

# Arun District Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Standards Committee – 16 January 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Review of Councillors Guide to Personal Safety</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Daniel Bainbridge, Group Head of Law &amp; Governance</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor David Huntley</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:</b>	
The Council's Constitution (Part 2 – Para 4(g)) requires the Monitoring Officer to support and advise councillors [and officers] in their respective roles. The Guide to Personal Safety forms part of that advice.	
<b>DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:</b>	
The Law & Governance service and the Monitoring Officer sit within the Chief Executive's Office.	
<b>FINANCIAL SUMMARY:</b>	
No financial implications as this relates to guidance matters.	

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Councillors Guide to Personal Safety was last reviewed in March 2023. At its meeting on 17 October 2024, Committee was asked to conduct a further review in light of recent incidents at Committee meetings. The Committee resolved to seek views from individual political groups, for consideration at the meeting on 16 January 2025. This report reminds the Committee of the issues discussed and invites feedback from group meetings.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers the Councillors Guide to Personal Safety and any updates that it considers necessary.

## 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. The Councillors Guide to Personal Safety was last reviewed in March 2023. Recent incidents in 2024 which have impacted upon Councillor safety have suggested that a review of the document should be undertaken and refreshed to reflect updated guidance.

## 4. DETAIL

- 4.1. The Councillors Guide to Personal Safety was introduced to help Councillors to maintain personal safety whilst conducting their duties. This is attached at Appendix 1. It forms part of a suite of other policies and guidance such as the Code of Conduct and Social Media Guidance, and is stored in the 'Useful Documents' library in the Members Area on SharePoint.
- 4.2. The Guide includes guidance on how a Councillor should protect themselves and each other whilst carrying out their duties. For example, when visiting constituents or attending ward surgeries.
- 4.3. There is a balance to be maintained between Councillors making themselves available as a Councillor, carrying out their public duties, and keeping themselves (and their household) safe. The guidance gives advice on matters such as handling nuisance phone calls and dealing with personal callers, as well as practical advice on situations such as attending evening meetings (e.g. returning to your car in the dark).
- 4.4. Some unpleasant events have occurred recently, with Councillors being threatened as a consequence of difficult decisions being made. This is not just a local issue – there have been national incidents that have raised the profile of needing to ensure that elected representatives at all levels of government are kept as safe as possible while fulfilling their democratic duties. The murder of Jo Cox MP raised the matter of safety within politics and the Guide to Personal Safety was reviewed in 2017 as a direct consequence of this. In 2021, David Amess MP was murdered at a constituency surgery. A further review of the Guide took place in March 2023.
- 4.5. Since those incidents, central government has asked Monitoring Officers to look favourably on requests from Councillors for their home addresses to not be published on the Council's website. The Monitoring Officer has always considered such requests in such a way.
- 4.6. Councillor safety is covered during the comprehensive induction programme that is delivered after every local election, and Councillors are reminded of the guidance as and when an incident arises.
- 4.7. The Local Government Association has also issued guidance for Councillors – attached at Appendix 2. The Monitoring Officer has also circulated details of other advice and webinars on Councillor safety, as and when he has been made aware.
- 4.8. The Committee is asked to review the Guide and decide whether any amendments need to be made to ensure it is up-to-date for Councillors. The Committee may wish to seek views from within each political group and to finalise comments at a later meeting.

## **5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 This report forms a consultation tool with Committee Members.

## **6 OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

6.1 None.

## **7 COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER**

7.1 No financial implications are identified.

## **8 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 Ensuring the Guide if up-to-date assists in supporting a risk-based approach to protecting Councillors in carrying out their democratic responsibilities.

## **9 COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER**

9.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are contained within the body of the report.

For items 10 – 17 below, there are no direct impacts arising from this report.

## **10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

## **11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT**

## **12 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT**

## **13 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE**

## **14 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE**

## **15 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

## **16 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT**

## **17 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

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### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None