

**Report of the Director of Resources and Housing
Report to Member Management Committee**

Date: 28 June 2019

Subject: Personal Safety of Elected Members

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Following the tragic murder of MP Jo Cox in 2016 a review of Elected Member safety was undertaken.
2. This review identified improvements in training, guidance and the need for lone-working technology – which was all put in place.
3. The work also links to the work around Sensitive Interests, which is discussed in this report.
4. The need for further, practical training for Members has been highlighted and this is being planned.

Recommendations

Member Management Committee is asked to note this report and discuss whether any additional support is required.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is designed to provide a summary of the work undertaken to improve the personal security arrangements for Elected Members and the further work planned.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 In June 2016 a Member of Parliament, Jo Cox, was tragically murdered whilst undertaking her constituency duties. Cllr Coupar called for a review of the personal security of Elected Members in Leeds which was undertaken by the LCC Health and Safety Team and Member Development.
- 2.2 This review led to various improvements detailed in 3.1 below.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 Improvements in Personal Security

3.1.1 Training/Awareness

A workshop was initially organised to which all Members were invited. This had presentations from the Police, Health and Safety and a more practical session about de-escalation techniques. There was also the opportunity for Members to discuss their experiences and concerns.

Subsequent training sessions have also been offered to Members and to new Members following the major refresh in 2018. This also included a session concentrating on basic self-defence.

From 2016 to date, 58 Members have attended the various training offers around safety, including one delivered by the Emergencies and Resilience Team around counter-terrorism (a Member could have attended more than one session). A further 37 Members attending training delivered by our lone-working technology provider, Solo-Protect. Feedback from all sessions was positive, although a need for more practical sessions is now emerging.

3.1.2 Guidance

Initial guidance was prepared and distributed to Members and later a detailed Protocol was produced 'Undertaking Elected Member Duties Safely - a Protocol for Leeds City Councillors' (see Addendum 1).

This covers:

- ✓ Safety during face to face meetings;
- ✓ Emails and Social Media;
- ✓ Reporting, investigating and responding to incidents;
- ✓ Sharing information to protect others;
- ✓ Training available;
- ✓ Appendices 1 – 6 which hold more detailed guidance.

A more recent briefing note and 'hints and tips' was circulated to Members in March 2019.

3.1.3 Personal Safety Technology

To further enhance personal safety it was agreed that all Members would be offered a 'lone working device'. A procurement exercise was undertaken to source the best technology and 99 devices were purchased.

These devices allow for the discreet raising of an alarm if Members feel under threat and this is responded to by a fully accredited Alarm Receiving Centre, who initially listen in to determine the best response. Members can also: check in and out with a contact of their choice; alert the Alarm Receiving Centre proactively before entering a situation that could be hazardous; be located in an emergency; and automatically notify of any heavy fall.

Currently, 59 Members have taken up the offer of a lone-working device. Of these 21 Members have logged in and used the devices pro-actively. Apart from false alarms, there have been no instances of an alarm being raised in an emergency.

Basic personal alarms were also made available.

3.2 Further Work Planned

Elected Members have expressed a need for further, practical training on de-escalation and basic self-defence techniques. These are currently being organised by the Health and Safety Team and Member Development.

3.3 Sensitive Interests

- 3.3.1 Section 32 (2) of the Localism Act 2011 allows for interests which are considered to be sensitive to be withheld from a Member's Register of Interest. The decision as to whether to withhold such an interest from the public register is made by the Monitoring Officer. Permission to withhold an interest may only be granted in cases where disclosure of the details of an interest could lead to a member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation – it is particularly relevant that that threat or potential threat would be substantially contributed to as a result of those interests appearing on the members' public register.
- 3.3.2 In essence, a Member needs to clearly demonstrate that, either they or those connected to them have either suffered violence or intimidation or there is a reasonable ground for them to suppose that that may be the case if the interests are publicly available. The Member needs to provide supporting evidence for that reasonable belief and it is against that evidence that the Monitoring Officer agrees or not to the interest being withheld.
- 3.3.3 The Monitoring Officer reports the use of the power to withhold these details annually to the Standards and Conduct Committee. In 2018/19 Twelve (11 in 2017/18) permissions to withhold interests were in place in respect of the 435 elected Leeds City Council and Parish and Town Council Members across the Leeds Metropolitan District, an increase of three on the previous year. Seven (5 in 2018/19) of these related to Leeds City Councillors, an increase of two from last year. In the main permission has been granted for withholding details of home addresses or other land or property interest with the rationale for the permission being due to the existing or previous employment of the councillor or their partner (e.g. retired police or prison officer), threats of violence made against the Councillor or due to vandalism to properties.
- 3.3.4 In 2018/19, as in 2017/18, there has been a small increase in permissions granted in response to a threat of violence against Members or their families from a member of the public. Following the 2019 Elections a further two Leeds City Council

Members and one Parish and Town Council Member have been granted permission for address details to be withheld.

- 3.3.5 The actions taken by the Monitoring Officer in Leeds in relation to Sensitive Interests mirrors a recommendation recently made (December 2017) by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The Committee, in their report 'Intimidation in Public Life – A review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life', recommend that all Monitoring Officers 'Should ensure members required to declare pecuniary interest are aware of the sensitive interest provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.3.6 The Monitoring Officer has highlighted the Section 32 provisions to all new and returning members after the 2018 all-out elections and following the local elections in 2019. The Monitoring Officer has also reviewed the previously granted permissions to ensure they remain necessary.
- 3.3.7 Members may wish to note that the report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life, makes recommendations to Government to clarify that a councillor does not need to register their home address on an authority's register of interests. We are still awaiting the Government's

4.0 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Initial discussions were held with Elected Members and Member Development regarding what additional measures needed to be put in place. This included a well-attended workshop.
- 4.1.2 All documents were developed in conjunction with Member Development, Legal and Health and Safety colleagues.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 Community cohesion will impact on the important roles Elected Members play in the areas they serve and the nature of any engagement. Any response to instances of violence, aggression or abuse could also impact on community cohesion. Measures taken to support and protect Members, which are detailed in this report, are designed to be fair, transparent and proportionate – balancing the nature of the role with a need to be safe.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 Elected Members are central to the delivery of the best council plan and it is essential that they can undertake their roles as safely as possible. Leeds is also committed to creating a safe city.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The resources made available to develop guidance, provide advice and deliver training has been managed through existing teams. The funding for the lone-working technology was procured taking into account price and quality and represents value for money, when taking into account the risk.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 There may be legal involvement if action is taken against any perpetrator of violence or aggression against Members. Any sharing of information between Members relating to potentially violent/aggressive people will be done in such a way as is compliant with data protection legislation. This report is not subject to call-in.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 The risk to the personal safety of Elected Members has been added to the Council's Risk Register.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The relationship between Elected Members and the communities they serve has always been at the heart of what being a councillor is all about. The face to face contact, where constituents can share problems and concerns, is vital to making that relationship work. This is also true of other channels of communication such as email and social media.

5.2 Whilst it is not possible or desirable to interfere with this way of working, the work outlined in this paper aims to minimise the risks faced by all public servants in a front facing role i.e. that of violence, aggression or abuse.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that Member Management Committee notes the contents of this report and considers whether any further support is required.

7.0 Background documents¹

7.1 'Undertaking Elected Member Duties Safely - a Protocol for Leeds City Councillors'

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.