

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 25 September 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Civility in Public Life – Programme of Work
Purpose of Report:	To provide Standards Committee Members with details on the Programme of Work.
Report Owner:	Victoria Davidson, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	None required, this is a matter for Standards Committee.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Standards Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update Members of the Standards Committee on recent work associated with the Civility in Public Life Programme (“the programme”) being led by the Local Government Association (LGA) in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The programme continues to address abuse, intimidation and declining standards of discourse in public life, while promoting councillor safety, transparency and accountability. This report builds on the update provided in September 2024 and reflects UK-wide and Welsh developments reported during 2024/25, including the launch of the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol, the Debate Not Hate campaign evaluation, and a refreshed focus on online safety and democratic literacy. 	

Recommendation

1. THAT Standards Committee Members note the further progress being undertaken by the LGA, WLGA and the other UK associations on this programme of work.

Reason for Recommendation

1. For Committee's consideration and information.

1. Background

- 1.1 The LGA, WLGA, COSLA and NILGA continue to collaborate on the Civility in Public Life programme, meeting monthly and maintaining close partnership with the Jo Cox Foundation.
The purpose of the programme remains to:
 - Address intimidation of local government Members and officers,
 - Address standards of political discourse and behaviour, and
 - Provide support and advice to councils and councillors.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 UK-wide progress:
- 2.2 The LGA Civility in Public Life Steering Group Annual Report 2024/25 confirmed significant achievement including:
- 2.3 Delivery and evaluation of the Debate Not Hate campaign, showing sector wide positive impact. New workshops on personal safety and online harassment, reaching over 600 Councillors.
- 2.4 Publication of the Ending Abuse in Public Life Toolkit for Councils.
- 2.5 Launch of the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol with dedicated police contacts in each force for councillor safety, alongside additional funding for responses to intimidation. Continued engagement with Ofcom and government following the Online Safety Act 2023, pressing for risk-based regulation of digital platforms and stronger action on harassment.
- 2.6 Lobbying for long term Standards regime reform and for a permanent central unit to monitor intimidation and abuse of politicians. The Steering Group has set 2025/26 priorities around influencing forthcoming legislation (including the UK Devolution Bill), strengthening police and justice system responses, tackling misinformation, and promoting democratic literacy.
- 2.7 Wales - The WLGA continues to prioritise Civility in Public Life in its Corporate Plan 2024-27. In January 2024, the WLGA co-hosted a national event with Welsh Government to examine abuse in politics, informed by lived experiences of councillors and officers.

- 2.8** In May 2025, the LGA sent an online survey to all Councillors in England and Wales to investigate the extent to which abuse and intimidation remains rife in public life, as well the nature and scale of abuse and intimidation. The Debate Not Hate campaign was launched following the finding in the 2022 Councillors' Census that seven in 10 Councillors reported having experienced abuse or intimidation. The [findings of the survey](#) are now published on the LGA Website.
- 2.9** Guidance on bullying and harassment and personal safety for Members continues to be updated with council providing counselling and liaising with local police to ensure support.
- 2.10** Welsh Standards Committees, including this Council's, continue to monitor compliance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 duty on political group leaders to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.
- 2.11** Scotland - COSLA has launched the Raising the Standard initiative with the Jo Cox Foundation, encouraging Councillors to sign up to a civility pledge based on honesty, respect, and compassion. Action plans are being developed to embed these principles in local political culture.
- 2.12** Northern Ireland - NILGA remains an active participant in the four-nation programme, contributing to joint lobbying and shared resources, and aligning with LGA/WLGA/COSLA campaigns. Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.
- 2.13** A North Wales Democracy in Local Government Event is scheduled for the 9th October 2025 to enhance collaboration and connection within local government. The event, hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government will focus on: Collaborative learning and sharing of best practices, cultivating a healthy culture of scrutiny, and creating a safe environment, for respectful debate fundamental to democracy. The event is for: Members of principal councils and officers, Corporate Joint Committees, Chairs and members of Standards Committees and Scrutiny Committees. The event will be hosted at the Conwy Business Centre, Llandudno Junction, Conwy LL31 9XX and members can register for a place [here](#).

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The role of the Standards Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct directly supports the principles of good governance, long-term resilience of democratic processes, and community well-being.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

5.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

5.2 The Council has a statutory duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.3 The Council has a statutory duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation.

6. Background Papers

[Member Meeting Report](#) - LGA Annual Report Civility in Public Life Steering Group and 2025/26 priorities – June 2025

[Jo-Cox-Civility-Commission-report.pdf](#) - No Place in Politics – Tackling Abuse and Intimidation – A Call to Action

[Civility in public life: A Global Executive Live Panel reflects on challenges and solutions - LGiU](#)
- Local Government Information Unit