action on for abuse are now proactively surfaced using technology. As we seek to further reduce the burden on victims, we also want to continue to partner with key stakeholders and ensure all candidates are provided with key information on our rules, reporting and safety tools. Below is some important information from Twitter regarding the General Election.

Username swaps: We can facilitate the swapping of your username for the election; and the freeze of your current username. This service is designed for MPs who are running for re-election. Please email govuk@twitter.com with your current username and desired username, and we will process as soon as possible.

Resources: Our short guides to campaigning and staying safe on Twitter are available on the Internet Association website.

Reporting:

Reporting in-app or via our website is the most efficient way of reporting potential violations of our rules - you can find further information here. The Partner Support Portal is an exclusive page in the Twitter Help Centre that provides elevated support to partner organisations. We have contacted the main political parties to ensure all key organisations not already on boarded are given the opportunity to join. Separately, we can be contacted by candidates via govuk@twitter.com with any questions; we would, however, advise users to report on Twitter directly first and then send through the case number. This will help expedite the process.

Webinars:

We will be holding webinars throughout November for candidates and campaigners covering Twitter best practice; security; safety; and Q&A. They will be held on 22nd November (12-1pm), 25th November (10-11am) and 28th November (1-2pm). If you are interested in attending, please email govuk@twitter.com, indicating which session you would like to attend.

Facebook

As a candidate standing in the upcoming general election, we wanted to share with you information on how to have a safe experience on the platform during the campaign, and how to report threatening or harassing content to us. To that end, please find below information on how to report via the platform, and via the dedicated reporting channel which is available to you as a candidate. This channel is for use by candidates and their staff to flag content of particular concern. We also want to highlight the Facebook Safety Guide for Page Admins, which provides guidance on protecting your own Page and the tools available to do so.

Reporting and removing content:

Every piece of content on Facebook and Instagram has a report button, and in addition to removing content that violates our community standards (what is and isn't allowed on Facebook) we refer cases to law enforcement when we become aware of an imminent threat. Our Community Operations teams are available 24/7, and we now have 35,000 people worldwide working on safety and security. We are also investing more in automated techniques for content removal to help us remove as much of this content as quickly and proactively as possible. To report via the platform, please use the report button, ensuring that you follow the process to the point of submitting a report after you have provided feedback.

Contacting Facebook and Instagram: As well as the report function available on every piece of content on Facebook and Instagram, we want to ensure you can raise any concerns around content to the Facebook Politics and Government Outreach team directly via this email address - ukpol@fb.com . Should you have any concerns relating to abuse or content on the platform and its impact on your role as a candidate. Please do not hesitate to get in touch via this channel. Included below is a template email which you can use when reporting content via this email address, to ensure it is able to be investigated as quickly as possible by our teams. This channel is for use by candidates and their staff only at present.

Managing your account and Page:

To help ensure that negative content does not appear on your Page in the first place we have developed a range of tools that allow public figures to moderate and filter the content that people put on their Pages. People who help manage Facebook Pages can hide or delete individual comments. They can also proactively moderate comments and posts by visitors by turning on the profanity filter, or blocking specific words or lists of words that they do not want to appear on their Page. Page admins can also remove or ban people from their Pages using the straightforward tools available to them as administrators. Details of how to apply these measures is included in the Safety Guide for Page Admins. We also have a publicly available website, www.facebook.com/gpa which provides insight and advice on best practice across a range of areas, including protecting account safety and security.

For issues including account verification, support on ads and general support on non-urgent issues, you have access to our dedicated support team. Please go to www.facebook.com/gpa/help and use the form to contact our support team directly.



Template for reporting via inbox:

Name:

Please give your full name

Title:

Please give your title: (e.g. x candidate for x constituency) what are you reporting? (Delete as appropriate)

- This user is harassing me
- I believe this user is harassing someone else
- I believe this user is a danger to me or someone else
- I believe this user is violating your Community Standards
- I believe this content has potential for real world harm

Please provide a brief description of the issue and why you believe it violates our community standards (outlined here):

Violation Link on Facebook or Instagram:

Please provide full URL links for our team to review (link to the actual page for a page review, link to the exact photo for a photo review). Please only provide links to Facebook content (We cannot act based on links or screenshots of content from other online providers) Screenshots for comments/posts/photos: Specific piece of content you are concerned about if you cannot find the link. If this is about ongoing user harassment, can you tell us when this harassment started? i.e. one week ago/one month ago

In the case of a long video, please provide exact time of abuse:

For example, graphic violence at 5.35mins, other context or links to external content:

Provide a reason or full context for the flagged content like a police reference, case number, and activity on other platforms or elsewhere on the Internet, media reports. Please let us know if this content has been reported before: Yes/No

How to provide URLs to us:

In order for us to accurately investigate your report, we need to understand the specific piece of content you believe to be in violation of our Community Standards. This can only be done if you provide the URL to the specific content at issue. URLs of posts, photos, videos or comments can be generated by clicking on the time or date on which content has been posted and then copying the link in the web bar at the top of the page. For example, sometimes pages may contain violating content, but it may be a particular post rather than the entire page that contains violating content. Therefore, in order for our team to investigate you can provide us with a URL to the specific post by following these instructions.

Google

Online security takes many forms: information security - protection against threats from those who want to access data maliciously or disrupt the flow of information – and personal security, against those who would use online platforms to target or abuse specific individuals. Whilst we know technology alone can't solve the issue, we invest in creating and maintaining the infrastructure to keep our users' accounts and websites secure, and to protect them from content that violates our guidelines. If you have a Google account, YouTube channel, or host a website, we would be delighted to offer you and your team in-person training on how the different features and measures we have developed work, for example:

How to protect your email against phishing attempts

By using our Advanced Protection Programme, this system uses a physical security key, to offer the most sophisticated protection yet against those who would try to access your data illegally. We would be happy to offer you your first key to enable you and your office to take advantage of this higher level of security.

How to protect your constituency website from DDoS attacks – digital attacks which can be used to take your website offline - by installing our Project Shield tool, which has been designed to address this kind of malicious attack and can be installed in approximately ten minutes.

How to access the enhanced moderation controls on YouTube, which help you manage comments on your channel. YouTube account holders can delete inappropriate comments and block a user so they can't view videos or leave more comments. Comments can also be turned off for any video by the uploader or managed by requiring pre-approval before they are posted publicly. We can also talk in detail about how to flag content that violates our Community Guidelines on YouTube, and the action that our teams take to ensure that our platform does not contain abusive content. We know that the abuse of people in public life is a concern to many in Parliament, and we have been actively working with partners including the Metropolitan Police and the Parliamentary Security Department to identify and respond to this issue. If a briefing on these issues would be of interest, or you would like a physical security key, please do get in touch on ukpublicpolicy@google.com

YouTube

At YouTube, we have Community Guidelines that set the rules of what is not allowed on the platform. We remove content that violates these guidelines, whether in videos or comments. Hate speech, predatory behaviour, graphic violence, malicious attacks and content that promotes harmful or dangerous behaviour isn't allowed on YouTube.

Among others, we have policies that cover:

Hate Speech: We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, nationality, race, immigration status, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, victims of a major violent event and their kin, and veteran status.

Harassment and Cyberbullying: Content or behaviour intended to maliciously harass, threaten or bully others is not allowed on YouTube.

Harmful or Dangerous Content: Content that aims to encourage dangerous or illegal activities that risk serious physical harm or death is not allowed on YouTube.

Please report content that violates our policies. Instructions for reporting violations of our Community Guidelines are available [here](#). If you need to report more than one piece of content or wish to submit a more detailed report for review, use the reporting tool. This can be used to highlight a user's comments, videos and provide additional information about any concerns. The in-product reporting tool can be used for targeted abuse.

Once content has been reported, YouTube's Trust & Safety team reviews it. Reviewers evaluate flagged videos against all our YouTube Community Guidelines and policies. If a video is found to violate our policies, it will be removed from YouTube. If a strike is particularly egregious or a whole channel is found in violation of YouTube's Community Guidelines, we may remove the channel and its videos immediately. Comments can be turned off for any video by the uploader or managed by requiring pre-approval before



they are posted publicly .Full details on the comment moderation features can be found here. You can also contact our team directly at ukpublicpolicy@google.com



REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF HR & LEGAL & GOVERNANCE

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ON: 15th January 2020

SUBJECT: Member Training - Update

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To review the Member training programme 2019/20.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is asked:

1. To note the report as presented and endorse the continued digitisation of training interventions for elected members.
2. To make any recommendations for changes to the Member Training Programme and recommendations for the development of further e-learning courses.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2018/19, the Council undertook a programme of training reflecting the `all out` nature of the elections and the creation of the revised Council Constitution and election of 51 Councillors.

Members training and development is under the remit of the Standards Committee and a copy of the programme agreed and updated for this year is attached (Appendix 1). The programme includes items that this Committee has considered as mandatory and areas that the committee felt necessary for members to be aware of in carrying out their duties as a Councillor.

Councillors also increasingly having access to the `MeLearning platform which provides a range of `online` training courses supplementing this training

4. RATIONALE

At their meeting in June the Committee received a presentation on the MeLearning e-learning solution, confirmed the move to e training, and noted the selection of courses now open and available to all members. The committee also discussed the identification of additional areas/courses that they would like to see covered/developed for the platform.

This was in response to a number of issues that members had with regular `face to face` training events. Now as part of the Digital Strategy, many courses for staff (and partners) in the Council are now managed through `e-learning` which addresses many of the concerns raised by Members who have traditionally only accessed `face to face` training events. However

members increasingly felt that `face to face` training was not always accessible, clashing with personal/work commitments or political surgery or community meetings. Organisationally due to such issues it was always very difficult to find times and dates which are convenient to 51 councillors at the same time.

It is also recognised that people learn in different ways and at varying speeds depending on the nature of the learning taking place. E-learning offered a solution which means that people can learn at their own pace, privately and without peer or other pressures. E-learning is available 24 hours a day which again given today's society is often considered a valuable option for people with very busy lives.

A report is attached which demonstrates the impact the e-learning solution has on learning opportunities across internal staff, members and external partners who utilise the system. This report demonstrates that there have been over 43,000 course completions to date on a wide and varied range of topics.

It is in this context that in creating this year's training programme for members, that the emphasis was very much focussed on moving to a majority e-learning platform for most councillor training in 2019/20.

To date the experience of Councillors has been mixed and the Committee will be provided with an up to date position at the meeting.

Last year it was agreed that regularly throughout the year there should be the consideration of some general strategic briefings for all members covering key elements of their roles and responsibilities. This preferably and more appropriately being `face to face` as set out in the chart attached. These have been retained in the programme for this year.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications from the report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None, although the increased utilisation of the digital solution to learning and development will result in the delivery of efficiency savings already assumed in the budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The attendance of Members of the Planning and Highways Committee and Licensing Committee at Mandatory Training is a legal requirement and reflects the current legislation. Attendance at other mandatory courses (Data Protection, etc) whilst not being a legal requirement are seen as good practice.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Members Strategic Briefings are delivered in-house and will be delivered within existing budgets. Subject to the agreement of this report the Director of HR, Legal and Governance will evaluate all other areas of development to ensure that maximum use is made of delivery of other training via use of digital technology.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Any proposals for change will be assessed to establish any potential equality implications. The provision of training to elected members incorporates elements which will enhance members

understanding of equality aspects/implications in the development and delivery of Council services

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Standards Committee is being consulted through this report.

David Fairclough
Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: David Fairclough
Date: 24th December 2019

Member Training 2019/20

Date	Event	Time & Venue	Presented/Led by	Code	Attendance
Tuesday 21st May 2019	Planning Committee Training	Conference Room 1 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Gavin Prescott / Mike Green	*M1	*M1 - for all members who sit on this committee
Wednesday 22nd May 2019	Planning Committee Training	Conference Room 1 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Gavin Prescott / Mike Green	*M1	*M1 - for all members who sit on this committee
Tuesday 28th May 2019	Licensing Committee Training	Conference Room 1 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Donna Riding / Jack Henrique	*M1	*M1 - for all members who sit on this committee
Monday 29th July 2019	Our Community Our Future Programme Draft Agenda	Meeting Room A 6.00p.m. to 7.30p.m.	Rebecca Ramsay	M1	
Wednesday 18th September 2019	Strategic Development Session 1 Corporate Parenting – A Member Guide	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Jayne Ivory	M1	
Thursday 24th October 2019	Dementia Awareness	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Sayyed Osman	M1	
Wednesday 29th January 2020	Strategic Development Session 2 Local Government Finance – A Member Guide	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Louise Mattinson	M1	
Monday 3rd February 2020 (TBC)	Counter Terrorism Risk & Threat	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Medina Patel		
Wednesday 5th February 2020	Strategic Development Session 3 Adult Safeguarding – A Member Guide	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Sayyed Osman/Paul Lee/Dawn Walmsley	M1	
Wednesday 12th February 2020 (TBC)	Social Integration	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Muddassir Shah		
Tuesday 25th February 2020	Civil Contingencies	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Rachel Hutchinson		
Feb	Suicide Prevention Awareness Raising training for elected Members	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	Gillian Kelly		
Wednesday 18th March 2020	Strategic Development Session 4 Equality and Inclusion – A Member Guide	Council Chamber 6.00p.m. to 8.00p.m.	David Fairclough/ Corinne McMillan/ Graham Fawcett	M1	

CODE.: M1 / M2 = Mandatory R = Recommended TBC = To be Confirmed

The Standards Committee have determined that courses marked M1 must be attended by all Members.

The Standards Committee have determined that courses marked M2 must be attended by all Members, unless they have attended the same course within the last 12 months.

Course completion report		
User filter		
Sector:	All sectors	Service:
Location:	All locations	Department:
User creation from date:	--	User creation to date:
Last login from date:	--	Last login to date:
User created:	--	Last login:

Total number of courses

153

Course name	Not started	In process
MyView Online Courses	4	14
DOJO Cyber Security Awareness	653	93
Responsible for Information for General User	17	175
Responsible for Information - IAO	91	56
Responsible for Information - SIRO	4	8
Education Health and Care Plan	0	4
We need to talk about suicide	2	3
Information Governance for Elected Members	44	5
NEW BwD Information Governance Training	669	63
Schools GDPR	7	0
Care Act - Introduction and Overview	47	171
Care Act - Care and Support Planning	44	59
Sexual Abuse and an Introduction to Child Sexual Exploitation	1288	102
Safeguarding Children - Levels 1 and 2	100	199
Safeguarding Adults - Level 1	111	192
Mental Capacity Act	69	71
Domestic Abuse	68	61
Age Discrimination	3	19
Angry Customers	6	43
Asbestos Awareness	3	14
Assert Yourself	8	31
Bringing Presentations Alive	4	16
Challenging Behaviour	13	30
Coaching Skills	11	25
Communicating Performance Expectations	6	14
Communicating to Influence	9	18
Conducting a Performance Review	4	4
Creating Presentation Support Materials	5	2
Customer Service Essentials	7	19
Customer Service Knowledge and Attitude	5	16
Dealing with Sensitive Issues	11	28
Decision Making: Options to Implementation	5	5
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)	51	47
Developing Team Trust	4	12

Diabetes (Awareness)	5	11
Disability Confident	9	14
Display Screen Workstation Assessment	6	45
Effective Communication with Children and Families	10	6
Emotional Abuse	52	113
Equality and Diversity and Customer Care	10	23
Equality Essentials	3	8
Equality Impact Assessment - Advanced Level	3	2
Equality Impact Assessment - Foundation Level	2	2
Online Safety - Risks to Children	71	71
Evaluating Performance	6	2
Exploring Needs	2	9
First Contact	2	4
Fraud Awareness	12	54
Freedom of Information Act 2000	28	14
Gender Matters	2	5
Get that job	6	23
Giving and Receiving Feedback	9	10
Growing your Team to High Performance	4	6
Handling Complaints	7	11
Handling Presentation Questions	1	0
Handling difficult conversations	12	18
Hazardous Substances COSHH	2	6
Risk Assessments	4	4
Health and Safety In the Office	0	1
Honour-Based Violence and Forced Marriage	57	39
How to Act like a Leader	5	21
Improving Group Dynamics	1	7
Influencing in Meetings	7	2
Influencing Teams	3	1
Influencing to Win Win	0	3
Cyber Security and Protecting Information	18	30
Information Sharing and Consent - for People Working with Children	1	4
Leader as Coach	4	5
Leading a Meeting	4	5
Legionella Awareness	4	8
Making Presentations Powerful	6	5
Managing Challenging Behaviour Effectively	8	9
Managing Conflict	3	5
Managing Conflict - Children's Services	2	1
Managing Social Media in the Workplace	4	3
Meeting Needs	2	3
Meeting Planning and Preparation	2	4
Mental Health in the Workplace - Good Practice	5	20
Mental Health in the Workplace - Overview	5	5
Monitoring Performance	3	5
Multi-Agency Working	1	0

Neglect (Archived)	28	46
Palliative Care and End of Life Care	0	1
Performance Improvement Strategies	0	1
Performance Outcomes that Motivate	2	0
Personal Protective Equipment	3	4
Planning a Powerful Presentation	1	1
Powerful Message and Structure	2	1
Preparing for a Formal Review	0	0
Preventing Bribery in Business	10	30
Reablement	1	1
Rehearsing your Presentation	1	2
Religion and Belief	0	7
Resolving Meeting Challenges	2	1
Safeguarding Against Radicalisation - The Prevent Duty	100	96
Safeguarding Children with Disabilities	56	42
Satisfying Challenging customers	1	5
Setting Goals & Guidelines for High Performance	1	2
Setting Performance Expectations	2	3
Sexual Orientation	3	1
Solving Performance Problems	1	1
Solving Problems: Definition to Options	0	1
Stage Presence	0	2
Stress in the Workplace	2	11
The Diversity Challenge - Maximising Potential	2	1
The Impact of Micro-Behaviours	0	7
The Inclusive Workplace - Race in the workplace	1	1
The Inclusive Workplace	2	1
The Resilient Mindset	7	14
The Sales Sequence	1	2
The Write Way	6	17
Thinking Creatively	2	9
Time Management	2	5
Types of Problem Behaviour	3	6
Under Pressure	4	13
Understanding Problem Behaviour	5	13
Understanding Unconscious Bias	1	5
Using Social Media in the Workplace	1	3
Using the GROW Model to Coach 1	4	4
Using the GROW Model to Coach 2	5	1
Using Words and Voice Effectively	3	2
Why Manage Performance?	2	2
Working at Height	5	42
Working with the Bribery Act	3	4
Working with the Data Protection Act	17	46
First Aid	14	9
Teenage Pregnancy	6	2
Eating Disorders	3	5

Safeguarding Adults - Level 2	87	90
Safeguarding Children and Adults Awareness	66	62
Epilepsy Awareness	1	0
Hate Crime	13	7
Basic Food & Kitchen safety	0	1
Lone Working	13	4
Hidden Harm: Parental Substance Misuse, Parental Mental Ill-Health and Domestic Abuse	70	68
Fire Safety Awareness	27	22
Safeguarding Children in Sport	27	15
Parkinson's Disease Awareness	0	2
Falls and Fracture Prevention in the Elderly	7	0
Stroke Awareness	1	1
Loss and Bereavement	2	4
Safer Recruitment	42	32
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)	22	10
Food Safety and Hygiene Essentials	5	3
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - Overview	22	57
Manual Handling	117	18
Neglect	38	35
Health and Safety in the Workplace	26	19
Risk Assessment in the Workplace	30	22
ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) Awareness	10	32
Customer Service - Angry Customers (Engage in Learning)	1	4
Satisfying Challenging Customers (Engage in Learning)	2	5
Disability Confident V2	3	3
Total	4733	3255

All services	Group:	All groups
All Departments		
--		
--		
--		

Completed	Total enrolled
21	39
1714	2460
2168	2360
120	267
35	47
9	13
11	16
13	62
1926	2658
685	692
832	1050
521	624
3248	4638
6373	6672
1620	1923
890	1030
1374	1503
67	89
122	171
72	89
61	100
28	48
110	153
59	95
32	52
69	96
26	34
10	17
56	82
48	69
79	118
9	19
543	641
47	63

52	68
47	70
424	475
59	75
962	1127
139	172
51	62
13	18
22	26
2328	2470
13	21
11	22
43	49
280	346
266	308
7	14
15	44
35	54
9	19
23	41
6	7
17	47
33	41
47	55
30	31
643	739
17	43
13	21
8	17
3	7
9	12
472	520
15	20
4	13
6	15
46	58
4	15
22	39
30	38
0	3
14	21
14	19
12	18
36	61
17	27
13	21
1	2

413	487
11	12
5	6
7	9
38	45
3	5
4	7
3	3
28	68
34	36
3	6
15	22
1	4
3115	3311
1104	1202
23	29
1	4
13	18
8	12
10	12
3	4
6	8
121	134
6	9
20	27
8	10
8	11
89	110
4	7
32	55
19	30
44	51
11	20
23	40
15	33
4	10
23	27
6	14
5	11
12	17
11	15
458	505
13	20
149	212
81	104
14	22
40	48

863	1040
850	978
49	50
93	113
7	8
530	547
450	588
776	825
360	402
12	14
14	21
10	12
29	35
421	495
214	246
150	158
1451	1530
400	535
782	855
292	337
227	279
347	389
16	21
4	11
12	18
43752	51740



REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF HR & LEGAL & GOVERNANCE

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ON: 15 January 2020

SUBJECT: Guidance on Handling Personal Reference Requests

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider the proposed revised guidance to Councillors in responding to requests for personal references.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is asked:

1. To consider and approve the revised guidance to Councillors (as contained in the Appendix A) in responding to requests for personal references.
2. Subject to 1 above, to recommend to Council to adopt and thereafter request that all councillors comply with the guidance issued.

3. BACKGROUND

The Committee on 23 October 2019 considered the report on advice for Councillors handling reference requests and referred to the advice issued in December 2016. The discussion referred to some recent issues experienced by some Councillors when requested for personal references by their constituents. Advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer can be sought by Councillors as and when needed. However, the Committee suggested that an updated Guidance on personal references would be helpful covering references for passport applications, criminal matters in court and employment related matters. Advice was last issued in December 2016 and requests have been made for this advice to be reviewed and if appropriate, updated and re-issued.

4. RATIONALE

The Standards Committee's role and function includes oversight of the development of quality information and support being provided to members in their roles as decision makers and Ward councillors. It also includes the direct provision of related member development training and advice, promoting high standards in the conduct of council business.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications from the report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal obligations on councillors to provide a reference or testimonials, nor are there any legal restrictions. However, Councillors should not provide personal references on any matters where the Council is involved in anyway; otherwise there could be a potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

In relation to other matters, any personal reference provided by a Councillor should not have any inference that it is connected in any way to, or on behalf of the Council. The Council may therefore adopt appropriate and reasonable safeguards to ensure this.

Also, councillors providing personal references are advised that the contents must be honest and factual. Any responsibility, liability or any other consequence arising from providing a personal reference would rest entirely with the Councillor concerned, and not with the Council.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Once considered and adopted by the Council there are no additional resource implications from the review of the Guidance by the Standards Committee.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no equality implications from the update of the guidance as this will be in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct and wider legislation.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Standards Committee is being consulted via this report and any recommendations for change will be presented for agreement at full council.

Contact Officer: Asad Laher, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Date: 18th December 2019

Appendix A

Guidance for Members – Handling Reference Requests

Councillors are on occasion asked to provide character or other references on behalf of a ward resident or acquaintance. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for a reference to be supplied as a community service but it is important that procedures are in place to protect the interests of both the Councillor and the Council, particularly in relation to the Code of Conduct. Councillors are not obliged to supply a reference, which can be provided only at their discretion and for someone who is known to them. The Standards Committee has agreed the guidance below to be followed in the event that a Councillor is requested to provide a reference for a ward resident or acquaintance. To assist Councillors, guidance is also provided for countersigning UK Passport Application Forms based on current information provided by HM Passport Office.

1. Matters where the Council is involved – This can include court matters where the Council is a party or has some involvement in relation to its functions, duties, powers and responsibilities. For example, matters relating social care, public protection, and environment matters. In such matters, Councillors should not provide references (or make any representations) on behalf of ward residents or acquaintances as this could be regarded as a conflict of interest in view of their position as Councillors, and could breach potentially the Code of Conduct. If approached, Councillors should politely decline and if necessary seek advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officers. The Council has also provided specific advice and guidance in the Constitution for Councillor Involvement in relation to family member and social care matters.
2. Personal Character references/representations where there is no Council involvement – This can include providing personal character references for a ward resident or acquaintance in court matters (civil and criminal), or employment matters. Councillors are under no obligation to provide personal character references. However, Councillors are regarded as persons of good standing and they are often approached by ward residents or acquaintance to provide personal character references. If Councillors choose to provide a personal character reference for a ward resident or an acquaintance, they must adhere to the following safeguards which clarifies the status of the reference, and protects the interests of both Councillors and the Council itself:
 - Personal character references should only be provided for someone who is known to the Councillor.
 - Councillors should use their own note paper, and not Council letterhead.
 - All personal character references may be signed by Councillors using the title “Councillor” but must include the following text in the main body of the letter: *“This is a personal reference reflecting my views, knowledge and belief. It is not a reference of (or on behalf of) Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.*
 - Councillors should carefully consider each request and address reference letters to a specific addressee, and avoid addressing the reference “To whom it may concern”.
 - Councillors should ensure that references are factually accurate and honest.
 - Any responsibility, liability or any other consequence arising from providing a personal reference would rest entirely with the Councillor concerned, and not with the Council.
 - Councillors should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officers, and consult their group leader before providing a reference on a high profile matter, or a matter which may be publically reported.

3. Countersigning UK Passport Application Forms

Based on the current information provided by HM Passport Office (Dec 2019) Councillors, are listed as persons of good standing in the community, and are therefore often requested to countersign passport applications for ward residents or acquaintances.

Councillors are not obliged to countersign passport applications for anybody. However, should they choose to do so at their discretion, they should check and comply any with the requirements issued by HM Passport Office. The current requirements (Dec 2019) for countersigning UK passport application forms are that the Councillor can only countersign if they have personally known the individual for at least 2 years, live in the UK and hold a current British or Irish passport. When countersigning the application, the Councillor will need to enter their current British passport number.

When signing the application form, Councillors are reminded to check that the name on the form matches that of the individual that has presented the form, and that the photograph (which is also to be signed) is a current likeness of the individual. As a general reminder, a Councillor must not sign an application form for any person who is related by birth or by marriage, involved in a relationship with the applicant or residing at the same address. Under no circumstances should Councillors sign a blank or partially completed application form.

Countersignatories may be contacted by HM Passport Office for more information.

Councillor should always also check the HM Passport website for the latest advice for countersignatories.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office>



REPORT OF:	The Monitoring Officer
TO:	Standards Committee
DATE:	15 January 2020

SUBJECT: Complaints Update to the Standards Committee

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Members on complaints received regarding Members conduct under the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members up to 30th November 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note the update report.

3. BACKGROUND

The Committee has a role in considering any complaints received relating to the conduct of Members of the Borough Council, co-opted Members and Parish Councils in its area. Members will be aware that not all complaints are proceeded with for various reasons (unsubstantiated complaints, vexatious complaints etc.) however it is important that members are aware of receipt of these and legitimate complaints that are being processed and progressed.

Members of the Committee are to be kept up to date on receipt of all complaints and progress at meetings of the Standards Committee where appropriate subject to any relevant provisions relating to confidentiality.

Further to the report at their meeting in October 2019 the Committee is advised that during October 2019 a complaint was received regarding an elected members alleged conduct towards an officer. Following a meeting with the complainant supported by a Deputy Monitoring Officer the elected member offered an apology, which was accepted, by the officer concerned and therefore no further action was required under the procedure.

Up to 30th November 2019 there were no further complaints received under the Members Complaints Procedures.

4. RATIONALE

The Localism Act requires Councils to put in place mechanisms for reporting and investigation of complaints. This report provides information for the Standards Committee in a clear and transparent way to ensure that all members of the committee are aware of complaints received, progress and outcomes.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has adopted the Code and the arrangements for dealing with member complaints, which it must follow when a formal complaint is received.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A governance framework in local authorities is necessary to promote and maintain high ethical standards, and to ensure public confidence.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None contained in this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

The Council's arrangements for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct have been discussed by the Standards Committee and the arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members are the subject of this report, to ensure openness and transparency to Members of the Committee on complaints received and progress.

Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officer: David Fairclough
Date: 30th December 2019

Background Papers: The Localism Act 2011