

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

11th November 2024

Report of the Chair of the Handling Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation towards Elected Members Task and Finish Group

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected

All Wards

To consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Handling Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation to Elected Members.

Purpose of the Report

To consider the draft Action Plan developed by the Democratic Services Committee, Handling Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation for Councillors Task & Finish Group and to commend to Council.

Executive Summary

Following the consideration of the increasing levels of intimidation, harassment and abuse faced by elected members in the course of their work, committee members supported the establishment of a task and finish group. The groups aim was to identify the issues faced by elected members and to consider actions that could be taken to address the identified issues. The Action Plan attached as an appendix to this report outlines the outcomes from this work.

Background

The Task and Finish Group was established in response to increasing levels of intimidation, harassment and abuse faced by elected members in the course of their work. Whilst debate and expressing different opinions is part of a healthy representative democracy, unacceptable behaviours undermine the key democratic principles of free speech, debate and engagement, and sometimes pose a risk to councillors' safety.

At the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 27th November 2023, Committee Members supported the establishment of a Task and Finish Group in relation to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation for Councillors while promoting Councillor safety at a local level. The scoping document for the Task & Finish Group was considered by the committee at the meeting held on 8th April 2024 and it was decided to offer membership of the group to all non-executive members.

The Task and Finish Group held repeat workshops on 7th and 14th June 2024 to identify member's issues and any actions that can be taken to address these issues. Following the workshops, members of the group who were unable to attend were invited to contribute to the discussion and share their thoughts via a Microsoft Forms questionnaire.

The information gathered from members was collated into an action plan which is attached at appendix A. The draft action plan was considered by the Task and Finish Group at a meeting on the 10th October and is now presented to the Democratic Services Committee for comment and onward endorsement to Full Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment

No specific integrated impact assessment is included for this task and finish report due to it being an internal scrutiny exercise.

Workforce Impacts

There are no direct workforce impacts associated with this report however, if the recommendations are agreed and taken forward there potentially could be workforce impacts from the actions suggested.

Legal Impacts

There are no legal impacts associated with this report however any legal elements will have to be considered from the actions suggested.

Risk Management

There are no direct risk management impacts associated with the report.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. That members of the Democratic Services Committee endorse the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group included at Appendix A.
2. That the action plan be monitored by the Democratic Services Committee on a 6 monthly basis for progress and performance monitoring.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To assist members in addressing the ongoing concerns in relation to harassment, intimidation and abuse towards elected members.

Implementation of Decision

Not applicable

Appendices

Appendix A - Task and Finish Group Report.

Officer Contact

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