

## **Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee**

**04 October 2019**

### **Scope of the review:**

The Director for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer was asked by this committee to oversee a review relating to the personal safety of Elected Members in pursuance of their role. This review forms part of the Member Development Programme (MDP) which incorporates training, support and well-being interventions as requested by Elected Members in its design phase.

The review surveyed Elected Members and utilised outcomes to assess the key factors affecting personal safety in pursuance of their roles which included surgeries, a mechanism for reporting and escalating incidents, the need for personal alarms and associated training, advice and guidance for all Elected Members.

The review researched best practice and utilised the skill, knowledge and experience of specialist officers from WM Police who were available in an advisory capacity throughout.

The review was based on the premise that Elected Members need, and have every right, to feel safe and assured when carrying out their roles including the fulfilment of expectations relating to the delivery of Vision 2030 ambitions.

Senior officers from Civic and Member Services and the Council's Health and Safety team conducted this review, which was overseen by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, and encompassed all aspects of personal safety for Elected Members following the most up to date guidance literature that has been produced both regionally and nationally.

## **Report background and findings:**

### **Survey, feedback and initial response**

To assist this 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. There were isolated incidents cited which related to harassment and threatening behaviour as well as relatively minor incidents 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 and the need for a protocol to incorporate reports of incidents was raised and has been explored as part of this review. A current list of Ward Surgery addresses is attached as an Appendix Four to this report and differentiates between Council and Non-Council buildings.

Initial meetings also took place with two former Cabinet Members who experienced issues relating to personal safety that have helped inform officers undertaking this review. Discussions have also taken place with other Elected Members who have experienced issues that can be directly attributed to personal safety concerns.

As an immediate response to the survey findings, 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 were circulated to all Elected Members via linked searches and on the advice of WM Police respectively.

### **Incident reporting process established**

Existing processes and procedures relating to personal safety have also been reviewed, again with advice sought from Specialist Officers from WM Police at key stages of the review. A process for Elected Members to report incidents affecting their personal safety has been developed and is proposed for consideration as shown in Appendix 1 of this report. This includes a process for Elected Members to report minor incidents, to Civic and Member Services, which can be sent via a Partnership Information Report form to the WM Police's Force Intelligence Bureau. Isolated incidents can then be recorded by area, to assess trends and clusters of activity that may require further investigation. It is, of course, imperative Elected Members continue to call 999 for emergencies or life-threatening incidents, or 101 to report non-urgent crime incidents if they feel the need to, in addition to the process outlined.

During this review, no major incidents were reported by Elected Members and there were no noticeable trends or clusters of activity relating to personal safety issues locally, regionally or nationally.

### **In-house Personal Safety training designed for all Elected Members**

In response to feedback and as part of the MDP, four training sessions relating to Personal Safety and Lone Working for Elected Members will be delivered on 19 and 28 November 2019 respectively. The aim of this proposed essential learning course will be *'To raise awareness of personal safety issues in relation to aggression and violence. Explore how to anticipate, avoid and deal with incidents during the course of your duties'*. Key outcomes of the course will include:

- To state what makes an aggressive incident
- To describe the new incident reporting procedure
- To recognise your body's response to fear/aggression
- To describe how to calm and de-escalate conflict situations
- To recognise the role your behaviour has in the violent behaviour cycle

Specialist Officers from WM Police have positively endorsed the proposed content and approach which will include a filmed introduction by Chief Superintendent Richard Youds. In the introduction Mr Youds says "I'm really encouraged to see Sandwell Council's Member Development Programme taking the issue of Personal Safety for Councillors so seriously. We live in times where risks can be heightened for public figures, so it is critical that processes, procedures, advice, guidance and training are in place to mitigate these risks. It's refreshing to see Councillors take control of this issue by bringing their issues and concerns to a programme like this, so they can be addressed. I'm also pleased to see the interaction that has taken place between officers from your Civic and Member Services team, Health & Safety Unit and West Midlands Police which ensures the latest tools, tips and techniques are available for you during this short course. I'd like to endorse this training and hope it makes a difference to the crucial role you carry out on a day to day basis for the people of Sandwell."

This course, which is proposed in the Member Development Programme as 'essential' learning, will be delivered in-house by officers from the Council's Health and Safety Unit and Civic and Member Services team.

## **Consideration of Personal Alarms to mitigate risks**

Following survey responses and other comments received, this review has also investigated the main types and specification of personal alarms that could be obtained for Elected Members to carry with them in order to mitigate risks to their personal safety. Following on-line research and contact with relevant suppliers, there are two main types of personal alarm that the committee are asked to consider. These are:

- Recommended by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust website, a Personal Attack Alarm (Black or Pink) Cordless currently priced at £5.06 per device (excluding VAT). For all Elected Members, this would equate to an overall cost of £364.32 excluding VAT. Further information relating to this device is attached as Appendix two.
- A Skyguard MySOS emergency Personal Safety Device, featuring GPS & GPRS technologies, currently priced at £10.44 per device per month for a one-year contract down to £5.03 per month for a five-year contract. For all Elected Members, a one-year contract would equate to an overall cost of £9,020.16 per year. Further information relating to this device is attached as Appendix three

If it is agreed each Elected Member can receive the preferred personal alarm device, how they are resourced will need also need to be considered by this committee.

## **Future risk assessments linked to continued communication, advice and guidance**

Following Personal Safety courses held in November, or incidents arising, Elected Members may feel they need to request a risk assessment is carried out at their surgery. Risk assessments will need to be appropriately resourced and results, or recommendations, budgeted for accordingly. The documents referred to in page two of this report offer detailed advice and guidance to mitigate risks at surgeries or when undertaking home visits etc. These will be re-circulated to all Elected Members following this committee. Future MDP bulletins will contain spotlight features relating to the importance of personal safety as a consistent reminder to all Elected Members.

## **Report recommendations:**

1. To note the issues raised from in this report which reviewed the personal safety of Elected Members in pursuance of their role.
2. To agree Personal Safety training session content that will be available to all Elected Members as a mandatory element of the Member Development Programme during November this year.
3. To agree a process for Elected Members to report incidents affecting their personal safety including minor incidents that will assist WM Police, in informing them of trends and clusters which may require further investigation.
4. To decide if personal alarms are required for Elected Members to help mitigate the risks to their personal safety when carrying out their role.
5. To note the issues raised from a review which looked at the personal safety of Elected Members in pursuance of their role.
6. To agree the Personal Safety training session content that will be available to all Elected Members as a mandatory element of the Member Development Programme later this year.
7. To agree a process for Elected Members to report incidents affecting their personal safety including minor incidents that will assist WM Police, in informing them of trends and clusters which may require further investigation.

## **Report Appendices:**

Appendix One - A incident reporting process for Elected Members to report incidents affecting their personal safety in pursuance of their role

Appendix Two - Further information on a Personal Attack Alarm recommended by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust website

Appendix Three - Further information on a A Skyguard MySOS emergency Personal Safety Device, featuring GPS & GPRS technologies

Appendix Four – List of Ward Surgeries

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