

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date and Time:- Thursday 11 September 2025 at 2.00 p.m.

Venue:- Rotherham Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH

Membership:- Councillors Clarke (Chair), Lelliott (Vice-Chair), Beck, T. Collingham, Hall, Harper, Keenan and Monk.

Independent Co-optees:- Mrs. A. Bingham, Mr. P. Edler and Mrs. K. Penney.

Independent Persons:- Mr. P. Beavers and Mr. D. Roper-Newman.

The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend today's meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

3. Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th June, 2025 (Pages 3 - 7)

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th June, 2025 as a true and correct record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

5. Appointment of Parish Council Members to the Standards and Ethics Committee (Pages 9 - 11)

To consider the appointment of Parish Council Members to the Standards and Ethics Committee following a ballot by the YLCA (Yorkshire Local Council Association).

6. Review of Members' Register of Interests

To receive a verbal update on the current status of Members' Registers of Interest.

7. LGA's Debate Not Hate Campaign (Pages 13 - 77)

A consider the objectives of and the resources available to the Council and Members through the LGA's Debate Not Hate Campaign.

8. A Review of Concerns Raised Pursuant to the Whistleblowing Policy (Pages 79 - 86)

To give consideration to a report regarding concerns raised pursuant to the Whistleblowing Policy and the actions taken to address these matters.

9. Review of Complaints (Pages 87 - 94)

To give consideration to a report updating the Committee on the Complaints received against Members of the Council, and Town and Parish Councillors alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.

10. Urgent Business

To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

**The next meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee will
be held on Thursday 13 November 2025
commencing at 2.00 p.m.
in Rotherham Town Hall.**



**JOHN EDWARDS,
Chief Executive.**

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE
12th June, 2025

Present:- Councillor Clarke (in the Chair); Councillors T. Collingham, Hall, Harper, Keenan, Monk along with Mrs. M. Carroll (Parish Council Representative) and also Mrs. A. Bingham and Mrs. K. Penney (Independent Members).

Also in attendance were Mr. P. Beavers and Mr. D. Roper-Newman (Independent Persons).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beck and Lelliott.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for (Minute Nos. 8 and 9 (Whistleblowing and Complaints) on the grounds that the appendices to those reports involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH MARCH, 2025

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th March, 2025 were approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4. REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer seeking a review by the Committee of the Code of Conduct.

The Model Code of Conduct as provided by the LGA remained as it was drafted in 2020. The Monitoring Officer had, therefore, reviewed the Code of Conduct and was happy with its current content. However, the Committee may suggest any amendments they feel would be beneficial.

More recently, however, the Government sought views on introducing measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England, partly to ensure consistency of approach among Councils in addressing breaches of their Member Code of Conduct. One of the issues consulted upon was the possible introduction of a mandatory minimum Code of Conduct for local authorities in England, as opposed to the current optional model code.

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - 12/06/25

Whilst consultation had taken place there was no imminent decision.

The Committee's views were now sought on the current version as adopted by the Council in May 2021.

The Committee expressed frustration as to how the Code of Conduct had no real influence over Town and Parish Councillors and the difficult judgements over compliance in the absence of any sanctions. There was no legal requirement for Town and Parish Councils to adopt the model Code and were advised that if in doubt contact should be made with the Monitoring Officer.

Acknowledging the challenges Elected Members did have a right to privacy, but this was balanced against the public's right to know and their own responsibilities as public figures. While they were entitled to personal space and confidentiality like any individual, certain aspects of their private lives may be relevant to their public role and subject to scrutiny.

The importance of raising standards was emphasised and the National Association of Local Councils had introduced the Civility and Respect Pledge to start a culture change in the Town and Parish Council sector to eradicate bullying, harassment and intimidation. Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to sign up enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to addressing poor behaviour and fostering positive changes that supported civil and respectful conduct. Whilst some in Rotherham had signed up to the Pledge there were many who had not.

The Committee wished to see standards of behaviour improve across Town and Parish Councils and sought assurance that relevant training was offered and undertaken and serious consideration was given to the adoption of the Civility and Respect Pledge. It was suggested that a friendly reminder via Clerks was circulated.

Resolved:- (1) That following a review of the Code of Conduct no amendments were suggested.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer contact all the Parish Clerks to highlight the importance of signing up the National Association of Local Council's Civility and Respect Pledge to eradicate bullying, harassment and intimidation in the Town and Parish Council sector.

5. CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

Consideration was given to a report by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out the objectives of and the resources available to Members through the LGA's Civility in Public Life campaign.

The LGA's Civility in Public Life campaign started at the time of the Committee on Standards in Public Life report into Ethical Standards in Local Government. One of the main focuses initially for the campaign was to provide a Model Code of Conduct as a direct response to one of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life report.

Due to the type and nature of the complaints received by the Council it was felt timely and appropriate to provide a reminder to members of this Committee, as to the ambit and content of the Civility in Public Life campaign and the resources available therein. It was, therefore, proposed that a summary of the resources available through the Civility in Public Life campaign be provided to all locally elected Members to assist in their role as councillor, in particular around standards and conduct.

In light of the Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee having a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, it was suggested the Monitoring Officer circulate the materials referred to within this report as this could only contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

The Committee welcomed any opportunity to uphold and promote the high standards of conduct and as such suggested details also be included in the Members' Newsletter as well as details circulated to all Town and Parish Clerks. If possible links on the website should be provided in the Standards and Ethics area, along with any induction materials or correspondence provided where new local councillors are elected.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer circulate to Borough members a summary of the resources available as set out in this report via the Members newsletter and provide the same information to Town and Parish Councils via Clerks.

6. RESPECT AND CIVILITY PLEDGE

Consideration was given to a verbal update by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which outlined the project by the National Association of Local Councils. The Civility and Respect Pledge was for Town and Parish Councils to sign up to and help tackle poor behaviour and promote culture change.

Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to sign up and once completed, would receive support and access to various resources. By signing the Pledge, Town and Parish Councils agreed they would treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.

STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE - 12/06/25

To date only thirteen Town and Parish Councils in Rotherham had signed up to the Pledge (46%). Whilst training was voluntary it would be good practice if information was again circulated to Town and Parish Councils encouraging them to sign up and the benefits of doing so outlined.

Resolved:- (1) That the update be received and the contents noted.

(2) That details and a link be again circulated to Town and Parish Council Clerks.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Further to Minute No. 29 of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 13th March, 2025 the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided an update on mechanism for selecting nominees for the Town and Parish Councils through the Yorkshire Local Councils Association. This process was ongoing so an update report would be provided to the next meeting.

In respect of the two vacant Independent Members of the Committee these positions would be advertised in due course.

Resolved:- That the update on the membership be received and noted.

8. A REVIEW OF CONCERNS RAISED PURSUANT TO THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report and appendix presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, which provided an overview of the Whistleblowing cases which have been received over the past year.

Particular reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out clearly the description of the concerns received and action taken.

Resolved:- That the Whistleblowing concerns raised over the previous year and the actions taken to address these matters be noted.

9. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Deputy Monitoring Officer, detailing the progress with the handling of complaints relating to breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and Town and Parish Councillors. The report listed the current cases of complaint and the action being taken in respect of each one.

Reference was made to each related case and recommended outcomes/actions identified were highlighted and any questions answered.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Committee's consideration.

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Public Report
Standards and Ethics Committee

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Standards and Ethics Committee - 11 September 2025

Report Title

Standards and Ethics Committee - Appointment of Parish Council members to the Standards and Ethics Committee

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

N/A

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

A report recommending the appointment of Parish Council Members to the Standards and Ethics Committee following a ballot by the YLCA (Yorkshire Local Council Association)

Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1) Recommends to Council the appointment of Cllr Lisa Gibbins, Cllr Tony Griffin and Cllr Mark Senior as co-opted Parish Council members of the Standards and Ethics Committee until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in 2029.
- 2) Records its formal thanks to outgoing Parish Council Members Alan Buckley, Richard Swann and Monica Carroll for their service and contribution to the Standards and Ethics Committee.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Standards and Ethics Committee - Appointment of Parish Council members to the Standards and Ethics Committee

1. Background

1.1 The Standard and Ethics Committee comprises eight borough councillors, three Parish Councillors and five independent members. Three Parish Council members, Richard Swann, Monica Carroll and Alan Buckley were appointed to the Standards and Ethics Committee at the annual Council meeting in May 2021. Cllr Buckley recently resigned from the Committee.

1.2 A ballot for new Parish Council members is undertaken in order to determine candidates to fill these roles. As such a ballot for new Parish Council members has been undertaken by the YLCA (Yorkshire Local Council Association) and the successful nominees were as follows:

Cllr Mark Senior (Thrybergh)
Cllr Tony Griffin (Whiston)
Cllr Lisa Gibbins (Wales)

1.3 The Committee will no doubt wish to extend its thanks to Parish Councillors Alan Buckley, Richard Swann and Monica Carroll for their service and contribution to the Standards and Ethics Committee.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The key issues are set out above.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Recommended proposals are set out above.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 All Parish and Town Councils were consulted and involved in the ballot undertaken by the YLCA.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

The appointments will be recommended to and considered at the next full Council meeting.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 None

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee have a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Parish Council members are an important part of the Committee and provide valuable insight and contribution to the work undertaken by the Committee.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

None

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

None

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

None

11. Implications for Partners

None

12. Risks and Mitigation

None

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Bal Nahal, Head of Legal Services

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Public Report
Standards and Ethics Committee

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Standards and Ethics Committee – 11 September 2025

Report Title

Standards and Ethics Committee – Debate not Hate.

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

N/A

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

A report setting out the objectives of and the resources available to the Council and members through the LGA's Debate not Hate campaign.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee notes the content of the report.
2. That the Committee requests that individual councillors sign up to the public statement referred to at paragraph 2.3 of the report, and considers whether to recommend to Council the adoption of a Motion in the same terms.
3. That the Committee establish a Working Group to undertake the LGA self-assessment and report back to the Committee with its findings and recommendations.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Standards and Ethics Committee – Debate not Hate

1. Background

- 1.1 The Debate Not Hate campaign, launched by the Local Government Association (LGA), responds to the growing concern over abuse and intimidation faced by councillors across the UK. 7 in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse or intimidation in the past year and over half were victims of misinformation. Clearly this has the potential to threaten local democracy and deter individuals from standing for election.
- 1.2 The campaign is part of the LGA's broader Civility in Public Life programme a report about which was brought to the last Standards and Ethics Committee meeting. The Debate not hate Campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role councillors play in their communities and encourage healthy and respectful debate in political and public discourse. It further seeks to improve responses and support mechanisms for councillors facing abuse and intimidation. Also as part of the campaign the LGA will lobby for legislative changes, including protections around councillors' personal information and stronger enforcement against abuse. The rationale and objectives of the LGA's Debate not hate campaign are fully set out at [Debate Not Hate | Local Government Association](#).

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The LGA has recently published its latest Debate not Hate survey of councillors. The Key Findings from the 2025 Survey were that 70% of councillors experienced abuse or intimidation and over 50% were targeted by misinformation campaigns. Further it was found that abuse is increasingly online, but also occurs in person and through correspondence. It was found that the impact of this abuse can include mental health strain, reduced civic engagement, and withdrawal from public life. A full copy of the Survey is at Appendix 1 and can be accessed at [Debate Not Hate: Survey of councillors 2025 | Local Government Association](#)
- 2.2 The Debate Not Hate campaign is built around a set of strategic objectives designed to protect local democracy, support councillors, and foster a culture of respectful political discourse. The campaign's objectives include:
 - 2.2.1. **Raising Public Awareness of the Role of Councillors**
The campaign intends to promote understanding of the vital work councillors do in representing their communities and highlight the challenges councillors face, including the increasing levels of abuse and intimidation. The campaign also sets out to encourage public respect and appreciation for elected officials, regardless of political affiliation.

2.2.2. Encouraging Healthy and Respectful Debate

The campaign reinforces the principle that disagreement is a healthy part of democracy, but abuse is not. It will promote standards of civility in public discourse, both online and offline and support initiatives that foster constructive engagement between councillors and constituents.

2.2.3. Improving Support for Councillors Facing Abuse

The campaign provides councils with tools and guidance to assess and improve their support systems, by amongst other things encouraging the adoption of risk assessments, safety protocols, and mental health support for councillors. It also shares best practices and case studies to help councils respond effectively to incidents of abuse.

2.2.4. Lobbying for Legislative and Policy Change

The LGA will advocate for changes in legislation to better protect councillors, such as restricting the publication of councillors' home addresses and strengthening laws around harassment and online abuse. Further it will work with national government, police, and social media platforms to improve enforcement and accountability.

2.2.5. Empowering Councils and Councillors to take action

The intention of the campaign is to equip Councils with campaign toolkits, including social media assets, posters, and template letters. Further it provides self-assessment tools to evaluate current practices and encourage councillors and Councils to sign a public statement and publicly commit to tackling abuse. Further the campaign's work will try to assist with promoting cross-party collaboration to uphold shared values of respect and civility.

2.2.6. Building a Culture of Safety and Inclusion in Local Politics

The campaign also seeks to ensure that individuals from all backgrounds feel safe and welcome to stand for election and looks to address the disproportionate impact of abuse on underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and younger councillors. This in itself will lead to fostering a more inclusive political environment where diverse voices can thrive.

- 2.3 As referred to above as part of the campaign, the LGA is asking that Councillors and Councils sign up to the "Public Statement" below. Individual Councillors can sign up at [Debate Not Hate – sign our public statement | Local Government Association](#) and if the Committee considered it appropriate for the Council to consider signing up to this statement by means of a Motion at full Council, it could make that Recommendation.

"The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election, and undermine public trust in democratic processes.

Seven in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months and councillors reported feeling that abuse is becoming more common and increasing in severity.

Debating and disagreeing with one another has always been, and will continue to be, a healthy part of democracy. However, the right engagement matters and abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory and has no place in politics.

We are calling on local government leaders, the Government and relevant partners, like the police, political parties and social media companies to come together through a government convened working group to produce and implement an action plan that addresses the abuse and intimidation of elected members and candidates and ensures their safety while they fulfil their democratic roles.”

- 2.4 As part of the campaign the LGA has developed a suite of resources to support councils and councillors including a Campaign Toolkit, which can be accessed at [Debate Not Hate: Campaign toolkit | Local Government Association](#). This toolkit provides guidance on promoting civility and responding to abuse through publicizing involvement with and support for the Debate not Hate campaign.
- 2.5 Further the campaign provides a Self-Assessment Toolkit to help councils evaluate practices and identify improvements. Although a number of the suggested practices are in place at the Council, it is recommended that the Committee establish a Working Group to systematically work through the self-assessment and ensure that any possible improvements are implemented. The campaign also provides a number of publications and other resources for Councillors, which it is suggested are considered as part of the Working Group and where appropriate circulated to members.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The only other option to the recommendations is that the Committee does not become involved with Debate not Hate campaign. This is not recommended as it would miss the opportunity for the Council to improve its systems in supporting councillors and demonstrating that it embraces the aims and objectives of the Debate not hate campaign.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision.

N/A

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The officer time in dealing with this issue is met within existing Legal Services resources.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council and the Standards and Ethics Committee have a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. The adoption of the recommendations as set out within this report, will contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

None

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

None

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

None

11. Implications for Partners

None

12. Risks and Mitigation

None

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Bal Nahal, Head of Legal Services

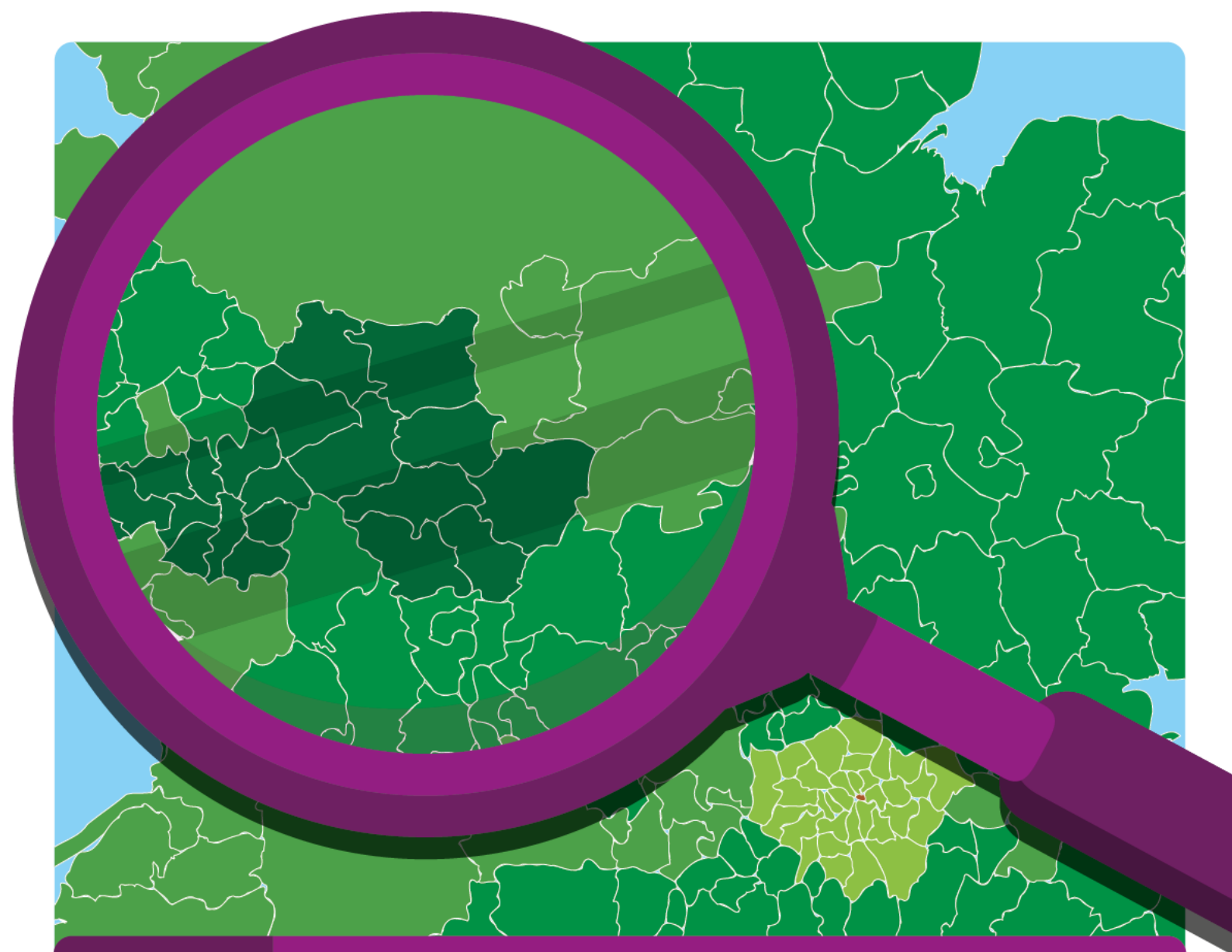
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Debate Not Hate

Survey of councillors, May – June 2025



Research report

Icons in the cover image and throughout the report are made by Freepik from <https://www.flaticon.com/>

To view more research from the Local Government Association Research and Information team please visit: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research>

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Summary

Background

In May 2025, the Local Government Association (LGA) launched the third edition of the annual Debate Not Hate survey. The Debate Not Hate campaign was launched following the finding in the 2022 Councillors' Census that seven in 10 councillors reported having experienced abuse or intimidation – since 2023, the LGA has distributed an annual online survey to all councillors in England and Wales to investigate the extent to which abuse and intimidation remains rife in public life, as well the nature and scale of abuse and intimidation. Each year, more councillors are engaging with the campaign – the survey received 815 responses in 2023, rising to 1,734 responses in 2024, and a total of 1,861 councillors responded in 2025 – a response rate of 11 per cent. The responding councillors represented a wide cross-section of political affiliations and levels of experience.

Key findings

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (73 per cent) reported feeling personally at risk when fulfilling their role as councillor, which remains consistent with last year's survey (74 per cent). This was higher among women (84 per cent), ethnic minorities (84 per cent), the LGBT+ community (85 per cent), and disabled respondents (85 per cent).
- Seventy-two per cent of respondents reported experiencing abuse or intimidation due to their role as councillors over the last 12 months. Similarly, this was higher among women (78 per cent), the LGBT+ community (85 per cent), and disabled respondents (86 per cent).
- A quarter of respondents (25 per cent) had experienced a threat of violence or a threat of death against themselves or someone close to them.
- More than half of respondents (52 per cent) had experienced the spread of misinformation about either their personal or political character, whilst 11

per cent had been the victim of the inappropriate publication of their personal information.

- A fifth of respondents (21 per cent) had reported an incident of abuse or intimidation to the police, yet 30 per cent of those felt the policing response had not addressed their concern at all. More than half of respondents (58 per cent) reported that their authority's arrangements for protecting them were very or fairly effective.
- More than half of respondents (56 per cent) have decided not to stand or are currently unsure about standing at the next elections. Of those, a quarter (26 per cent) reported that the possibility of abuse or intimidation had influenced their position on whether to stand; this was higher among female respondents, at 32 per cent, and among disabled respondents, at 37 per cent.

Introduction

The Local Government Association launched its “Debate Not Hate” campaign in 2022 following rising concerns about abuse and intimidation in public life, including findings in the 2022 Councillors’ Census that seven in 10 councillors reported having experienced abuse or intimidation. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the damaging impact of intimidation on local democracy and lobby for changes to relevant legislation and improved protections for councillors.

The following survey was the third edition of the Debate Not Hate survey – the first having taken place in June 2023 – and aimed to understand the extent to which abuse and intimidation has changed since both the 2022 Councillors’ Census and since the last two editions of the survey, as well as the nature of this abuse and intimidation in greater detail.

Methodology

The LGA’s Research and Information Team sent an online survey to all councillors of all political affiliations belonging to principal authorities in England and Wales. The survey was open for three weeks, from 21 May to 11 June 2025.

Of the approximately 17,000 councillors invited to take part in the survey, a total of 1,861 responses were received – a response rate of 11 per cent. This level of response means that these respondents should not necessarily be taken to be widely representative of the views of all councillors. Rather, they are a snapshot of the views of this particular group of respondents.

In addition, the following should be considered when interpreting the findings of this survey:

- Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. Please note that bases can vary

throughout the survey, because certain questions were not relevant to all respondents they were therefore not required to answer them.

- Throughout the report, percentages may not appear to add up to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding.
- Demographic breakdowns have been included where the sample size is sufficient for comparison. Statistical significance is tested at a 95 per cent confidence interval.
- The * icon denotes a value that is above zero but less than 0.5 per cent, which would otherwise be rounded down to zero.
- Throughout the report, the term 'abuse' is used to describe abuse and intimidation.
- Throughout the report, the term '2022 census' relates to the 2022 Councillors' Census conducted by the Local Government Association. The full report is available here: [2022 Councillors' Census Report](#).

Debate Not Hate Survey 2025

This section contains analysis of the full results from the survey.

Councillor profiling

Respondents were first asked to indicate the type of council of which they are a member. Respondents were able to select more than one option, as councillors are able to sit on more than one council. Only principal council members were invited to participate, however, respondents could indicate if they also sit on town, parish, or community councils. The full results are shown in Table 1, and demonstrate that the sample represented a broad range of council types, noting an overrepresentation of Unitary councillors and an underrepresentation of District councillors.

Table 1: Council type

	Percentage of responses	Percentage of all councillors
District	35%	49%
County	14%	6%
London borough	10%	10%
Metropolitan borough	12%	11%
Unitary (inc. Welsh Unitary)	34%	25%
Town council	12%	-
Parish/community council	10%	-
Other	*	-

Base: all respondents (1861). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Respondents were then asked to indicate their political affiliation. As Table 2 shows, respondents to the survey represented all major UK political affiliations broadly in line with their actual proportions, with a slight underrepresentation of the Conservative party alongside a slight overrepresentation of both the Green Party and Reform UK.

Table 2: Political affiliation

	Percentage of responses	Percentage of all councillors
Labour	33%	34%
Conservatives	17%	24%
Liberal Democrats	18%	18%
Green Party	8%	5%
Reform UK	9%	4%
Plaid Cymru	1%	1%
Independent and all other groups	14%	13%

Base: all respondents (1861).

Respondents were then asked how long they had been serving as a councillor. The survey was launched three weeks after a small set of local and regional elections held on 1 May 2025, in which 1,641 seats were contested across 24 authorities. The full results are shown in Table 3, and show that around half of the sample (48 per cent) had been serving for five or more years, whilst 29 per cent had been serving for between two and five years, 8 per cent had been serving for between one and two years, and a further 14 per cent had been serving for less than a year, including those newly elected in May 2025.

Table 3: Length of time serving as a councillor

2025 survey	
Less than one year / newly elected in May	14%
1 to <2 years	8%
2 to <5 years	29%
5 years or more	48%

Base: all respondents (1861).

Respondents were asked to indicate their role in the May 2025 local and regional elections. Around two fifths of respondents (39 per cent) reported that they did not participate at all in the most recent elections, whilst a third of respondents (33 per cent) indicated that they had campaigned, and a similar proportion (30 per cent) indicated that they were a candidate. Four per cent indicated that they acted as an election agent, and a further 5 per cent indicated another role. The full results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Role in May 2025 local and/or regional elections

2025 survey	
Election campaigner	33%
Election candidate	30%
Election agent	4%
Other, please specify	5%
None of the above – I did not participate in any way in the May 2025 elections	39%

Base: all respondents (1861). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Feeling at risk as a councillor

Respondents were asked how often, if at all, they felt personally at risk when fulfilling their role as councillor. This question was asked in the 2022 Councillors' Census, and all three editions of the Debate Not Hate survey. The results for all four years are shown in Table 5.

The table shows that just under three quarters of respondents (73 per cent) feel some level of risk, either frequently, occasionally or rarely, which remains in line with both the 2022 census and last year's Debate Not Hate survey. Five per cent of respondents reported feeling at risk frequently, whilst 25 per cent felt at risk occasionally, and a further 43 per cent felt at risk rarely. Twenty-seven per cent reported never feeling at risk in their role as councillor.

Table 5: How often, if at all, do you feel personally at risk when fulfilling your role as a councillor?

	2022 census	2023 survey	2024 survey	2025 survey
Some level of risk	73%	82%	74%	73%
Frequently	4%	8%	4%	5%
Occasionally	24%	33%	27%	25%
Rarely	45%	41%	43%	43%
Never	27%	18%	26%	27%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5055), 2023 (814), 2024 (1734), 2025 (1861).

Table 6 shows this question broken down by different demographic groups. The table shows that female respondents are significantly more likely to feel at risk than their male counterparts, with 84 per cent of female respondents reporting feeling some level of risk compared to 66 per cent of male respondents. Ethnic minority respondents are also significantly more likely to feel at risk as reported by 84 per

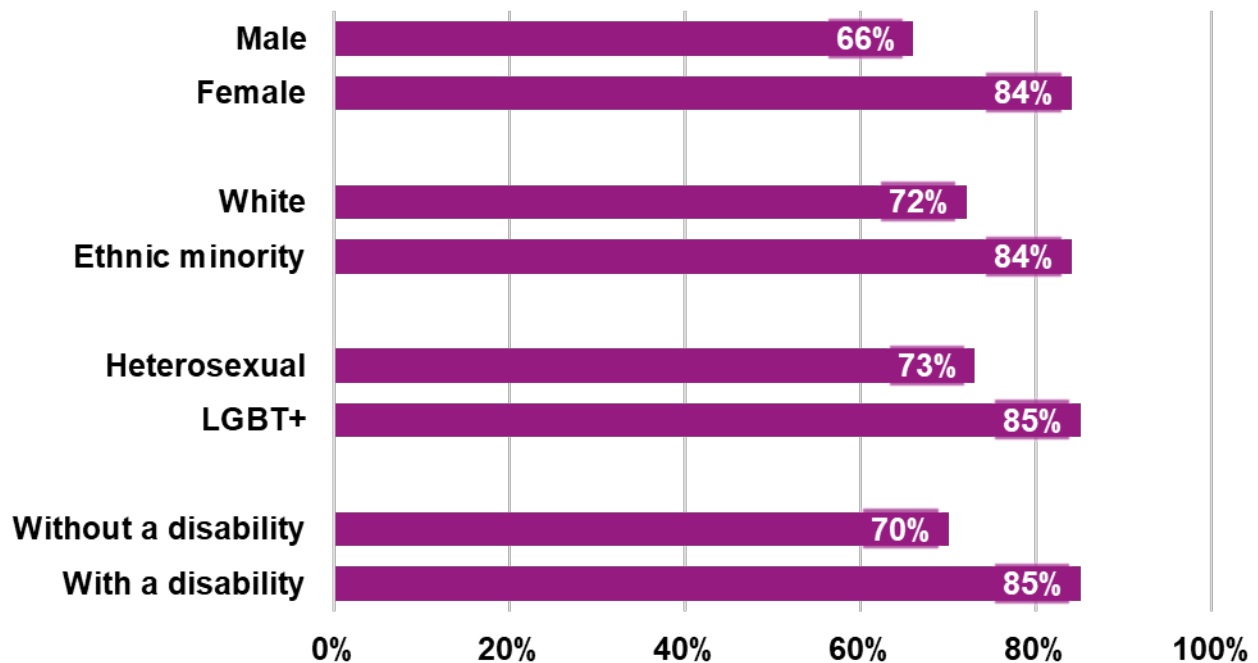
cent of respondents, compared to 72 per cent of white respondents. In addition, 85 per cent of LGBT+ respondents reported feeling at risk compared to 73 per cent of heterosexual respondents, and 85 per cent of disabled respondents felt at risk compared to 70 per cent of non-disabled respondents – again, both significant comparisons. The full results are shown in Table 6 and Figure 1.

Table 6: How often, if at all, do you feel personally at risk when fulfilling your role as a councillor? – *Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status*

	Some level of risk (frequently, occasionally, rarely)
Male	66%
Female	84%
White	72%
Ethnic minority	84%
Heterosexual	73%
LGBT+	85%
Non-disabled people	70%
Disabled people	85%

Base: all respondents; male (1073), female (763), white (1633), ethnic minorities (171), heterosexual (1598), LGBT+ (147), non-disabled (1410), disabled (325).

Figure 1: Feeling personally at risk when fulfilling role as councillor frequently, occasionally, or rarely – *Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status*



Base: all respondents; male (1073), female (763), white (1633), ethnic minorities (171), heterosexual (1598), LGBT+ (147), non-disabled (1410), disabled (325).

Support from the local authority

Respondents were then asked how effective or not they thought their authority's arrangements were for protecting them in their role as councillor. This question was also asked across all four surveys.

The table shows that almost three-fifths of respondents (58 per cent) thought their authority's arrangements were very or fairly effective, which remains in line with last year's survey and sustains the improvement on 2023's survey. Eighteen per cent of respondents thought their authority's arrangements were not very effective, whilst 8 per cent thought they were not at all effective. A further 16 per cent were unsure how effective the arrangements for protection were. The full results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: How effective or not do you think are your authority's arrangements for protecting you personally as you fulfil your role as a councillor?

	2022 census	2023 survey	2024 survey	2025 survey
Very or fairly effective	64%	44%	57%	58%
Very effective	15%	9%	14%	14%
Fairly effective	49%	34%	43%	44%
Not very effective	25%	25%	17%	18%
Not at all effective	12%	15%	8%	8%
Don't know	-	17%	18%	16%

Base: all respondents serving for at least a year: 2022 (5055), 2023 (654), 2024 (1531), 2025 (1598). *'Don't know' was not an option in the 2022 census.*

Abuse and intimidation during campaign periods

Respondents were asked how often, if at all, they experienced abuse or intimidation during this year's election campaign period. This related not only to candidates, but also campaigners, agents, and councillors with any other role in the electoral campaign.

The results show that of those respondents who participated in elections this year, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) experienced some level of abuse or intimidation during the campaign period. This included 8 per cent who experienced abuse or intimidation frequently, 27 per cent who experienced abuse or intimidation occasionally, and 33 per cent who experienced it rarely. Thirty-two per cent of respondents did not experience any abuse or intimidation during the campaign period. The full results for this question are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: How often, if at all, did you experience abuse or intimidation during this year's local and/or regional election campaign period?

2025 survey	
Some level of abuse or intimidation (frequently, occasionally, or rarely)	68%
Frequently	8%
Occasionally	27%
Rarely	33%
Never	32%

Base: all respondents who took part in elections this year (1141).

This figure is slightly lower than last year's survey, which reported that 73 per cent of respondents experienced some level of abuse and intimidation during the election campaign periods, covering both the May 2024 local elections and the July 2024 general election. These figures have not however been directly compared due to the difference in the election size and type between the two sets of elections in 2024 and the May 2025 local elections.

Differences by role

Differences in the level of abuse or intimidation experienced during the election campaign period were observed depending on the respondent's role. Election candidates were significantly more likely to experience some level of abuse or intimidation during the electoral period than campaigners, as reported by 77 per cent of candidates compared to 66 per cent of campaigners. Candidates were also more likely to report frequent abuse, as reported by 12 per cent of candidates compared to 7 per cent of campaigners. Whilst election agents were more likely to have experienced abuse or intimidation than campaigners and candidates during the

campaign period, due to the small sample of election agents this difference is not statistically significant. The full results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: How often, if at all, did you experience abuse or intimidation during this year's local and/or regional election campaign period?

	Election campaigner	Election candidate	Election agent
Some level of abuse or intimidation (frequently, occasionally, or rarely)	66%	72%	77%
Frequently	7%	12%	18%
Occasionally	28%	24%	42%
Rarely	32%	36%	18%
Never	34%	28%	23%

Base: all respondents who took part in elections this year; campaigner (620), candidate (557), agent (74).

Abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months

Respondents who had served as a councillor for at least a year were then asked how often, if at all, they had experienced abuse or intimidation in their role as a councillor over the last 12 months prior to completing the survey.

The results show that just under three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) had experienced some level of abuse or intimidation in their role as councillor over the last 12 months, including 10 per cent who had experienced it frequently and 28 per cent who had experienced it occasionally. Around a third (34 per cent) reported experiencing it rarely, whilst 28 per cent reported that they had never experienced abuse or intimidation in the last 12 months. This remains in line with the 2024 survey

and the 2022 census and remains below the peak levels of 81 per cent reported in 2023. The full results for this question are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Over the last 12 months, how often, if at all, have you experienced abuse or intimidation in your role as a councillor?

	2022 census	2023 survey	2024 survey	2025 survey
Some level of abuse or intimidation (frequently, occasionally, or rarely)	73%	81%	73%	72%
Frequently	10%	20%	9%	10%
Occasionally	29%	34%	31%	28%
Rarely	33%	27%	33%	34%
Never	27%	19%	27%	28%

Base: all respondents – 2022 (5055); all respondents serving for at least a year – 2023 (655), 2024 (1531), 2025 (1598).

Table 11 explores how the level of abuse or intimidation received in the councillor role over the past 12 months differs among demographic groups. The table shows that female respondents were significantly more likely than male respondents to report experiencing abuse or intimidation in their role as councillor over the past 12 months, as reported by 78 per cent of female respondents compared to 67 per cent of male respondents. LGBT+ respondents were also significantly more likely than heterosexual respondents to have received abuse or intimidation in their role as councillor over the last 12 months, as reported by 85 per cent of LGBT+ respondents compared to 70 per cent of heterosexual respondents. Significant differences were also observed by disability status, as 86 per cent of disabled respondents reported

experiencing abuse or intimidation in their role over the last 12 months compared to 68 per cent of non-disabled respondents. The full results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Over the last 12 months, how often, if at all, have you experienced abuse or intimidation in your role as a councillor? – Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status

	Some level of abuse or intimidation (frequently, occasionally, rarely)
Male	67%
Female	78%
White	71%
Ethnic minority	75%
Heterosexual	70%
LGBT+	85%
Non-disabled people	68%
Disabled people	86%

Base: all respondents serving for at least a year; male (886), female (540), white (1401), ethnic minorities (155), heterosexual (1377), LGBT+ (131), non-disabled (1205), disabled (293).

Channels of abuse or intimidation

Respondents who had experienced some level of abuse or intimidation were asked where this had occurred. The most frequently reported channel of abuse or intimidation was public online platforms including social media or open online forums, reported by 64 per cent of respondents. This was closely followed by in person abuse or intimidation, reported by 59 per cent of respondents. Twenty-five per cent reported receiving abuse or intimidation privately by phone or direct

messaging channels including text, email, or WhatsApp, whilst 6 per cent reported receiving abuse or intimidation by post.

A further 10 per cent indicated other channels and these included detailing abuse that was in person (often specifically in the council or meetings, but also in the community), privately, publicly online, or by post. The most common other channels of abuse were via vexatious complaint, report or FOI, via property damage, publicly in the media or indirectly to others. Some respondents responded on types of abuse or who conducted the abuse, or specified that they had not suffered abuse within memory. The full results for this question are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Where did the abuse and/or intimidation occur?

	2025 survey
Publicly online, including on social media platforms or open forums online	64%
In person	59%
Privately, by phone including voice message, or through direct messaging including text, email and WhatsApp	25%
By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox	6%
Other (please specify)	10%

Base: all respondents who reported receiving abuse (1352). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Table 13 shows a demographic breakdown of the two most frequently cited channels of abuse or intimidation – public online platforms including social media and open forums, and in person interactions. The table shows that LGBT+ respondents were significantly more likely to receive both online and in person than heterosexual respondents. In addition, disabled respondents were significantly more likely to receive abuse online compared to non-disabled respondents. Other slight

demographic differences were observed however these were not statistically significant. The full breakdown is shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Abuse faced publicly online and in person – *Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status*

	Abuse faced publicly online	Abuse faced in person
Male	64%	60%
Female	64%	58%
White	66%	59%
Ethnic minority	50%	63%
Heterosexual	63%	59%
LGBT+	74%	70%
Non-disabled people	63%	58%
Disabled people	71%	61%

Base all respondents who reported receiving abuse; male (738), female (595), white (1172), ethnic minorities (135), heterosexual (1142), LGBT+ (122), non-disabled (975), disabled (276).

Changes over the past 12 months

Respondents serving for at least a year who reported that they had experienced some level of abuse or intimidation in their capacity as councillor over the last 12 months were then asked how the volume of abuse or intimidation had changed over the past 12 months. Just under half of respondents (46 per cent) reported that the volume of abuse and intimidation received had increased, including 17 per cent who reported that it had increased sharply. Forty per cent reported that the volume had stayed about the same, whilst 9 per cent reported that the volume had decreased either slightly or sharply. This is broadly in line with last year's survey which found

that 49 per cent of respondents reported an increase, including 14 per cent who reported a sharp increase. The full results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: And thinking about the last 12 months, how has the volume of abuse and intimidation you have received in your role as a councillor changed?

	2024 survey	2025 survey
It has sharply or slightly increased	49%	46%
It has sharply increased	14%	17%
It has slightly increased	35%	30%
It has stayed about the same	42%	40%
It has slightly decreased	4%	5%
It has sharply decreased	1%	4%
Don't know	3%	4%

Base: all respondents serving for at least a year who had experienced some level of abuse over the past 12 months; 2024 (1116), 2025 (1148).

When broken down demographically, LGBT+ respondents were significantly more likely to report that the volume of abuse or intimidation had increased, with 57 per cent noticing an increase compared to 45 per cent of heterosexual respondents. Disabled respondents were also more likely to report that the volume had increased, with more than half (53 per cent) reporting an increase, compared to 44 per cent of non-disabled respondents. Differences were observed between male and female respondents, as well as white and ethnic minority respondents, however these were not statistically significant. The full results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: And thinking about the last 12 months, how has the volume of abuse and intimidation you have received in your role as a councillor changed? – *Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status*

Sharply or slightly increased	
Male	48%
Female	45%
White	47%
Ethnic minority	41%
Heterosexual	45%
LGBT+	57%
Non-disabled people	44%
Disabled people	53%

Base: all respondents serving for at least a year who had experienced some level of abuse; male (595), female (539), white (999), ethnic minorities (116), heterosexual (968), LGBT+ (111), non-disabled (816), disabled (251).

Involvement of the police

Respondents were asked if they had ever reported to the police an incident of abuse experienced in their capacity as councillor. Twenty-one per cent of respondents reported that they had reported an incident to the police, whilst 77 per cent reported that they had not. This again was broadly in line with last year's survey, which found that 23 per cent had reported an incident to the police. The full results for this question are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Have you ever reported to the police an incident of abuse or intimidation you have experienced in your role as councillor?

	2024 survey	2025 survey
Yes	23%	21%
No	76%	77%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%

Base: all respondents; 2024 (1724), 2025 (1850).

Table 17 shows a demographic breakdown of this question. The table shows that a quarter of female respondents (25 per cent) had reported an incident to the police compared to a fifth (19 per cent) of male respondents, whilst 29 per cent of disabled respondents had reported an incident compared to a fifth of non-disabled respondents (20 per cent). In addition, over a third of LGBT+ respondents (34 per cent) had reported an incident compared to a fifth of heterosexual respondents (20 per cent). A difference was observed between ethnic minority respondents and white respondents; however, this difference was not statistically significant. The full results are shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Have you ever reported to the police an incident of abuse or intimidation you have experienced in your role as councillor? – Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status

	Has reported an incident to the police
Male	19%
Female	25%
White	21%
Ethnic minority	27%
Heterosexual	20%
LGBT+	34%
Non-disabled people	20%
Disabled people	29%

Base: all respondents serving for at least a year who had experienced some level of abuse; male (1065), female (760), white (1622), ethnic minorities (171), heterosexual (1587), LGBT+ (147), non-disabled (1400), disabled (324).

Police response

Respondents who had reported an issue to the police were then asked the extent to which the policing response addressed the issue of abuse or intimidation that had been reported. Experiences were mixed, as 18 per cent reported that the response addressed the issue to a great extent, whilst 21 per cent thought to a moderate extent, and a further 27 per cent thought to a small extent. Thirty per cent of respondents reported that the policing response did not at all address the issue, and a further 4 per cent were unsure. The full results are shown in Table 18.

Table 18: To what extent, if at all, did the policing response address the issue of abuse or intimidation that you reported?

2025 survey	
To a great extent	18%
To a moderate extent	21%
To a small extent	27%
Not at all	30%
Don't know	4%

Base: all respondents who had reported an issue to the police (397).

Forms of abuse or intimidation

To understand the forms that abuse or intimidation may take, respondents were asked to indicate whether they or someone closely connected with them had been the victim of a specific range of violent activities due to their role as councillor.

Of all respondents who answered this question, 8 per cent reported experiencing a threat of damage to their own property, whilst 5 per cent reported being a victim of actual damage to their own property. Four per cent reported that someone closely connected to them had experienced a threat of damage to their property, whilst 2 per cent reported that someone close to them had suffered actual damage to their property, due to the respondent's role as councillor.

More than one in five (21 per cent) reported experiencing a threat of violence against themselves due to their role as councillor, whilst 3 per cent had been a victim of actual violence due to their role. Eight per cent reported experiencing a threat of violence against someone closely connected to them, whilst 1 per cent reported that someone close to them had been a victim of violence due to the respondent's role as councillor. Twenty-five per cent of respondents reported receiving a threat of violence against themselves or someone closely connected to them. Five per cent of

respondent councillors had been a victim of a death threat, whilst 2 per cent of respondent councillors had had someone close to them receive a death threat due to the respondent's role as councillor. The full results are shown in Table 19, including comparison to last year's figures.

Table 19: Due to your role as councillor, have you or a person closely connected with you ever experienced any of the following?

	2024 – Against you	2025 – Against you	2024 – Against someone connected to you	2025 – Against someone connected to you
Threat of damage to property	10%	8%	5%	4%
Actual damage to property	5%	5%	3%	2%
Threat of violence	22%	21%	8%	9%
Actual violence	3%	3%	1%	1%
Threat of death	5%	5%	2%	2%

Base: all respondents; 2024 (1617), 2025 (1739). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Table 20 explores a demographic breakdown of those respondents who reported a threat of violence, including a threat of death, against either themselves or someone closely connected to them. The table shows that a quarter of the total sample (25 per cent) had experienced this – this was higher among male respondents than female respondents, with 27 per cent of males reporting this compared to 22 per cent of female respondents. Ethnic minority respondents were more likely than white respondents to have experienced a threat of violence or death against themselves or a close connection, as reported by a third (33 per cent) of ethnic minority respondents. More than two-fifths of LGBT+ respondents (41 per cent) had

experienced this, whilst 36 per cent of disabled respondents had experienced this. The full comparison is shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Due to your role as councillor, have you or a person closely connected with you ever experienced any of the following? – Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status

Threat of violence or death against you OR someone connected to you	
Total	25%
Male	27%
Female	22%
White	24%
Ethnic minority	33%
Heterosexual	24%
LGBT+	41%
Non-disabled people	22%
Disabled people	36%

Base: all respondents; total (1739), male (1008), female (707), white (1528), ethnic minorities (159), heterosexual (1485), LGBT+ (144), non-disabled (1321), disabled (301).

Respondents were then asked whether they themselves, or someone closely connected with them, had been the victim of another set of malicious activities due to their role as councillor.

The table shows that the most prolific form of abuse or intimidation was the publication of misinformation, with 44 per cent of respondents reporting that they had been the victim of the publication of misinformation about their political conduct or character and 41 per cent reporting that they had been the victim of the publication

of misinformation about their personal character. This was also the case for respondents' close connections, with 10 and 11 per cent respectively reporting that someone closely connected to them had suffered this too.

Eleven per cent of respondents had suffered the inappropriate publication of private information about themselves, whilst 8 per cent had suffered abuse relating to a protected characteristic, and a further 8 per cent had been visited at home in an intimidatory or inappropriate manner. Five per cent of respondents had suffered stalking, whilst 2 per cent had suffered sexual harassment, and a further 1 per cent had experienced a public protest at their home.

Respondents also had the opportunity to detail any other forms of abuse and intimidation; 6 per cent indicated another action against themselves, whilst 2 per cent indicated another action against a close connection. Actions against themselves were largely incidents of verbal abuse, but also included: vexatious complaints or reporting, misinformation about them being spread (without clarification of whether it was political or personal), abuse related to protected characteristics, sexual abuse, stalking, bullying or harassment, political exclusion, trolling, physical attacks or aggression impersonation, filming in public. Of these, some specified that the abuse was in relation to their protected characteristics, or in relation to abuse around their political beliefs or activity. Other actions mentioned once included public protest at a surgery, theft, and criticism. Actions against close connections included miscellaneous abuse, or misinformation spread about them. Some respondents detailed other aspects of the abuse, such as the channel in which it occurred, or who conducted the abuse. The full results are shown in Table 21.

Table 21: Due to your role as councillor, have you or a person closely connected with you ever experienced any of the following?

	Against you	Against someone connected to you
Publication of untrue/misleading information about your political OR personal conduct or character	52%	13%
Publication of untrue/misleading information about your political conduct or character	44%	10%
Publication of untrue/misleading information about your personal conduct or character	41%	11%
Inappropriate publication of private information	11%	4%
Abuse related to a protected characteristic	8%	3%
A member of the public attending your home in a manner you consider intimidatory or inappropriate	8%	3%
Stalking	5%	1%
Sexual harassment	2%	1%
A public protest at your home	1%	1%
Other (please specify)	6%	2%

Base: all respondents (1784). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristics are a list of characteristics for which it is against the law to discriminate against someone under the Equality Act 2010. Respondents who reported that they had experienced an incident relating to a protected characteristic had the opportunity to specify which characteristic(s) the incident related to. The results show that 25 per cent suffered abuse relating to race, whilst 22 per cent each suffered abuse relating to sex, and to sexual orientation, and 21 per cent each reported suffering abuse relating to disability status, and to age. Eighteen per cent reported receiving abuse relating to their religion or belief, 5 per cent received abuse relating to gender reassignment, and a further 4 per cent received abuse relating to their marital status. The full results from this question are shown in Table 22.

Table 22: Which protected characteristic(s) was it related to?

	2025 survey
Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin	25%
Sex	22%
Sexual orientation	22%
Disability	21%
Age	21%
Religion or belief	18%
Gender reassignment	5%
Being married or in a civil partnership	4%
Being pregnant or on maternity leave	0%
Prefer not to say	7%

Base: all respondents who experienced abuse or intimidation about a protected characteristic (180). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Home modifications

Respondents were asked whether or not they had made modifications to their home since having been elected due to concerns about their safety as a councillor. Around a fifth of respondents (21 per cent) indicated that they had made home modifications, whilst a further 11 per cent had not yet but felt they needed them. Two-thirds (64 per cent) had not made modifications and did not feel they needed them, whilst a further 4 per cent chose not to say. Results from this year were very closely in line with those from last year; the full results are shown in Table 23.

Table 23: Have you made modifications to your home security since becoming a councillor due to concerns you have about your security as an elected member?

	2024 survey	2025 survey
Yes	20%	21%
No – but I feel I need them	11%	11%
No – but I do not feel I need them	66%	64%
Prefer not to say	3%	4%

Base: all respondents; 2024 (1734), 2025 (1853).

Those who had not made modifications but felt that they needed to were then asked why they had not yet made them. Half of respondents (50 per cent) reported that they were unsure what they should get, whilst 45 per cent reported being unable to afford home modifications.

Twenty per cent indicated another reason, and these were primarily those who had not gotten around to doing it yet or were waiting – of which, the most common reasons of which were that they did not have enough time (especially for installation), were not sure what method would be useful or cost effective, or only had concerns too recently to have done modifications yet. Some other respondents suggested they were working on modifications, modifications would not address their

concerns, or that they were not concerned enough for modifications. Eight respondents responded in this way as they already had modifications. Additionally, one respondent each mentioned they had not got modifications as they did not own their property, because they would be difficult to install and operate legally, and because they believed councils should pay for modifications. The full results for this question can be seen in Table 24.

Table 24: Why have you not made modifications to your home security despite feeling you need to?

	2024 survey	2025 survey
I am not sure what I should get	53%	50%
I cannot afford them	38%	45%
Other, please specify	24%	20%

Base: all respondents who had not made modifications but need them; 2024 (183), 2025 (199). Please note: respondents could select more than one option.

Respondents who had made modifications were asked about the modifications that they had made. Fifty-eight per cent had installed CCTV or other cameras, and equally, 58 per cent had installed a camera doorbell. Forty-two per cent had installed security lights, whilst 19 per cent each had installed new locks, and a house alarm. Fifteen per cent had flagged their home address for police response, whilst 11 per cent had installed an external post-box and 10 per cent had installed a panic button or alarm. Eight per cent had installed higher or stronger fences, 7 per cent had installed gates, and a further 7 per cent had got a pet dog.

Twelve per cent indicated other modifications, and these primarily included: removing home addresses from council websites or elsewhere, removing or securing letterboxes, specific cameras (such as hidden cameras or Dash Cams), ensuring doors and windows are secure, personal alarms or apps, motion sensors and moving house. Other home modifications with one mention each included additional

doors or security posts, adding smoke detectors, private security, parking away from the home or adding security film downstairs and ladders upstairs. Some other ways to address security mentioned included flagging home addresses to the police, blocking callers, changing names on social media, and not picking up calls or answering the door. The full results for this question are shown in Table 25.

Table 25: What modifications have you made?

	2025 survey
CCTV or other cameras	58%
Camera doorbell	58%
Security lights	42%
New locks	19%
House alarm	19%
Home address flagged for police response	15%
Installed an external post-box	11%
Panic button/alarm	10%
Higher/stronger fences	8%
Installing gates (manual or electric)	7%
Getting a dog	7%
Other, please specify	12%
Prefer not to say	1%

Base: all respondents who had made modifications (385). Please note: respondents could select more than one response.

Protection measures and support

The government's Operation Ford, a policing campaign to support local councillors and candidates, introduced a post to every police force in the country – titled Force Elected Officials Adviser – dedicated to supporting local politicians whilst undertaking their role.

Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware of this post. Forty per cent of respondents were aware of the post, whilst 55 per cent were not, and a further 6 per cent were unsure whether or not they were aware of it. The full results are shown in Table 26.

Table 26: Are you aware that your police force now has a dedicated officer for elected member safety called the Force Elected Officials Adviser?

2025 survey	
Yes	40%
No	55%
Don't know	6%

Base: all respondents (1856).

Respondents were then asked whether or not they were aware that the LGA provides personal safety training to all councillors. Almost two-thirds of respondents (63 per cent) were aware of the LGA's training, whilst 31 per cent were not aware, and a further 6 per cent were unsure. The full results are shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Are you aware that the LGA provides personal safety training to all councillors?

2025 survey	
Yes	63%
No	31%
Don't know	6%

Base: all respondents (1860).

Standing at the next local elections

Respondents were asked whether or not they plan to stand at the next local elections in their area. As shown in Table 28, just under half of all respondents (44 per cent) were planning to stand at the next local elections in their area, whilst around a fifth (19 per cent) had decided not to stand, and a further third (36 per cent) were unsure whether or not they would be standing.

Table 28: Will you be standing for election at the next local elections in your area?

2025 survey	
Yes	44%
No	19%
Not yet decided	36%

Base: all respondents (1861).

Respondents who were unsure about standing, or who had decided not to stand, were then asked whether or not the possibility of abuse or intimidation had influenced their position on whether to stand. As Table 29 shows, quarter of respondents (26 per cent) indicated that the possibility of abuse or intimidation had

influenced their position, whilst two-thirds (67 per cent) reported that it had not had an influence, and a further 7 per cent were unsure.

Table 29: Has the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation influenced your position on whether to stand?

2025 survey	
Yes	26%
No	67%
Don't know	7%

Base: all respondents unsure or not standing at the next elections (1027).

Table 30 shows a demographic breakdown of this question, and highlights that female councillors and councillors with a disability are significantly more likely to be impacted by abuse and intimidation to the point that it has influenced their decision on whether or not to stand for re-election; a third of female respondents (32 per cent) reported that it has impacted their decision compared to 20 per cent of male respondents, whilst 37 per cent of disabled respondents reported that it had impacted their decision compared to 22 per cent of non-disabled respondents. Differences were observed between ethnic minority respondents and white respondents, as well as between heterosexual respondents and LGBT+ respondents, however these differences were not statistically significant. The full results are shown in Table 30.

Table 30: Has the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation influenced your position on whether to stand? – *Broken down by sex, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability status*

Possibility has influenced position on whether to stand	
Male	20%
Female	32%
White	25%
Ethnic minority	35%
Heterosexual	24%
LGBT+	37%
Non-disabled people	22%
Disabled people	37%

Base: all respondents unsure or not standing at the next elections; male (577), female (438), white (932), ethnic minorities (65), heterosexual (895), LGBT+ (68), non-disabled (789), disabled (175).

Demographics

Respondents were asked a series of demographic questions to understand what impact, if any, certain characteristics have on experiences of abuse or intimidation in local politics. These questions were optional, and each had a 'prefer not to say' option.

Demographic profiling has been compared to the 2022 Councillor's Census, and whilst this is the most up-to-date profiling of councillors available, it is important to note that there have been four sets of local elections since the undertaking of the census meaning that proportions may have changed. The comparison has however been included to serve as an approximate benchmark, to give a sense of how representative the survey respondents are of the councillor population.

The results indicate that the demographic breakdown of councillors responding to the 2025 survey was demographically representative of the profile of councillors as observed in the 2022 Councillor's Census.

Sex

As shown in Table 31, 41 per cent of respondents were female, whilst 58 per cent of respondents were male and a further 1 per cent chose not to specify. These proportions are broadly in line with the 2022 census which found that 39 per cent of councillors were female and 57 per cent were male, with 4 per cent choosing not to specify.

Table 31: Sex

	2022 census	2025 survey
Female	39%	41%
Male	57%	58%
Prefer not to say	4%	1%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1858).

Gender identity

Respondents were asked whether or not their gender identity is the same as their sex as registered at birth. As Table 32 shows, 98 per cent of respondents reported that their gender identity does align with their sex registered at birth, whilst less than 1 per cent reported that their gender identity does not align with their sex as registered at birth. Two per cent of respondents chose not to specify. This too is broadly in line with the 2022 census which found that 94 per cent of councillors reported that their gender identity aligned with their sex registered at birth, whilst 1 per cent reported that it did not align, and a further 5 per cent chose not to specify.

Table 32: Gender identity

	2022 census	2025 survey
Gender identity IS the same as sex registered at birth	94%	98%
Gender identity is NOT the same as sex registered at birth	1%	*
Prefer not to say	5%	2%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1844).

Age group

Respondents were asked to indicate their age group. As shown in Table 33, 1 per cent of respondents were under 25, whilst 4 per cent were between 25 and 34, 8 per cent were between 35 and 44, 14 per cent were between 45 and 54, and 27 per cent were between 55 and 64. By far the largest group, 44 per cent of respondents were 65 or over. The age distribution of respondents to the 2025 survey fell very closely in line with the age distribution of councillors observed in the 2022 census.

Table 33: Age group

	2022 census	2025 survey
Under 25	1%	1%
25-34	5%	4%
35-44	10%	8%
45-54	15%	14%
55-64	27%	27%
65 or over	42%	44%
Prefer not to say	-	2%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1859).

Ethnicity

Respondents were asked to indicate their ethnicity from a set list. Those who did not feel represented by this list had the opportunity to specify the ethnicity with which they aligned. As Table 34 shows, the majority of respondents to the 2025 survey (88 per cent) identified as white, whilst 2 per cent identified as being from mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 3 per cent identified as Asian or Asian British, and 2 per cent identified as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African. Three per cent indicated another ethnic group, and a further three per cent chose not to say. This, once again, was closely in line with the ethnic breakdown observed in the 2022 census.

Table 34: Ethnicity

	2022 census	2025 survey
White	92%	88%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2%	2%
Asian or Asian British	4%	3%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	2%	2%
Other ethnic group (please specify)	1%	3%
Prefer not to say	-	3%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1856).

Sexual orientation

Respondents were asked to indicate their sexual orientation from a set list. Eighty-six per cent of respondents identified as straight or heterosexual, whilst 4 per cent identified as gay or lesbian, 3 per cent identified as bisexual, and 1 per cent identified as another sexual orientation not listed. This again aligns closely to the proportions observed in the 2022 census; the full results are shown in Table 35.

Table 35: Sexual orientation

	2022 census	2025 survey
Straight/heterosexual	84%	86%
Gay or lesbian	4%	4%
Bisexual	2%	3%
Other sexual orientation	2%	1%
Prefer not to say	8%	6%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1855).

Long-term physical or mental health conditions/illnesses

Respondents were asked whether or not they had a physical or mental health condition lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more which reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Eighteen per cent of respondents indicated that they did have a condition of this nature, whilst 76 per cent indicated that they did not, and a further 6 per cent chose not to say. The 2022 councillors' census provides only the statistic for those declaring that they do have a condition of this nature, yet at 16 per cent this sits in line with the results observed in this year's survey. The full results are shown in Table 36.

Table 36: Long-term physical or mental health conditions/illnesses

	2022 census	2025 survey
Has a physical or mental health condition lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more which reduces ability to carry out day-to-day activities	16%	18%
Does not have a physical or mental health condition expecting to last for 12 months or more which reduces ability to carry out day-to-day activities	-	76%
Prefer not to say	-	6%

Base: all respondents; 2022 (5005), 2025 (1853).

Further comments

Respondents were asked to provide any comments about the safety of councillors, or civility in public life more generally. A total of 818 respondents provided comments, which were grouped into common themes. The following themes emerged most frequently from respondents' comments, organised in descending order from the most common theme downwards:

- **Social media and online abuse.** As observed in comments in both 2023 and 2024, the prevalence of abuse and intimidation on social media and other online channels was again a dominant theme among respondents this year. Respondents explained that online channels can offer anonymity, which allows users to post abuse and threats without consequence, and online debate feels increasingly polarised and charged, with a sense that some members of the public feel they “have a right to have a go” at elected members.
- **Need for better support for councillors.** Also, a major theme in previous years, many comments emphasised that reports of abuse and intimidation towards councillors are not always taken seriously by the police or by the local authority. Furthermore, some respondents highlighted the lack of security measures available for councillors, for example personal security devices or funding for home security modifications. Some comments also expressed that more, or better, training could be put in place as a preventative or de-escalation measure.
- **Abuse received from other councillors.** Some respondents explored the abuse and intimidation that happens between councillors, which has also been a recurrent theme in previous years. This appears, generally, to be between opposing political parties or a disagreement of a personal nature between individuals. Nonetheless, respondents report that it is often not taken seriously by police or the local authority, with some adding that the current Councillor Standards Regime has no real consequences for abusive

or intimidating behaviour; “the standards committee are toothless and can do little else than ask the person not to do it”.

- **Misinformation.** The dissemination of misinformation was also identified as a form of abuse and intimidation in itself, as well as a driver of abuse and intimidation in response to the misinformation. One respondent described the dissemination of misinformation as “the most dangerous attack on democracy” aiming to “stir up uninformed anger to the detriment of the target and the benefit of their opponents”. Both social media and the press were noted as key channels for the spread of untrue information, with some respondents highlighting the lack of consequences for perpetrators.
- **Abuse relating to protected characteristics.** Respondents emphasised that protected characteristics such as race, sex, religion, and disability status are often drivers of abuse and intimidation. This was observed across comments from those who hold protected characteristics, as well as those who do not yet notice that other councillors who do suffer more abuse and intimidation. Female respondents in particular noted feeling more vulnerable to abuse and intimidation from males when out in public, whilst respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds noted an increased sense of hostility towards ethnic minorities in recent years. Transgender respondents also highlighted increased hostility towards the trans community.
- **Misunderstanding of the role of councillor.** Some respondents highlighted that abuse and intimidation can stem from a lack of understanding of the role and power of councillors. One respondent described how “national politics is playing out at a local level” and that councillors are “often blamed for things out of their direct control”, including, for example, the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance and the role in or stance on the 7 October terror attack, and the resulting conflict in Gaza.. Improved education or awareness around the role of the councillor would be valuable to ensure that councillors are judged by measures within the scope of their role.

- **Perception of national and international politicians.** Along with the misunderstanding of the role of councillor, respondents explained that a negative perception of both national and international politicians can be a driver of abuse and intimidation towards councillors, and that this negative perception has grown in recent years contributing to a lack of faith and trust in politics more generally. Some respondents feel they then face the consequences of this. As one respondent noted, “at national level, the hostility and tribalism between parties portrays politicians in a very bad light leading some people to think [councillors] are fair game for insults”.
- **Concern about in-person events.** Some respondents described certain in-person councillor duties which make them feel more vulnerable to abuse and intimidation. These included lone working, and some respondents explained that they hold surgeries alongside other councillors or no longer undertake home visits to protect their personal safety. Another example was in-person events that end late or are in poorly lit areas, making councillors feel uneasy when leaving the event. As one female respondent advised, “I think that councillors’ security could be enhanced by being mindful of late-night meetings in secluded venues.” A few respondents also described being physically assaulted at events.
- **Making people not want to stand as councillor.** A few respondents admitted that the abuse and intimidation faced can make capable and well-meaning councillors withdraw from their duties or wish to step down from the role, as well as dissuading capable candidates from entering into local politics. One respondent warned that the abuse and misinformation on social media may cause a “crisis in democracy of no one wanting to stand due to fear”. Some respondents reported that they themselves were stepping down due to their experiences of abuse and intimidation.
- **Part of the job.** In contrast, some respondents emphasised the value of debate in public life, admitting, sometimes regretfully, that a level of abuse and intimidation is a “fact of life” for a public facing role.

Other comments mentioned by a smaller number of respondents each included:

- The political environment has become **increasingly toxic** in recent years.
- Experiences of abuse and intimidation **perpetrated by an individual** with a personal grievance.
- **Positive experience of safety training** offered by the local authority or the LGA.
- Abuse and intimidation experienced whilst **canvassing** in the community.
- Concerns of, or actual, threats and harassment of **family members**.
- **Withholding of home address** from public domain as a safety precaution.
- Abuse and intimidation being **area dependent**.
- Comparison of the protection of councillors to the stronger protection received by **Members of Parliament**.
- Reminders that **local government officers** also experience abuse and intimidation.

Annex A: Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

All responses will be treated confidentially. Information will be aggregated, and no individual or authority will be identified in any publications without your consent. Identifiable information may be used internally within the LGA but will only be held and processed in accordance with our privacy statement. We are undertaking this survey to aid the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing authorities. It is necessary for us to collect and process special category data in relation to our work in monitoring differences in opportunities and outcomes among various protected characteristics, such as gender, age and ethnicity, which we do under condition (a) of Article 9(2) of the Data Protection Act 2018.

You are in control of any personal data that you have provided to us in your response. You can contact us at all times to have your information changed or deleted.

1. Please amend the details we have on record if necessary. If you are a member of more than one council, please only complete this survey once.

- Name
- Authority
- Email address

2. Please indicate the type of council(s) of which you are a member. *Select all that apply*

- District council
- County council
- Unitary council

- London borough
- Metropolitan borough
- Town council
- Parish/community council
- Other, please specify

3. What is your political affiliation as a councillor?

- Conservatives
- Green Party
- Independent (including Residents' Association)
- Labour
- Liberal Democrats
- Plaid Cymru
- Reform UK
- Other (please specify)

4. How long have you been serving as a councillor?

- Less than one year / newly elected in May
- 1 to <2 years
- 2 to <5 years
- 5 years or more

5. Which of the following, if any, describes your role in the May 2025 local and/or regional elections? *Select all that apply*

- Election candidate
- Election agent
- Election campaigner
- Other, please specify
- None of the above – I did not participate in any way in the May 2025 elections

6. How often, if at all, do you feel at risk personally when fulfilling your role as a councillor?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Ask those who have been serving for at least a year:

7. How effective or not do you think are your authority's arrangements for protecting you personally as you fulfil your role as a councillor?

- Very effective
- Fairly effective
- Not very effective
- Not at all effective
- Don't know

The following questions relate to whether you have experienced abuse or intimidation in your role as a councillor and/or as a candidate or campaigner at the most recent local and/or general electoral period.

These terms are defined as follows:

Abuse – words and/or behaviour that constitute abuse or mistreatment can include, but is not limited to, physical abuse, bullying, emotional abuse, unsolicited abusive communication, and harassment. It may be one-off or repeated.

Intimidation – words and/or behaviour intended or likely to block, influence, or deter participation in public debate or causing alarm or distress, which could lead to an individual wanting to withdraw from public life. It may be one-off or repeated behaviour.

Ask those who participated in May 2025 local elections:

8. How often, if at all, did you experience abuse or intimidation during this year's local and/or general election campaign period?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Ask those who have been serving for at least a year:

9. Over the last twelve months, how often, if at all, have you experienced abuse or intimidation in your role as a councillor?

- Frequently
- Occasionally

- Rarely
- Never

Ask respondents who have experienced abuse/intimidation:

10. Where did the abuse and/or intimidation occur? *Select all that apply*

- In person
- By post, including messages and/or articles put through letterbox
- Privately, by phone including voice message, or through direct messaging including text, email and WhatsApp
- Publicly online, including on social media platforms or open forums online
- Other (please specify)

Ask respondents who answered rarely, frequently or occasionally at Q7 or Q8:

11. And thinking about the last twelve months, how has the volume of abuse and intimidation you have received in your role as a councillor changed?

- It has sharply increased
- It has slightly increased
- It has stayed about the same
- It has slightly decreased
- It has sharply decreased
- Don't know

12. Have you ever reported to the police an incident of abuse or intimidation you have experienced in your role as a councillor?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Ask respondents who had reported an incident to the police:

13. To what extent, if at all, did the policing response address the issue of abuse or intimidation that you reported?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know

14. Due to your role as a councillor, have you or a person closely connected with you ever experienced any of the following? *Select all that apply*

For the purposes of this question, a person closely connected with you could be your immediate or extended family, your partner, or a close friend.

- Threat of damage to property
- Actual damage to property
- Threat of violence
- Actual violence

- Threat of death
- None of the above
- Against you
- Against a person closely connected with you

15. And due to your role as a councillor, have you or a person closely connected with you ever experienced any of the following? *Select all that apply*

- Publication of untrue or misleading information about your personal conduct or character
- Publication of untrue or misleading information about your political conduct or character
- Inappropriate publication of private information
- Abuse related to a protected characteristic
- A public protest at your home
- A member of the public attending your home in a matter you consider intimidatory or inappropriate
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking
- Other, please specify
- None of the above
- Against you
- Against a person closely connected with you

Ask those who reported that they and/or someone closely connected to them has received abuse relating to a protected characteristic:

16. Which protected characteristic(s) was it related to? *Select all that apply*

- age
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- Prefer not to say

17. Have you made modifications to your home security since becoming a councillor due to concerns you have about your security as an elected member?

- Yes
- No – But I feel I need them
- No – I do not feel I need them
- Prefer not to say

Ask respondents who answered No – But I feel I need them:

18. Why have you not made modifications to your home security despite feeling you need to? *Select all that apply*

- I cannot afford them
- I am not sure what I should get
- Other, please specify

Ask respondents who had made modifications:

19. What modifications have you made? *Select all that apply*

- Security lights
- Camera doorbell
- CCTV or other cameras
- New locks
- Panic button/alarm
- House alarm
- Installed an external postbox
- Home address flagged for police response
- Higher/stronger fences
- Installing gates (manual or electric)
- Getting a dog
- Other, please specify
- Prefer not to say

20. Are you aware that your police force now has a dedicated officer for elected member safety called the Force Elected Officials Adviser?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

21. Are you aware that the LGA provides personal safety training to all councillors?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

22. Will you be standing for election at the next local elections in your area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Ask those who are not, or unsure about, standing at the next elections:

23. Has the possibility of abuse and/or intimidation influenced your position on whether to stand?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Demographics: this section ask some questions about you. These questions are optional.

24. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

25. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

26. What is your age group?

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or over
- Prefer not to say

27. What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Other ethnic group (please specify)
- Prefer not to say

28. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight/heterosexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation
- Prefer not to say

29. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for twelve months or more which reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

30. Please use the space below to tell us anything more you'd like to about the safety of councillors, or civility in public life more generally.

--

31. Please tick the box below if you would like to be involved in future work related to this area and/or the contents of this survey.

[] I would like to be involved in further work.



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