

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	General Purposes Committee	Date:	15 January 2019
Subject:	Members' Personal Safety		
Report Of:	Chair of the General Purposes Committee		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. LGiU Report: Personal Safety for Elected Members		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To highlight matters relating to the personal safety of elected Members', identify what is already in place to support Members' and highlight additional advice and guidance.

2.1 Recommendations

- 2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- (1) The contents of the report be noted and any further actions be identified for consideration.
- (2) The report and guidance documents referred to in the report be circulated to all Members and uploaded to the intranet.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The role of Councillor has changed in a number of ways over the years particularly due to advances in technology. While much of this has been positive, resulting in Members' being more visible and accessible to residents, it has also led to Members being more exposed as they are easier to contact both online and by easy access to contact details. Personal safety can easily be taken for granted and it is essential to note that every individual is responsible for taking steps to keep themselves safe in any environment.
- 3.2 To complement and reinforce the steps that Members can take themselves, this report seeks to signpost to what is already in place to help Councillors manage the risks associated with carrying out their role and highlight sources of relevant advice.

Publication of Councillor Contact Details

- 3.3 When an individual seeks election, their home address is published on the ballot paper for the election. The Cabinet Office are currently consulting on draft

legislation which, when it comes into effect, will remove the requirement for candidates to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper at local elections. It is expected that this legislation will come in to effect in 2019 and will therefore be in place for the scheduled City Council elections in May 2020.

- 3.4 When a candidate is successfully elected, their contact details are published online and made available on request. Members are provided with a mobile phone and a City Council email address so they do not have to give out their personal contact details and they may also use the City Council offices as their published correspondence address on their main website profile.
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the above, the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of Members' interests, to make that register available for inspection, and to publish it on the Council's website. The register must include disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs). DPIs include 'land' e.g. your home, and any other land that you own or have a beneficial interest in, including any land or building that you or your partner receive rent from. Therefore, there is a presumption that Members must provide their home address and the Council must publish it. However, the Localism Act does not require the property to be identified as your home. The Act also provides for details about a registered interest to be excluded from versions of the register that are available for public inspection or published where a Member believes and Monitoring Officer agrees that the disclosure of these details could lead to harm or intimidation of the member or their family. These are called 'sensitive' interests and Members have recently been reminded about the provisions around these types of interest.

Social Media

- 3.6 The prominence of social media as a means of communication has contributed to the increased visibility and accessibility of elected Members. It is an easy way for Councillors to stay in touch with their communities, but users do expect quick responses and a minority of people use it to be disruptive or provoke a reaction. The Council has produced Social Media Guidelines for Members, which were last circulated in March 2018. The guide covers how to use social media safely and legally. Social media training has also previously been offered and could be considered again on request.

Training

- 3.7 In response to a request from the Member Development Working Group, a Member development session on personal safety was held on 13 February 2017. The event was delivered by the highly recommended Suzy Lamplugh Trust and covered lone working, risk assessment and managing conflict. Seven Members attended the training; while it was a valuable session, the low level of attendance is relevant in considering whether another session should be held in the future, but its inclusion in the Induction Programme for the 2020 local elections should be considered.

Guidance for Members

- 3.8 Members' are issued with a guide to personal safety as part of their Induction Pack when they elected. It provides helpful advice relating to ward surgeries, home visits,

managing correspondence and dealing with challenging situations. The guide will be updated and reissued in the Induction Pack for the 2020 local elections.

- 3.9 In response to the murder of Jo Cox MP, the local democracy think tank the LGiU produced a comprehensive report looking at the principles of personal safety and making practical safety suggestions for elected Members when they are engaged in their Councillor duties (see Appendix 1). The House of Commons also released a guide for MPs which covers much of the same information, but is more specific to the processes and systems used by MPs, therefore it is not being included with this report.

Council Policies

- 3.10 The Council's Dignity and Respect at Work Policy applies to Members as well as staff, and as such Members should report any incidences of unacceptable behaviour (bullying and harassment) experienced in the course of carrying out their duties in line with the policy. Reporting of such incidents is essential to ensuring that Members, and the Council, can take an informed view on any steps required to improve personal safety.
- 3.11 The Council also has a Lone Working Policy that is relevant to both staff and Members. Much of the content is covered in the guide to personal safety issued to Members in a more tailored way, but it is another useful reference point.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 There are no ABCD implications.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 The report is not requesting any specific action at this time, but asks the Committee to identify any further actions that could be taken to complement what is already in place.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The report notes the steps already taken by the Council to help Members carry out their role with due regard to their personal safety, as well as signposting relevant guidance, and recommends that all information be made easily available to all Members.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 The guidance documents referred to in the report will be circulated to all Members and uploaded to the relevant section of the intranet. Any additional actions suggested by the Committee will be implemented, subject to consideration of any resource requirements.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 There are no further legal implications to add to those highlighted in paragraph 3.4 above.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

10.1 The Panel are satisfied that their recommendations do not present any risk to the Council.

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

11.1 The report is not recommending any specific action therefore a PIA is not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

12.1 The various guidance documents available to Members are aimed at ensuring the safety of both Members and their communities.

Sustainability

12.2 There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 There are no staffing or trade union implications arising directly from this report.

Background Documents: None