



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Council – 2 December 2021

Councillor Safety & Support

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| Purpose: | To provide support to all Councillors in discharging their role by agreeing in principal to the council funding appropriate security measures where councillors are at personal risk or significant threat. |
| Policy Framework: | Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report. |
| Consultation: | Access to Services, Finance, Legal, Democratic Services Committee. |
| Recommendation(s): | It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Where a Councillor is at personal risk or significant threat of harm in carrying out their role that consideration is given to funding appropriate security measures.2) Authority be delegated to the Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Finance Officer to consider and determine any request for such funding.3) A document relating to the Personal Safety of Councillors be included in the Local Government 2022 Candidate Packs. |
| Report Author: | Huw Evans |
| Finance Officer: | Ben Smith |
| Legal Officer: | Tracey Meredith |
| Access to Services Officer: | Rhian Millar |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 29 January 2019, the Democratic Services Committee considered the “Personal Safety for Councillors” report. This was circulated to Councillors at that time.
- 1.2 Following the tragic murder of Sir David Amess MP on 15 October 2021, that report together with a list of additional online resources directed at a Councillors Personal Safety and Online Abuse was circulated via email to Councillors.
- 1.3 The Council report of 29 January 2019 included a section on Lone Working. The report may be viewed at:

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/documents/s53371/Personal%20Safety%20for%20Cllrs.pdf?LLL=0>

- 1.4 The additional resources may be viewed at:
- i) [Councillors' guide to handling intimidation | Local Government Association \(Welsh version\).](#)
 - ii) [Personal safety | Local Government Association \(Welsh version\).](#)
 - iii) ‘Rules of engagement’ [infographic](#) for Councillors to use on social media to give all users a clear ‘code’ by which they should operate (also in [Welsh](#)).
 - iv) ‘Rules of engagement’ [infographic](#) for Candidates to use on social media to give all users a clear ‘code’ by which they should operate (also in [Welsh](#)).
 - v) ‘Handling online abuse’ [infographic](#) - a quick reference guide for Councillors with steps they can take to protect themselves online and seek support where needed. (also in [Welsh](#)).
 - vi) [Improving digital citizenship: A practical guide for councillors | Local Government Association \(Welsh version\).](#)
 - vii) [Research and Good Practice Improving digital citizenship: Research and good practice | Local Government Association \(Welsh version\).](#)
- 1.5 Additionally, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) will be writing a letter on behalf of the WLGA to Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to ensure that they also consider the risks, abuse and threats Councillors, particularly senior Councillors, face.

2. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales’ Determinations

- 2.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales’ Annual Report states that the Authority must support the work of its Councillors and Statutory Co-opted Members to enable them to carry out their duties.
- 2.2 To support their work, the Council provides access to e-mail, telephone, data, ICT etc. However, the Authority must also support the safety of Councillors.

2.3 The following in *italics* is an extract from the IRPW Annual Report:
“As a result of their legitimate actions as a Councillor and elected Members personal security may become significantly, adversely affected. In keeping with their existing responsibilities, it is the duty of the Democratic Services Committee to fund or provide support necessary to enable a Councillor to discharge their role reasonably and safely. This may require the funding of appropriate security measures to protect Councillors from personal risk or significant threat. Risk assessment and liaison with relevant bodies such as the Police and Security Services would normally inform the selection of required provision”.

2.4 In light of recent events, the Committee need to consider how such support should be provided.

3. Responsibility of the Democratic Services Committee

3.1 Whilst the Democratic Services Committee is under a duty to fund and provide the support necessary to enable councillors to discharge their roles reasonably and safely it is not practicable to bring individual requests to the Committee, particularly as some requests may be urgent.

3.2 It is proposed that the Head of Democratic Services and Chief Finance Officer be delegated authority to consider any requests to provide funding for appropriate security measures by Councillors.

3.3 Any such request will be considered on its merits but there will be an expectation that security measures have been advised by the police or security services. The relevant bodies would normally inform the required provision of support and any funding would be reasonable and proportionate.

4. Democratic Services Committee – 8 November 2021

4.1 The Democratic Services Committee held on 8 November 2021, considered the report and recommended to Council that:

- i) Where a Councillor is at personal risk or significant threat of harm in carrying out their role that consideration is given to funding appropriate security measures.
- ii) Authority be delegated to the Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Finance Officer to consider and determine any request for such funding.

5. Financial implications

5.1 It is difficult to outline the financial implications; however, any payment would be reasonable and proportionate and be based on a risk assessment and liaison with police/security services. The monies would be found within existing budget where possible.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 amended the Local Government Measure 2011 to provide that Democratic Services Committees may review any matter relevant to the support and advice available to members of that Authority. The IRPW clearly view considerations for safety and funding of security measures to be within the remit of the Committee.

7. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 7.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 7.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 7.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 7.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken and no adverse implications have been noted.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None