



**Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**9<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

Item

Public



# Report of the Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group

**Responsible Overview and Scrutiny Officer:**

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**Task and Finish Group Chair:**

Ruth Houghton

## 1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The following report from the Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group, details their findings and recommendations.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Task and Finish group was established in order to understand some of the challenges faced by Members as they carry out their roles as a Shropshire Councillor, to consider and propose what a protocol for handling incidents should include, and promote a culture of safety and respect within the council.
- 2.2. The Task and Finish Group are grateful to all those who contributed to their investigation, particularly those Members who shared their personal experiences of bullying and harassment. Their insights were invaluable in shaping the group's understanding of the issue and the support measures needed.

## 3. Officer Recommendations

- 3.1. Members of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider support the report of the Task and Finish group attached at Appendix 1.

- 3.2. That the committee considers including review of progress and impact of the approach in twelve to eighteen months' time in its work programme.

## Report

### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. There are no financial implications related to this report.

### 5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1. There are no climate change implications related to this report.

### 6. Background

- 6.1. The report of the Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish group at Appendix One highlights the increasing levels of abuse directed towards public officials and recognises the associated risks that this poses to democracy. The Task and Finish Group found over the course of their investigation that a number of councillors had had experiences of intimidation and abuse. As a result, the group recognised the need for a dedicated protocol to support Members who face such challenges.
- 6.2. The Task and Finish Group aimed to ensure that all Members' concerns are acknowledged and addressed appropriately. They sought to establish clear procedures for reporting incidents of bullying and harassment, whether they occur in person or online. The group also focused on promoting a respectful workplace culture and ensuring that all Members feel safe and valued.
- 6.3. The report attached also provides practical tips for Members to enhance their safety, including awareness of surroundings, sharing plans with trusted individuals, and maintaining privacy on social media. It encourages Members to set a positive tone in public discourse to help mitigate the normalisation of abusive behaviour. This information and the protocol are published on the Member Gateway so that they are accessible to all Members.
- 6.4. Task and Finish group members conducted a programme of meetings at which they consulted expert witnesses and reviewed national guidance on bullying and harassment. They utilised a self-assessment toolkit from the Local Government Association to evaluate existing support mechanisms and identify gaps. Their approach emphasised a zero-tolerance policy towards abuse and the need for clear protocols in place to support victims of bullying or harassment.
- 6.5. The Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish group members made several recommendations, including:
- Implementing a detailed protocol for handling bullying and harassment incidents.
  - Regularly reviewing the protocol and safety guidance for relevance.
  - Ensuring that all incidents are reported and tracked to identify patterns.
  - Referencing safety in the induction program for new Members.

- Maintaining collaboration with the Force Elected Official Advisor for ongoing support.

The key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group are detailed within the enclosed report (Appendix 1).

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

- The report of the Staff focussed Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish group – [Shropshire Council Healthy Communities Scrutiny Committee – Diabetes task and Finish Group](#)
- [Abuse of councillors and staff putting democracy at risk, say local government groups - BBC News](#)
- [The Personal Safety of Councillors \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- The policing response being planned to support democracy in Local Government nationally - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defending-democracy-policing-protocol/defending-democracy-policing-protocol>
- [LGA: Number of councillors feeling personally at risk in role reaches new high | Local Government Association](#)

**Local Member:** All

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Report of the Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group