

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Standards Committee  
Date: 04 March 2020  
Report for: Information  
Report of: Corporate Director of Governance & Community Strategy

### Report Title

Civility in Public Life a LGA Project

### Summary

In September 2019 the attached report (Appendix 1) was submitted to the Local Government Associations Board for consideration. The report laid out a work programme for a project to be undertaken by the LGA looking at Civility in Public Life. The report also linked the work on reviewing the model code of conduct for local authorities in line with the LGA's response to the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life to the work on civility in public life. This report asks the Standards Committee to note how the LGA are looking to address concerns raised by their members around intimidation of those in public office and in relation to the standards of public political discourse and debate. This report also asks the Standards Committee to note the LGA's timeline for creating a new model Code of Conduct and decide what, if any, involvement Trafford Council should have in this process.

### **Recommendations**

The Standards Committee are asked to note the report

### **Contact person for access to background papers and further information:**

Name: Alexander Murray  
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Background Papers: None

## **Implications**

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	None at this time
Financial	None
Legal Implications:	None
Equality/Diversity Implications	None
Sustainability Implications	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	None
Risk Management Implications	None at this time
Health and Safety Implications	None

### **1.0 Background**

1.1 The Standards Committee has raised concerns around the level of intimidation that Councillors in Trafford face on a number of occasions. Trafford has taken a number of actions in response to this including issuing guidance and arranging Training for Members.

### **2.0 LGA Report - Civility in Public Life – Project Proposal.**

2.1 The attached report (Appendix 1) comes from the LGA's Board meeting 11 September 2019. It shows that the issues seen within Trafford are part of a wider pattern of behaviour nationally. The report has two sections which look at different ways that the LGA is looking to tackle these issues.

2.2 The first section discusses the LGA's proposed project called Civility in Public Life. The report lays out the purpose, objectives, scope, leadership, opportunities and risks, and the components of the proposed programme of work. The proposed project will take a wide approach involving a number of partners and stakeholders however, a plan for engagement has not yet been made available. The parts of the project which are likely to be of most interest to the Standards Committee are:

- Improving support and guidance for member authorities, building on existing improvement and leadership programmes and the guide for councillors on handling intimidation
- The development of policy and legislative proposals with partners, government and stakeholders that address intimidation and standards of public discourse, particularly with a view to gaining a more consistent and robust response from the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). This includes the proposal for a new criminal offence for intimidating a person in public office and engagement with Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs).
- Exploring the potential for an informal council 'duty of care' towards its councillors as good practice.
- A revision of the local government model code of conduct with a view to promoting it as standard for all in public office.

2.3 The LGA's work in this regard is ongoing and a further report and update about this project will be brought to the Committee in due course.

2.4 The second section of the report focuses upon the creation of a new model code of conduct in response to recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The LGA have identified that this work aligns well with the Civility in Public Life project and so have added it as a work stream within the project. The report lays out why the LGA are conducting the review, how the review is to be conducted, who will be involved in the review, how the renewed model code of conduct will be agreed, and how consensus on adoption of the renewed model code of conduct will be developed. The section also presents the outline timetable for completion below:

- September 2019 – discussion with Leadership Board
- October 2019 – research begins
- November/December 2019 – research and engagement with stakeholders and councils including LGA workshop
- January 2020 – creating of proposal draft code and discussion with Leadership Board on 22 January
- February/March/April 2020 – consultation with member authorities and stakeholders
- May 2020 - bringing together draft code
- June 2020 – draft code to Leadership Board on 3 June for final discussion and approval
- July 2020 – final code launched at LGA General Assembly

2.5 Consultation with member authorities is to be conducted in February, March, or April 2020 but no dates have been confirmed. There will be an opportunity for Standards Committee to consider the proposals and to make a formal submission as part of the consultation process, should it wish to do so.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

3.1 The Standards Committee are asked to note the report.