Sarah Groom

From: Surrey ALC <admin@surreyalc.co.uk>
Sent: 19 November 2021 09:02
Cc: Trevor Leggo
Subject: Civility and Respect Newsletter
Attachments: CR Newsletter Nov21.pdf

Newsletter for all councils, councillors, and staff (some content may only be applicable to Councils in England)
Throughout our sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment and intimidation is having on our councils, councillors and staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. In response, this Civility and Respect Project has been founded by the Civility and Respect Working Group and is supported by representatives from across our sector including Councils, County Associations, NALC, SLCC and One Voice Wales.
The primary aim of the project is to coordinate a programme of work designed to promote civility and respect in public life, including good governance, positive debate and to support the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff.
The project team will keep you up to date with developments as the project progresses - Please find attached the first project newsletter.
Key points covered in the newsletter include:

- Civility and Respect Project Mission
- Overview of the project
- Anti-bullying petition
- Local Government call for evidence regarding the abuse and intimidation of Councillors
- Bullying and harassment statement

Look out for regular project updates in SLCC's 'The Clerk' and NALC's 'LCR' magazines, on social media and our websites.

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CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT

WELCOME TO THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Civility & Respect

IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

ISSUE 1 | NOVEMBER 2021

Throughout our sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment and intimidation is having on our councils, councillors and staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. In response, this Civility and Respect Project has been founded by the Civility and Respect Working Group and is supported by representatives from across our sector including Councils, County Associations, National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and One Voice Wales (OVW).

The primary aim of the project is to coordinate a programme of work designed to promote civility and respect in public life, including good governance, positive debate and to support the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff.

The group appointed a project manager, Michelle Moss, who started in October. Michelle has a background in project management and has 6 years' experience as a Parish Clerk in various local councils.

The project team is now focused on progressing the aims of the working group, and this is the first of a series of project updates to let everyone know what is being done on the project to address these issues.

Q: How will I be kept up to date about the project progress?
A: The team will produce regular newsletters and articles as the project progresses and utilize social media to keep you up to date. Newsletters will be emailed initially and will all be available on the Civility and Respect web pages of SLCC and NALC websites.

Q: What are the timescales for delivering the project?
A: The project will initially run until the end of 2022, and progress will be assessed against a set of critical success factors agreed by the project assurance board.

The Project Workstreams

The working group had identified a significant number of changes and improvements considered vital to provide support to help reduce and manage the issues related to bullying and harassment in the sector. These factors have been organized into six project workstreams which together will deliver on the Civility and Respect Working Group mission.

MISSION STATEMENT

'Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.

The intimidation, abuse, bullying and harassment of councillors, professional officers and staff, in person or online, is totally unacceptable whether that is by councillors, professional officers, staff or members of the public.

We are committed to working together to promote civility and respect in public life, good governance, positive debate and supporting the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff'.

ANTI-BULLYING PETITION

The petition calling for amended legislation to enable sanctions against councilors who persistently engage in unacceptable behavior, such as harassment and bullying including racist, sexist and ablest abuse, expires on 25 November 2021. The 10,000 signatures required for government to respond to this petition has been achieved, the next milestone is government debate at 100,000.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD YOUR SIGNATURE TO THE PETITION CLICK HERE

Petitions
UK Government and Parliament

Workstream 1 - Training	• For both Councillors and Staff • Including leadership, HR, team building and conflict management • Variety of training mediums
Workstream 2 - Governance	• Governance and enabling documentation • HR policies • Disciplinary and grievance toolkit
Workstream 3 - Intervention	• How to identify struggling councils • Support package • Performance strategy
Workstream 4 - Legislative	• Monitor and influence relevant legislation such as introduction of sanctions, online abuse and enhanced role of the MO • Make a change campaign
Workstream 5 - Collaboration	• Work closely with LGA and other similar organisations to share best practices, documents and processes to maximise support available to Councils, Councillors and staff
Workstream 6 - Enabling	• Enhanced websites to include Civility and Respect • Sign posting to further support on member websites • Drive to promote membership to relevant organisations

PR and Communication
- Stakeholder communication plan
- Project Updates and briefings

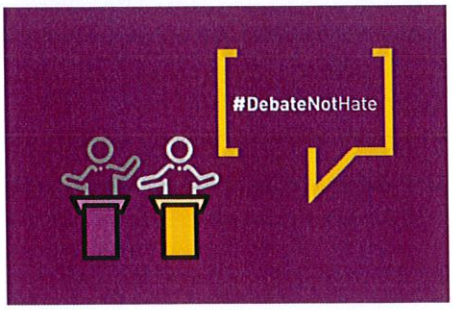
The project will deliver information hubs within existing SLCC and NALC websites to provide guidance and support to councils and staff, and will also signpost to additional support. The support will include training, governance and intervention to provide extra support to struggling councils. The training will incorporate a variety of mediums for skills-based training for both councillors and staff, such as developing leadership, tackling online abuse, team synergy and mediation skills. The governance workstream will focus on defining and centralizing the good practices, policies and documentation which support strong governance and HR practices, many of which already exist. We will also be working with other partners in the sector such as Local Government Association (LGA) to share best practices and add weight to the campaigns to amend legislation around issues such as introducing sanctions, and enhancing the roles of the monitoring officers.

Bullying and harassment is never acceptable

Local Government Association

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE CALL FOR EVIDENCE: ABUSE AND INTIMIDATION OF COUNCILLORS

The LGA has committed to promoting civility in public life and supporting the well-being of elected members. This is a long-standing area of work for the LGA, but the recent tragic death of Sir David Amess MP has brought this issue into marked focus. Everyone in public life should be able to go about their daily business without fear of attack. Now, more than ever, this is a challenge that we as a sector are determined to meet.



To support their Civility in Public Life programme, the LGA has been developing and now launched a call for evidence of abuse and intimidation of councillors - Click here to go to the survey (or search for Civility in Public life on the LGA website) The call for evidence is an ongoing part of the LGA Civility in Public Life Programme, capturing elected members' experiences and emerging trends around abuse and intimidation from the public.

The survey is primarily designed to capture the experience of councillors, but candidates who have run for election, officers who have supported candidates or councillors and members of the public can also share their reflections.

The evidence gathered will help the LGA develop a body of evidence to support LGA calls for legislative and systemic change and develop support for elected members. More information on the LGA Civility in Public Life Programme and relevant resources is available on the LGA webpage.

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT STATEMENT

As a first step in the promotion of civility and respect, councils may wish to add a statement to their websites stating that bullying, harassment and intimidation will not be tolerated.

This is a suggested wording for those councils wishing to add a bullying and harassment statement to their websites:

'We treat everyone with courtesy and respect and ask for the same in return. We ask that you treat your councillors and council staff courteously without violence, abuse or harassment.

Councillors and council staff have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is totally unacceptable.

The zero tolerance policy includes abuse, aggression or threats made in person, over the telephone or in written communication, including on social media. The council considers threatening behaviour to be:
Attempted or actual aggressive, or physical actions made towards any councillor or member of staff.

The use of aggressive, or abusive language, (including raising of the voice, swearing, shouting or in writing) which threatens or intimidates councillors or council staff'.

This policy applies throughout all council meetings, but it also applies to any councillor or council staff away from council meetings

STOP BULLYING

Civility & Respect

IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

nalc National Association of Local Councils

CoF

SLCC For Local Council Professionals

Un Llais Cymru One Voice Wales