

Somerset County Council

County Council
– 1 March 2023



Requisitioned Items

Cabinet Member: All

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge – Head of Governance & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

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A. Debate Not Hate

The following requisitioned item will be proposed by Cllr Leigh Redman and seconded by Cllr Dawn Denton :



<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy, preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.

Somerset Council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy, and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

Somerset council therefore commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse

against councillors and officers and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does.

Somerset Council further agrees to sign up to the [LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign](#). The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.

In addition, this council resolves to:

- Write to the local Members of Parliament to ask them to support the campaign.
- Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians at every level.
- Ensure that Somerset Council has a clear reporting mechanism which councillors can use to monitor and record incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers.
- Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety.
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals, like MP's.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.