



REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF HR & LEGAL & GOVERNANCE

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ON: 4th March 2020

SUBJECT: Personal Safety Councillors – Accident & Incident Reporting Guide for Elected Members

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider the introduction of a new Accident & Incident Reporting Guide for Elected Members.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is asked:

1. To approve an Accident & Incident Reporting Guide for Elected Members.

3. BACKGROUND

At their meeting in January the Committee reviewed the Local Government Association (LGA) 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 Standards Committee also approved a recommendation to the Full Council of a short 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.

During those discussions it was noted that Councillors are encouraged to report accidents and incidents which may affect them during their duties for the Council.

A digital solution for reporting incidents and accidents has been developed which will ensure the Council and elected members are kept informed of relevant incidents and receive appropriate support in the event of this being required.

A guide presented at Appendix A to this report has been created to enable Councillors to access the system and report relevant accidents and incidents in line with the LGA Guidance and Health & Safety Legislation.

4. RATIONALE

The Standards Committee's role and function includes oversight of the development of quality information to support members in their roles as decision makers and Ward councillors. 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. It is equally important that Councillors report any general accidents or near misses they have as this helps inform others and enables careful and informed planning to avoid the potential for future repetition.

The development of this reporting tool will enable councillors to quickly and easily report matters and access support if needed.

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. Incidents and accidents can occur in elected member roles and the Council has a general duty to seek to ensure a safe working environment, as far as is reasonably practicable. 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 is being consulted through this report.

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Monitoring Officer

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Date: 20th February 2020