

Committee:	Standards	Date:	16 April 2018
Title:	Committee on Standards in Public Life: Report on Intimidation in Public Life		
Author:	Monitoring Officer		Item for decision

Summary

The Committee on Standards in Public Life has issued a report on “Intimidation in Public Life”. The importance that the Committee attaches to its report is evident from the first sentence of the executive summary:

“Intimidation in public life presents a threat to the very nature of representative democracy in the UK.”

Whilst only one of the recommendations made in the report is addressed specifically to local authorities, the report addresses matters that are within the remit of the Standards Committee brief to promote ethical behaviour. Members are therefore invited to give it their consideration. It also contains recommendations to all those in public life.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee considers the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life report on “Intimidation in Public Life”.

Financial Implications

2. None

Background Papers

3. The full report may be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666927/6.3637_CO_v6_061217_Web3.1_2_.pdf

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	This report informs members of the report on “Intimidation in Public Life”. Further circulation of the executive summary to all members is a step that should be considered.
Community Safety	None

Equalities	Tackling intimidation in public life will help to promote participation by people with protected characteristics.
Health and Safety	There is a clear link between tackling intimidation and promoting health and safety.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	In dealing with this issue, it is important to be mindful of human rights relating to freedom of expression and assembly.
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

5. The Committee on Standards in Public Life has issued a report on “Intimidation in Public Life”. The appendix to this report sets out the terms of reference of the review being carried out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, along with the consultation questions. The full report may be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666927/6.3637_CO_v6_061217_Web3.1_2_.pdf

6. The summary is self-explanatory and much further commentary in this report is unnecessary.
7. The only direct recommendation in the report concerns the disclosure of home addresses as a “disclosable pecuniary interest”. The relevant part of our Code of Conduct states:

Where you have an interest that is registrable and the nature of the interest is such that you and The Council’s monitoring officer consider that disclosure of details of the interest could lead to you or a person connected with you being subject to violence or intimidation if the interest is entered in the authority’s register then copies of the register available for inspection and any published version of the register shall not include details of the interest but may state that you have an interest details of which are withheld under s.32(2) Localism Act 2011 and/or this paragraph.

This is wider in scope than home addresses and could include, for instance, shares held by a councillor. The report recommends Monitoring Officers to remind councillors of this provision and this will be done.

8. More widely, the report sets an important context for the work of the Standards Committee and for the Council and all councillors. Comments of particular relevance include:

- Nobody in public life should engage in intimidatory behaviour, nor condone or tolerate it.
 - Those in public life should seek to uphold high standards of conduct, adhering to the Seven Principles of Public Life, and help prevent a decline in public trust in political institutions through their own conduct.
 - Those in public life must set and protect a tone in public discourse which is not dehumanising or derogatory, and which recognises the rights of others to participate in public life.
 - Those in public life has a responsibility not to use language which engenders hatred or hostility towards individuals because of their personal characteristics.
9. These are reflected in the following recommendations made to all those in public life:
- Nobody in public life should engage in intimidatory behaviour, nor condone or tolerate it. All those in public life have a responsibility to challenge and report it wherever it occurs.
 - Those in public life should seek to uphold high standards of conduct, adhering to the Seven Principles of Public Life, and help prevent a decline in public trust in political institutions through their own conduct.
 - Those in public life must set and protect a tone in public discourse which is not dehumanising or derogatory, and which recognises the rights of others to participate in public life.
 - Those in public life have a responsibility not to use language which engenders hatred or hostility towards individuals because of their personal characteristics.
 - Those in public life should not engage in highly personalised attacks, nor portray policy disagreements or questions of professional competence as breaches of ethical standards.
10. Given the importance of the issue, the author suggests that all members of the Council, and parish councils, are made aware of the report and its recommendations.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That members of the Council do not meet the expectations set out in the report.	2	3	Informing all members of the Council of the report and its conclusions. Leading by example.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.