

Agenda Item 18.

TITLE	Local Government Association (LGA) Campaign “Debate Not Hate”
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Standards Committee on 23 October 2023
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Raises the public awareness of the role of councillors and improves the responses and support for local councillors facing abuse or intimidation.

RECOMMENDATION

That Standards Committee:-

1. Notes the report and the LGA’s Campaign material at Appendix A; and
2. Advises on the specific priorities for the Council to consider in response to the LGA’s Campaign.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report informs Members about the Local Government Association (LGA)’s Debate Not Hate campaign which was launched in July 2023.

The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation. Details of the campaign material can be found at Appendix A.

The Council’s Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer fully support the campaign and wish to develop the Council’s response through the leadership and promotion of the Standards Committee.

Background

- 1.1 The LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation.
- 1.2 The LGA has recently (July 2023) published its report outlining how councils can better support councillors to prevent and handle abuse and includes principles for councils to consider, top tips and good practice case studies.
- 1.3 This report attaches the LGA report and findings – see Appendix A.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The Standards Committee is asked to note the Report. Some of the issues highlighted are included in the Committee's work programme, such as the social media policy, and the LGA recommendations will be referenced in the relevant reports.
- 2.2 Members may also wish to consider whether any other elements should be included in the work programme, referred to the Constitution Review Working Group for consideration as part of the Constitution Review or whether to recommend that officers develop other policies and procedures.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
This report does not of itself contribute to the Council's Priorities, however, the safety of members will support the democratic process and enable members to work to achieve those priorities.

Public Sector Equality Duty
This is an information report but any specific proposals will be informed by an equalities assessment as appropriate.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
There are no specific Climate Emergency implications of this report.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
LGA report

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Appendix A
LGA Campaign “Debate not Hate”

[Debate Not Hate: Ending abuse in public life for councillors | Local Government Association](#)