

Bath and North East Somerset Council Full Council - 14 March 2024
Labour Motion on 'Debate, Not Hate'
To be proposed by Cllr Lesley Mansell

Council:

1. Believes the intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy, by preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.
2. Notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors and their families feel safe and that councillors are able to continue representing their residents.

Council therefore:

1. Takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.
 2. Challenges the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers.
 3. Upholds exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does.
 4. Commits to providing councillor and officer training in online safety
 5. Commits to ensuring the Council has a clear reporting mechanism to allow monitoring and recording of incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers.
 6. Commits to regularly reviewing support available to councillors and officers in relation to abuse and intimidation and safety.
- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
 - *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

7. Agrees to work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors, officers and their families, and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals, like MPs.
8. Commits to publicising its position, processes and sanctions internally and externally to further these aims.
9. Further agrees to sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.
10. Requests the group Leaders jointly write to BNES' local MPs to ask them to support the campaign and to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of people working and holding office in local government.

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