

Corporate Governance & Standards Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Joint Report of Director of Corporate Services & Monitoring Officer
& Director of Community Services

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Date: 28 July 2016

Security Arrangements of Councillors

Executive Summary

To receive a briefing on the security of Councillors.

Recommendation to Committee:-

To note this report.

Reason(s) for Recommendation: To keep Members of the Committee up to date.

1. Purpose of Report

To receive a briefing on the security of Councillors.

2. Strategic Priorities

Being up to date in such matters is an important element of the Council's
Governance.

3. Background

- 3.1 There have been significant concerns raised recently of the potentially vulnerable position of all those who work directly with the public. In addition to this, locally there have been concerns raised as part of the decision-making processes for the Local Plan. Officers are therefore keeping matters under review and will issue safety guidance as and when necessary.
- 3.2 This Report is a brief note of the steps being taken to date. Clearly it is important that the Council ensures the health & safety of its elected members as well as of its staff.
- 3.3 The various steps referred to in this note will be considered for all Members (and any Member with concerns should contact the Public Health Coordinator (“PHC”) in the first instance).
- 3.3 However, it should be noted that neither Officers nor the Police are aware of any specific threat in this area.

4. Physical Security

- 4.1 The Police – through its Crime Prevention Design Advisor - are happy to carry out security assessments for any Member that is concerned. Contact in the first instance should be made with the PHC
- 4.2 Such assessments can also be coupled with the issue of lone worker monitoring devices if desired; such devices are in the process of being procured.

5. Contact Details on the Council’s Website

- 5.1 For those Members that request it, their contact details on the Council’s website can be changed to c/o Guildford Borough Council together with either the Council’s telephone number or (preferably, so as not to impede communication) Members’ mobile phone numbers. All Councillors are currently being given this option.

6. Information within Councillors’ Registers of Interest

- 6.1 Members will be aware that information about them can be found via their Registers of Interests; this was an important element of the Localism Act 2011 and the then governments drive for increased transparency & openness.
- 6.2 A Member may apply to the Monitoring Officer under S32 of the 2011 Act for certain information to be withheld if:

“Disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation”

- 6.3 It should be stressed the default position is that information in Registers should be published; the withholding of information under s32 is very much the exception. It is the view of the Monitoring Officer that for s32 to be engaged there should be a specific threat, a clear and present danger, to the Member concerned. It is not believed that the current heightened awareness of security is sufficient of itself to engage s32.
- 6.4. However, if any Member has concerns about this, they should contact the Monitoring Officer directly.

7. The Town Hall

Ann Milton MP uses the Town Hall for her surgeries. The Town Hall is owned by the Council. Officers will be reassessing the security arrangements for the Town Hall in consultation with the MP, her office & staff.

8. Other Measures

Following the death of Jo Cox MP, the DCLG and the LGA have been promoting the need to review or introduce safety guidance; with such guidance from Bradford Council and Northampton Council being highlighted. Officers will consider this guidance and whether this Council needs to take any further action in this regard.

9. Consultations

The Lead Councillor for Governance has been consulted on this Report.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

It is important that the Council is able to retain councillors from a variety of backgrounds: ensuring their health & safety contributes to this goal.

11. Financial Implications

There will be financial implications arising from the subject matter of this report. The lone worker monitoring devices cost £221.00 a year at this time, this will have to be addressed in liaison with the Head of Financial Services and in accordance with the Budget and the financial procedures.

12. Legal Implications

None other than those implicit within this Report

13. Human Resource Implications

None

14. Conclusion

Members are asked to note this Report

15. Background Papers

15.1 Legal case files

15.2 DCLG Permanent Secretary's Newsletter, Melanie Dawes, Issue 14, July 2016