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**Report to Clackmannanshire Council**

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**Date of Meeting: 16 December 2021**

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**Subject: Councillors' Safety**

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**Report by: Strategic Director – Partnership & Performance**

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**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council agreement on to engage with elected members on developing a suite of safety principles and guidance notes to enable councillors to discharge their democratic duties within the community as safely as possible.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that Council:
- Notes the draft principles in relation to councillor safety set out in this report.
  - Agrees that officers should set up a Members' workshop in the first part of 2022 to discuss and agree a set of safety principles and any support and training that may be necessary.

**3.0 Considerations**

- 3.1. Recent terror events including the murder of Sir David Amess, MP, in October 2021 and the suicide bombing in a taxi outside Liverpool Women's Hospital in November 2021 have led to the UK's security threat level being upgraded to Severe. This is an intelligence assessment that further terror attacks are likely.
- 3.2. The murder of Sir David Amess whilst conducting a constituency surgery follows the similarly brutal murder of Jo Cox, MP, outside a library where she was holding a surgery in June 2016. Both attacks appear to have been carried out by lone actors harbouring extreme ideological views.
- 3.3. There is no failsafe measure for protecting politicians in a liberal society where visibility, relationships and connections between elected members and the constituencies they represent is fundamental to our democracy. Recent events however have reignited the debate, nationally and locally about the

safety of members within communities. This includes recently at CoSLA Convention.

- 3.4. Elected members are not employees of the Council; therefore, they are not necessarily subject to the same policies and procedures that govern the employment relationship. This paper however recognises the risks faced by councillors in conducting their duties within communities and seeks to work towards establishing a broad framework of principles and guidance to mitigate these, based on guidance produced by CoSLA and the Local Government Association.
- 3.5. Draft principles are set out further below as a basis for discussion with elected members. The proposed next steps is that a Member's workshop is set up in the New Year to agree a set of principles that can be supported with guidance and training.

### **Draft Principles**

- 3.6. Draft principles have been developed as follows:
  - Councillors will be offered training to recognise and manage risks to personal safety that may arise. This will include risk assessment on arrival at a location, but training might also suitably include:
    - conflict resolution
    - conflict de-escalation
    - managing online harms.
  - Locations used for surgeries will be risk assessed by the Health & Safety Team and exit strategies identified for use should a councillor feel endangered.
  - Councillors should consider doing surgeries or constituent meetings by video conference, telephone or by prearranged appointment only.
  - Councillors will be provided with generic guidance and or self checklist for lone working, surgeries, home visits (if there is no viable alternative), dealing with callers to your home, attending public meetings and travelling to meetings.
  - Councillors will have a means of communicating with others, e.g. a mobile phone.
  - Councillors should not make home visits on their own unless there is no feasible alternative – a public, staffed venue for appointments is recommended.
  - Councillors should not advertise if they work from home (whether during Covid restriction or at any time) and the Council will seek to ensure that their home addresses remain private as far as is practical.

- A 'buddy' system will be devised that allows councillors to provide their whereabouts, so that support staff or their nominated 'buddy' knows where the councillor is and with whom. Consideration will be given to a system that:
    - Ensures councillors can make support staff aware of their plans for their working day
    - Enables 'safety calls' for meetings with a new constituent to check perceived safety, with a predetermined code word ready in place to summon help
    - Allows councillors to 'check out' indicating that meetings have been safely completed.
  - An emergency alarm or lone working system will be made available which will enable councillors to summon assistance if necessary. This will be tested, and a response protocol put in place.
  - Councillors are encouraged to establish effective working relationships and maintain open communication lines with Police Scotland Community Policing Teams.
  - An online portal (using the Council's SHE Assure health and safety system) will be made available to all councillors (following training) to report abuse or intimidation, whether online, in writing or in person.
- 3.7. No set of safety measures is fail safe and councillors must actively consider their personal safety throughout their work, committing to attend and apply relevant training and raising any safety concerns with support staff.

### **Cost Implications**

- 3.8. It is possible that cost implications may arise once a set of principles is agreed. The cost of the recommendations within this report will be met from within the existing, agreed resource base.

### **Conclusions**

- 3.9. Recent events have underscored the risk and threats posed to councillors in undertaking their duties within communities. Whilst no system is failsafe, the recommendations in this paper seek to work towards providing suitable and appropriate mitigation measures.

## **4.0 Sustainability Implications**

- 4.1. There are no direct sustainability issues at this stage.

## **5.0 Resource Implications**

- 5.1. *Financial Details*

5.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

5.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

5.4. *Staffing*

## 6.0 Exempt Reports

6.1. Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

## 7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all

Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life

Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential

Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

## 8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?  
Yes  No

## 9.0 Legality

9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

## 10.0 Appendices

10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none". None

## 11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes  (please list the documents below) No

### Author(s)

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### Approved by

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
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