

Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

19 March 2019

Subject:	Interim report relating to a review of personal safety of Elected Members to include their surgeries
Director:	Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Phil Challoner Phil_challoner@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee:-

1. Note early progress from a review looking at the personal safety of Elected Members at their surgeries.
2. To note other issues that may affect the Health, safety and wellbeing of Elected Members in pursuance of their role.
3. Agree to a further report that will present recommendations and options to mitigate the risks that Elected Members may face when carrying out their role(s).

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee to note the progress of a review looking into the personal safety of Elected members at surgeries.
- 1.2 As part of this review, to note other issues that may affect the personal safety and wellbeing of Elected Members.

- 1.3 Agree to a further report to be brought to the next Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee that will present findings and proposals for consideration.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Elected Members need to feel safe and assured when carrying out their roles including the fulfilment of expectations relating to the delivery of Vision 2030 ambitions.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 There have been recent incidents, reported by some Elected Members, that have raised concerns about personal safety when carrying out their day to day role.
- 3.2 The Director for Law and Governance has been asked to oversee a review relating to the personal safety of Elected Members in pursuance of their role.
- 3.3 Senior officers from Civic and Member Services and the Council's Health and Safety team will conduct this review which will encompass all aspects of personal safety for Elected Members and follow the most up to date guidance literature that has been produced regionally and nationally.
- 3.4 Existing processes and procedures relating to personal safety will be assessed to explore if they are relevant to Elected Members and are fit for purpose. If new processes or procedures are required they shall be proposed for consideration.
- 3.5 The review has already included a survey of Elected Members in relation to their surgeries, as well as discussions with specialist officers from WM Police who have agreed to provide the requisite advice and guidance to help mitigate any actual, or perceived, risks moving forward.
- 3.6 Following this interim report, information obtained from further research and discussions will be finalised, with proposals formed for consideration at the next Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Following desktop research, relevant documents relating to personal safety advice and guidance for Elected Members have been downloaded and will form part of the expert advice and guidance sought as part of this review.

- 4.2 These include two documents entitled '*Personal safety for elected members*' produced by the LGiU Local democracy think tank and *Protect Yourself – A guide to personal security* produced by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office. Further documentation will be trawled during this review.
- 4.3 Internal documentation produced by the Council's Health and Safety team will also be utilised to help develop future proposals for consideration.
- 4.4 Initial meetings have taken place with two Cabinet Members who have experienced issues relating to personal safety that have helped inform officers undertaking this review. Discussions have also taken place with Elected Members who have experienced issues that can be directly attributed to personal safety concerns.
- 4.5 Subsequent discussions and meetings with specialist officers from WM Police have commenced to seek their advice and guidance when undertaking this review. Further meetings are diarised which will include scheduled fact-finding visits, agreed with these Elected Members.
- 4.6 To assist the review, a short survey was circulated to Elected Members in January 2019. This survey sought to validate information relating to surgery addresses, ask for any incidents or issues that occurred in the past six months as well as any improvements that would make Elected Members feel safer and more effective during their surgeries. Encouragingly 86% responded to confirm their surgery details were correct and only a small minority reported incidents occurring in the past six months. Suggestions were made relating to security, a lack of CCTV, having to personally open and close at some surgery venues as well as confusion with key holders around opening and the purpose of the 'meeting'. The purchase of appropriate panic alarms was also raised which will again be explored as part of this review.
- 4.7 Whilst only a minority of Elected Members reported issues that had concerned them, it is important appropriate risk assessments are designed, agreed and carried out where required. This will form part of this review and planned over the course of the year.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 Elected Members have recently received a short survey relating to surgeries. Meetings have taken place with two Cabinet Members and with a minority of other Elected Members to seek their views on the current issues relating to personal safety.
- 5.2 Discussions have commenced with specialist officers from WM Police to seek their professional advice and guidance as part of this review.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 At this stage of the review, all options relating to personal safety of Elected Members are being considered prior to proposals for consideration at the next committee meeting.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This review will detail options which may include costs associated with awareness raising, learning and development plus increased personal security. Costs will form part of options and recommendations associated with this review and considered accordingly.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 A review of personal safety has commenced following concerns raised from some Elected Members and forms part of the new Member Development Programme.
- 8.2 The Member Development Programme has a specific element dedicated to 'support' which includes the health and wellbeing of Elected Members.
- 8.3 Awareness raising, training and development that emerges from this review will form part of the Member Development Programme over the next 12 months.
- 8.4 Elected Members have a right to feel as safe and secure as possible when carrying out their role on behalf of the residents they serve.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 This review will address any Equality Act implications and issues arising.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Data and information gathered during this review will not be attributed to individual Elected Members.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 Information related to current or potential crime and disorder will be recorded and assessed during this review.
- 11.2 A process to carry out appropriate risk assessments will be established as part of this review.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 Appropriate processes, procedures and review milestones will be built in to the review so options and recommendations agreed can be monitored.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 The new Member Development Programme incorporates support associated with health and wellbeing which will be built upon from findings emerging as part of this review.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 There are no such implications arising.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 A review in to the personal safety of Elected Members has commenced and will conclude ahead of the next Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.
- 15.2 The review will look at all aspects of personal safety of Elected Members carrying out their roles.
- 15.3 Approval of the recommendations outlined will endorse the rationale and progress made to date, as well as continuation of the review to its conclusion.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 None.

17 APPENDICES:

None.