

Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

9 November 2021

Subject:	Personal Safety of Elected Members
Director:	Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Surjit Tour

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the current position and proposed review in respect of personal safety for elected members.
- 1.2 That the Ethical Standards Working Group commence a review of personal safety for elected members.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

A report relating to a review of personal safety for elected members was considered by the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee in October 2019 (minute no. 30/19 refers).

A review was due to be undertaken twelve months later, however, this has been delayed due to the pandemic and lockdown.

The review is listed in the Committee work programme, as members are now looking to return to surgeries, and in view of a recent tragic event concerning an MP, it is now considered timely to consider the matter.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		Elected members need to feel safe and assured when carrying out their roles including the fulfilment of expectations relating to the delivery of the Corporate Plan.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Further to minute no. 30/19, on 4 October 2019, the Committee had been advised that a review had been undertaken relating to the personal safety of elected members in pursuance of their role.

The review had formed part of the Member Development Programme which incorporated training, support and well-being interventions, as requested by elected members.

The review was based on the premise that elected members needed, and had every right, to feel safe and assured when carrying out their roles.

Senior officers from Civic and Members Services and the Council's Health and Safety Team conducted the review, overseen by the Director of Law and Governance, which encompassed all aspects of personal safety for elected members following the most up to date guidance literature that had been produced both regionally and nationally.

To assist the review, a short survey was circulated to elected members in January 2019 which sought to validate information relating to surgery addresses, asked for any incidents or issues that had occurred in the past six months as well as any improvements that would make elected members feel safer and more effective during their surgeries. Discussions also took place with Elected Members who had experienced issues that could be directly attributed to personal safety concerns.



Processes and procedures relating to personal safety had been revised, with advice from West Midlands Police at key stages of the review.

A process for Elected Members to report incidents affecting their personal safety had been developed, including a process for them to report minor incidents via a Partnership Information Report form to the West Midlands Police Force Intelligence Bureau. Isolated incidents could then be recorded by area to assess trends and clusters of activity that may require further investigation.

The review also investigated personal alarms that could be obtained for Elected Members to carry with them and information would be provided to members at training sessions.

Personal safety training sessions have been held during October and November 2021 with panic alarms being made available to elected members.

A personal safety guidance has been prepared for elected members which includes suggestions for councillors on how to make a ward surgery safer and more effective. A checklist is also being produced that can be issued to elected members working in non-council premises, so they are able to determine if the site has sufficient safety measures in place, e.g. receptions, panic buttons and safe means of escape. Assurances are also being sought that premises are suitable to use for surgeries.

The Committee had previously requested that a further review of personal safety be added to the work programme for consideration in 12 months' time, however, this has been delayed due to the pandemic. It is now considered timely to revisit the matter.

The Ethical Standards Working Group met on 5 October 2021 and approved the work programme for the municipal year. The review of personal safety has been included on the work programme for the Working Group and it is recommended that the matter be brought to its next meeting in November 2021 to review the previous and recent actions and make recommendations for any future actions along with timelines. A report will be brought back to the next meeting of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.



5 Implications

Resources:	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	In line with the Member Code of Conduct, measures are in place for details to be included on a Sensitive Register if the elected member meets the criteria to restrict personal information due to identifiable risk.
Risk:	All risk factors will be taken into consideration as part of the forthcoming review. Resources are available from the LGA to assist elected members https://local.gov.uk/personal-safety
Equality:	To be considered as part of the forthcoming review.
Health and Wellbeing:	The Member Development Programme incorporates support associated with health and wellbeing.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications arising from this report.

6 Appendices

None

7. Background Papers

Review of Personal Safety of Elected Members.

