

# NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING ABUSE OF COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

Council:	<b>22 February 2024</b>
Report Author	<b>Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager</b>
Portfolio Holder	<b>Councillor Everitt, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Transformation</b>
Status	<b>For Decision</b>
Classification:	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Ward:	<b>All Wards</b>

## **Executive Summary:**

This Council will consider a notice of motion requesting that the Council challenges the normalisation of abuse against Councillors and Officers and uphold exemplary standards of public life and political debate.

## **Recommendation(s):**

With reference to the options in section 2.0 of the report, Council is invited to consider the motion.

## **Corporate Implications:**

### **Financial and Value for Money**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Legal**

Council Procedure Rule 3.7 states that: “the Member whose name appears first on the notice will move the motion during his or her speech and call for a seconder. If seconded, a Member from the controlling political group will be entitled to a reply, after which the motion shall stand referred without further discussion to the Cabinet or appropriate committee for determination or report unless the Council decides to debate the motion in accordance with Rule 16” (*rules of debate*)

### **Corporate**

Council Procedure Rule 3 provides the opportunity for Councillors to give advance notice of

motions to be put to Council.

## **Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty**

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

There are no specific equality issues arising from this report.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To deliver the housing we need
- To protect our environment
- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 The following motion has been received from Councillor Whitehead in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 3:

*"The intimidation and abuse of Councillors and Officers, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy, preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for elections, and undermines public life, democratic processes and working representation.*

*This Council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians and Officers must improve to ensure Councillors and employees feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.*

*We therefore commit to challenge the normalisation of abuse against Councillors and Officers and uphold exemplary standards of public life and political debate in all we do. The Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of Councillors in local communities, encourage healthy*

*debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.*

*To tackle these issues effectively, we agree:*

- 1. That the Council signs up to the Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign.*
- 2. That the Leader of the Council writes to the local Members of Parliament to ask them to support the Debate Not Hate campaign;*
- 3. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Government to ask them to work with the Local Government Association to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians;*
- 4. That we collectively and individually support Councillors and Officers facing harassment and abuse, and model positive behaviour and positive politics in our political lives;*
- 5. That we make support and relevant training available to Councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and that Councillor safety related to this is explicitly included as part of our Member Induction Programme."*

## **2.0 Options**

- 2.1 To debate the motion,
- 2.2 Not to debate the motion, in which case the motion will fall

## **3.0 Decision Making Process**

- 3.1 If the motion is debated, at the end of the debate a vote will be taken to agree the motion or not. As only Council can agree to this motion, if the motion falls then it will not be referred to any other committee.

Contact Officer: Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager

Reporting to: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)

### **Annex List**

There are no annexes with this report.

### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers with this report.

### **Corporate Consultation**

**Finance:** Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services)

**Legal:** Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)