

Motion on Notice: Debate not Hate

Motion to Council

This Council notes the Local Government Association (LGA) have received cross-party support from organisations to sign the Debate Not Hate public statement, aiming to address the rise in abusive and intimidating behaviour directed at politicians.

This Council acknowledges the findings that 88 percent of the locally elected representatives who responded to the LGA's survey have faced abuse and intimidation. 73 percent said they have experienced it over social media, where it seems to be becoming increasingly normalised, and 64 percent said they have experienced it in person.

This Council understands this can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of our members and their families and we should be taking steps to ensure elected representatives feel safe and secure in their own communities.

This Council commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse against elected politicians and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does. The Council further agrees to re-affirm our commitment to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign at this Council meeting.

It is recommended that Council:

1. Takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers and asks the Council's Monitoring Officer to establish where and how our processes can be strengthened to fully achieve this.
2. Challenges the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers.
3. Upholds exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does.
4. Commits to ensuring the Council has a clear reporting mechanism to allow monitoring and recording of incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers.
5. Agrees to work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors, officers and their families.
6. Commits to publicising its position, processes and sanctions internally and externally to further these aims.
7. Further agrees to re-affirm our commitment to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support for those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.