

**Blaby District Council  
Council**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	28 January 2025
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Debate not Hate</b> This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr. Terry Richardson - Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Elections and Governance Manager
<b>Strategic Themes</b>	Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

**1. What is this report about?**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the 'Debate not Hate: Councillor Handbook for personal safety and healthy debate' and for Council to endorse the Local Government Association Debate not Hate campaign public statement.

**2. Recommendation(s) to Council**

- 2.1 That Council endorses and supports the Local Government Association (LGA) Debate not Hate campaign by signing the LGA Debate not Hate public statement and that each councillor is invited to demonstrate the pledge by signing the statement following this Council Meeting
- 2.2 That the 'Debate Not Hate: Councillor Handbook for personal safety and healthy debate' be accepted.

**3. Reason for Decisions Recommended**

- 3.1 The intimidation, personal attack and harassment of local politicians undermines democracy – preventing elected councillors from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public trust in democratic processes. Endorsing the Debate not Hate campaign demonstrates the Council's public commitment to tackling the abuse of elected councillors.
- 3.2 The 'Debate Not Hate: Councillor Handbook for personal safety and healthy debate' gives councillors vital information on how to report abuse, what support is available and how to prevent abuse from happening.

**4. Matters to consider**

- 4.1 Background

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.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 the LGA published the report "Debate Not Hate: Ending abuse in public life for councillors". The report outlined how Councils can better support councillors. On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 the LGA launched a self-assessment toolkit to assist officers in assessing the arrangements that their Council has in place in relation to the abuse and intimidation of councillors. Blaby District Council takes seriously the safety and wellbeing of its councillors and used this toolkit to assess our current provision, and to inform the drafting of the 'Debate Not Hate: Councillor Handbook' and review of the support available for councillors. This handbook aims to provide councillors with a single set of guidance on how to report abuse, what support is available and how to prevent abuse from happening.

Given that the types of abuse faced by councillors can change in nature, including as a result of changing local circumstances, this document is designed to adapt with the changing needs of councillors. The support provision and reporting mechanisms will be regularly reviewed by officers, in conjunction with Group Leaders to ensure they continue to meet the requirements of councillors.

#### 4.2 Proposal

That the Council agrees to publicly commit to the message of the Debate Not Hate campaign by signing the LGA public statement and utilising the 'Debate Not Hate: Councillor Handbook for personal safety and healthy debate' to both prevent future abuse where possible, and to arm councillors with the knowledge of what to do should they experience abuse.

#### 4.3 Relevant Consultations

None.

#### 4.4 Significant Issues

In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern.

### 5. **Environmental impact**

No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report.

## **6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?**

- 6.1 Any costs incurred will relate only to the support provided to Councillors as detailed in the Handbook. This support will be on an ad hoc basis upon request and therefore cannot be accurately predicted. Any costs incurred will be met from existing budgets.

## **7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?**

7.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Councillors experience abuse and do not know how to report this or access support.	The Handbook provides a clear procedure for reporting abuse and the support available which will be proactively offered.

## **8. Other options considered**

- 8.1 Not producing the Handbook. However, this may result in councillors experiencing abuse and not knowing how to report it or access support. This option was therefore not appropriate.

## **9. Appendix**

- 9.1 Appendix A- Debate Not Hate: Councillor Handbook for personal safety and healthy debate

## **10. Background paper(s)**

- 10.1 <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/debate-not-hate-ending-abuse-public-life-councillors>
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/ending-abuse-public-life-council-self-assessment-toolkit>

## **11. Report author's contact details**

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