

Joint statement by the 22 council leaders in Wales:

Fair and respectful election campaign

At Friday's WLGA Executive Board, council leaders agreed to make a joint statement calling on all councillors and candidates at May's local elections to commit to a fair and respectful election campaign:

We are all too familiar with the abuse we see in our inboxes, on our social media feeds or see and hear on our streets or, worse, at our homes.

Politics should focus on facts and respectful debate about differences of policy or priorities, not insults or intolerance, misinformation or misogyny, discrimination or division.

We are committed to attracting more diverse people to consider standing for election. We need to reassure and support those candidates who are newer to democratic life, those who are conscious they are in the minority or have already experienced discrimination.

The council elections are about people who just want to contribute and who want to make a positive difference to our communities.

Unfortunately, we are seeing an increasing number of councillors and candidates being subjected to abuse, threats and intimidation.

As well as being totally unacceptable, this behaviour undermines the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate.

We therefore endeavour to treat everyone with courtesy, kindness and respect and, as leaders, we stand together to call for an end to abuse, intimidation and harassment of any kind. This is particularly relevant as we enter the key period in the run up to the local government elections in May.

We pledge to participate in a fair election campaign which is based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals.

We encourage all elected members and candidates in the forthcoming election to do the same. In addition, we will publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

We all have the right to carry out our civic duties without fear of being attacked or abused.

Any inappropriate behaviour, whether that be verbal, physical or in writing on social media, is totally unacceptable and action will be taken if deemed necessary.

Please be kind and fair in all that you say and do.