

Notice of Motion pursuant to Rule 10.1

Proposed jointly by

Cllr. Edward. V Latham, Leader of the Labour Group

Cllr. Alun Llewelyn, Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group

Cllr. Scott Jones, Leader of the Independent Democrats Group

The Welsh Local Government Association has raised concerns about the risk of increased abuse and intimidation in the run-up to the local elections.

Political parties already have guidelines or codes of conduct for candidates and have internal disciplinary procedures. There is also an inter-party complaints resolution process in Wales to try to resolve any complaints about local party activity during election periods.

Serving councillors, who are seeking re-election, remain bound by the statutory Code of Conduct, which sets out high standards of conduct including treating others with respect and consideration and prohibiting bullying behaviour or harassment.

The Public Services Ombudsman has previously reported concerns that code of conduct complaints about councillors increase significantly in the run-up to the election and would be supportive of any efforts to encourage good behaviour and respect during elections.

Whilst serving councillors are bound by the code of conduct, other candidates are not and concerns have been previously raised that election campaigns are not always conducted 'on a level playing field' as a result.

A 'Fair Campaign' public statement of shared values is symbolic and would seek to set the tone and expectations of democratic debate in the run-up the elections. A statement can only be agreed locally on a voluntary basis; although serving councillors are bound by the code of conduct, wider compliance with any voluntary pledge could be encouraged via 'peer-pressure' and informal local resolution rather than any formal processes.

A public statement, whilst making a clear public appeal for fairness and respect from all during the election, can only shape the conduct of candidates rather than prevent abuse and intimidation from any members of the public.

Accordingly, it is proposed that elected members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough endorse a Fair Campaign Pledge in the format adopted at Appendix 1 of this Notice of Motion.

Appendix 1

Over recent years we have unfortunately seen an increase in the number of councillors and candidates being subjected to abuse, threats and intimidation.

Behaviour of this kind is not only totally unacceptable it fundamentally undermines and erodes the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate in our towns and communities.

As leaders we endeavour to treat everyone with courtesy, kindness and respect and, on behalf of our respective political groups, along with other council's across Wales, we stand 'shoulder to shoulder' to call for an end to abuse, intimidation and harassment of any kind.

This is particularly relevant as we enter the key period in the run up to the local government elections in May.

We add our voices to support and participate in the fair campaigns pledge and will aim to make use of the resources as produced by the Civility in Public Life programme which are based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals.

In addition, we will publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of any kind, and strongly encourage all elected members and candidates in the forthcoming election to do the same

All of us have the right to carry out our civic duties without fear of being attacked, bullied, intimidated or abused. Any inappropriate behaviour, whether that be verbal, physical, in print or via social media, must be stamped out and action will be taken if deemed necessary.

In all that we say and do we will:-

- Set an appropriate tone when campaigning
- Lead by example to foster constructive democratic debate
- Promote and defend the dignity of others, including our opponents

Be kind and fair in your words and actions.