



Wera Hobhouse MP
Member of Parliament for Bath
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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Sarah Crew, Chief Constable Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Police Headquarters
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18th April 2024

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah

Since the horrific murders in recent years of MPs Jo Cox and David Amiss we have become all too aware of the risks which our politicians, both national and local, can face. Indeed the Local Government Association's (LGA) councillor census of 2022 reported that seven out of ten councillors had experienced abuse or intimidation in the last year.

As a result the LGA has launched a campaign entitled "Debate Not Hate" which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the support for local politicians facing unacceptable behaviour towards them.

Apart from the tragic human consequences which can arise in these circumstances, I am concerned about the undermining effect this abuse and intimidation can have on democracy, whereby elected members are prevented from representing the communities they serve, and people are deterred from even standing for election in the first place.

I met with representatives from all the council groups in B&NES last week to discuss this issue. They shared some examples of the intimidation and abuse they and council officers had experienced. These included one worker who was driven at by a car, another (female) colleague who was followed back to her workplace and threatened with physical violence, and another who was threatened with a hammer. These were just a few of the accounts.

Naturally we went on to discuss the support and security that councillors and officers receive, and I was shocked to learn that when they have reported incidents in the past to local police, they have received limited practical support.

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You will, I am sure, agree that this is unacceptable, and that it is extremely important that:

- a) records are kept of all such incidents, so that the true scale of the issue can become known

and
- b) that they are all investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted, so that victims can feel more secure, and perpetrators are absolutely clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach in relation to this type of conduct.

I would be grateful for your assurances to this effect, and for details of the steps your force will take to reinforce them.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wera Hobhouse".

Wera Hobhouse
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