

## **COUNCIL – 19 OCTOBER 2022**

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

#### **Submitted to Council in Accordance with the Council Procedural Rules**

##### **1 DEBATE NOT HATE**

###### **Public Statement**

"The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election, and undermine public trust in democratic processes.

Seven in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months and councillors reported feeling that abuse is becoming more common and increasing in severity.

Debating and disagreeing with one another has always been, and will continue to be, a healthy part of democracy. However, the right engagement matters and abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory and has no place in politics.

We are calling on local government leaders, the Government and relevant partners, like the police, political parties and social media companies to come together through a government convened working group to produce and implement an action plan that addresses the abuse and intimidation of elected members and candidates and ensures their safety while they fulfil their democratic roles"

The full report sets out the findings and recommendations for the future of local democracy and can be found [here](#)

###### **Executive Summary**

Councillors are at the centre of local democracy. Elected from amongst their local community and forming a vital link between councils and residents, it is a privilege and responsibility to be elected to public office. However, increasing levels of abuse and intimidation in political and public discourse are negatively impacting politicians and democracy at local and national levels.

Rights to object and constructive challenge are both key components of democracy, but abuse and intimidation cross the line into unacceptable behaviour and serve to silence democratic voices and deter people from engaging with politics.

There is a considerable volume of evidence of the impact of abuse, intimidation, and aggression at a national level, including extreme incidents such as the murder of Jo Cox MP and Sir David Amess MP.

To understand the impacts on local government and councillors, the LGA launched a call for evidence of abuse and intimidation of councillors in October 2021. This report summarises the findings from the first six months of

the call for evidence. It sets out what more could be done to improve support and responses to abuse and intimidation of councillors and reverse national trends around abuse and intimidation that are harmful to democracy.

## Key findings

Respondents to the call for evidence were asked to share their personal experiences of abuse and intimidation as councillors or candidates or abuse of councillors they had witnessed. This included [quantitative questions](#) looking at frequency, location and circumstances of abuse. In addition, respondents were asking for details about triggers of abuse, impacts of abuse personally and more widely, and reflections on support and responses from relevant agencies.

The following themes were identified in the responses to the call for evidence:

- **Variability of support** – The support offered by councils, political parties, and the police varied across the country. In particular, respondents identified a lack of proactive support from some councils and responses from some police forces to threats made against councillors and their families.
- **Targeted abuse** – Evidence from the qualitative responses indicated that councillors and candidates with protected characteristics were more likely to receive personalised abuse. Misogyny, racism and homophobia were particularly highlighted in the responses.
- **Personal and democratic impacts** – Abuse and intimidation can significantly impact councillors and their families, and the wider community. Several respondents described the negative impacts of ongoing abuse on their mental health and wellbeing. In addition, respondents supported the idea that abuse can impact councillors' willingness to stand for re-election or deter others from considering standing for public office.
- **Vulnerability of councillors** – Many respondents highlighted the visibility and accessibility of councillors in their local community, particularly when councillors' home addresses are available online. Councillors are therefore vulnerable to physical abuse, particularly compared to national politicians who may have greater protections and access to specialist police support.
- **Normalisation** – There is a growing feeling that abuse and intimidation, particularly online, are becoming normalised. Attitudes around councillors expecting abuse and being expected to manage abuse with little support were prevalent in the responses.

## **MOTION**

This Council supports the Debate not Hate Campaign, signs the public statement and calls for a government convened working group to tackle this issue

## **2 FAIR TAX DECLARATION**

**Proposed by Councillor P Williams and Seconded by Councillor N Mannion**

Some 25 local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland have so far signed up to the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration - [Councils for Fair Tax Declaration - Fair Tax Foundation](#)

This commits councils to do what they can to encourage fair tax practices among supplier companies when buying goods and services and calls for more powers to exclude companies with links to tax havens from their procurement processes.

Research commissioned by the Fair Tax Foundation from DatLab reveals that between 2014 and 2019 some 17.5% of UK public procurement contracts were won by businesses with connections to a tax haven. Those contracts were worth a combined value of £37.5bn. Furthermore, the UK loses an estimated £17bn in corporation tax revenues as a result of profit shifting alone.

Recent polls show that two thirds of people (66%) questioned believe that the Government and local councils should consider a company's ethics and how they pay their tax alongside criteria such as value for money or quality of service when awarding contracts.

Our neighbouring authority, Cheshire West and Chester has already signed up to the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration, along with authorities as varied as Edinburgh, Oxford, Lincoln, Reading, Cannock Chase and Exeter.

## **MOTION**

Recognising that Cheshire East Council already meets some of the requirements of the Fair Tax Declaration, Council resolves to sign-up to the Declaration in its entirety.

### **3 SAFE NIGHT-TIME TRAVEL FOR WORKERS**

**Proposed by Councillor L Smith and Seconded by Councillor S Handley**

This Council notes that;

- Shift work is widespread in many industries, particularly hospitality, as well as health and care workers, retail , cleaning, security and porter staff and can often entail late-night working;
- Many workers, especially women, are increasingly worried about their safety travelling to and from work at night

This Council believes that;

- While employers may feel their duty of care to staff ends when an employee finishes a shift, they also need to take into consideration journeys home, especially during unsocial hours;
- The weakness of enforcement of the law against sexual assault, including up-skirting, on public transport is appalling and only 2% of victims go on to report sexual harassment on public transport;
- The Get Me Home Safely campaign - [Get ME Home Safely | Make Our Communities & Workplaces Safer](#) , which calls on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night, is greatly needed and should be supported;
- Greater numbers of trained staff and stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment on public transport are urgently needed;

This Council will;

- Use its powers - as others such as East Dunbartonshire Council - and adopt a policy that our licensing board will ensure the process for approving late night licences will be linked to the provision of free transport home.
- Calls on Cheshire East Council to use its powers - as others have done – to allow our licensing board include additional criteria when considering late opening applications from licensed premises dependent on venues providing free transport home for night shift employees. This will significantly benefit the safety and wellbeing of hospitality workers, particularly women, who often cannot afford, or access, safe transport options late at night and benefit our community.
- Publicly call for improvement to late night and off-peak transport service provision and use the Government’s Safety of Women at Night Fund to provide extra night services, as well as work with employers to use the fund for supplementary taxi travel.
- Publicly call for the lowering of fares and opposition to any cuts to public transport funding and for our local council to use their powers and political platforms to achieve this.
- Publicly call for the municipal ownership of buses in order to lower prices and improve service provision, especially for night-time and off-peak services and endeavour to work with Greater Manchester Combined Authority as they move forward with bus franchising using powers under the Bus services Act 2017

- Make representation to appropriate regional and national levels of governance to bring forward national minimum standards for taxis and private hire as per the recommendations of the Task and Finishing group and in support of this motion and its demands on behalf of our local community.

## **4 PUBLIC ART CONSULTATIONS**

### **Proposed by Councillor A Gage and Seconded by Councillor S Edgar**

This Council resolves that all works of public art undertaken by the council or works of public art to be undertaken by third parties on council owned land or assets should be subject to a public consultation of residents within the affected settlement area.

Where singular or multiple artwork option(s) are proposed the consultation should provide the consultees with the option to oppose the proposed artwork.

The consultation should last no less than 21 days and all results should be made readily available to the Cheshire East public before a final decision is made. The consultation will act in an informatory and advisory capacity with all final decisions on the commissioning of public art to be decided by the relevant body of democratically elected members as defined by the council's constitution.

## **5 TREE PLANTING**

### **Moved by Councillor T Dean and Seconded by Councillor Q Abel**

#### **Background**

This council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and has agreed a range of actions to meet its aims to become a carbon neutral council. This council has committed to significant tree planting across the borough:

- The council has supported and directly arranged tree planting programmes on its open spaces as part of its objective to plant the equivalent of 100 football pitches of trees.
- The council's corporate plan states it will introduce a policy on highways land and introduce a borough wide tree policy.
- The council's Carbon Neutral Action Plan notes that tree planting has benefits for biodiversity, the environment individuals, society and the economy.

Town and Parish Councils are also working to undertake tree planting programmes in their communities but have been limited in their ambitions by the refusal of Cheshire East Highways to grant permission for tree and hedge planting on land held as highway.

In addition to the obvious environmental benefits of tree planting, and the enhancement they offer to the street scene, trees along streets offer additional direct health benefits:

- Reducing air pollution
- Reducing stress and improving mental health

- Reducing noise levels
- Cooling air in summer
- Reducing UV radiation exposure
- Reducing wind speeds thereby reducing heat loss from buildings

(Source: Health Benefits of Street Trees, Forestry Commission 2011)

Knutsford Town Council has been seeking permission from Cheshire East Highways to undertake tree planting and hedgerow creation on land held as highway since 2019. It has routinely been advised by senior councillors that the council is reviewing its policy but to date no change in policy has been forthcoming. Cheshire East Highways officers have advised the town council that it cannot permit new planting in the highway due to this council's policy and that this council needs to change its policy for highway officers to be able to assess and permit planting.

This prohibition on planting has also prevented the replacement of trees which have been required to be felled meaning the number of street trees in the borough is actively decreasing.

### **Notice of Motion**

That this council:

- a) recognises the significant benefits of street trees and is committed to increasing the number of street trees across the borough
- b) will work with Town and Parish Councils to identify suitable locations for tree planting and hedgerow creation
- c) will ensure its policies require rather than prevent the replacement of felled street trees where appropriate to do so

## **6 COST OF LIVING**

**Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor T Dean**

### **We propose that:**

Cheshire East Council is determined to ensure the protection of the residents of Cheshire East from the cost-of-living challenge driven by Covid and Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine.

These combined effects have led to rising energy prices and our residents facing significant cost of living pressures.

This council is cognisant of the significant work that the Government has done to support the residents of Cheshire East. It notes the benefit that the two-year energy price guarantee and the certainty it will give to residents across Cheshire East as well as the enormous help that the £400 energy bill discount will provide to every household.

It further notes the additional support of the £650 cost of living payment for those in receipt of means-tested benefits, £300 for pensioner households and £150 for recipients of disability benefits in Cheshire East.

Cheshire East Council thanks the Government for providing equivalent support for those not on the mains energy grid and the protection of jobs in Cheshire East that the six-month protection for businesses will provide.

Cheshire East Council further welcomes the Government's longer-term plans that will maximise domestic energy produced through North Sea oil and gas, as well as nuclear energy and renewables that will contribute towards securing energy independence in the long term and ensure that Cheshire East will never be subject to energy price hikes caused by illegal wars again.

**Cheshire East Council therefore resolves to:**

- 1 Work with the Government to ensure that it delivers the much-appreciated support to the residents of Cheshire East as quickly as possible.
- 2 Proactively identify those most in need of support in Cheshire East and ensure that they access all the Government support for which they are eligible.
- 3 Identify further local opportunities in Cheshire East for energy generation to help increase the supply of energy to further aid the long-term lowering of prices, support the Government's aim of domestic energy security and create local jobs.

**7 CRITERIA FOR THE INSTALLATION OF ZEBRA CROSSINGS AND LIGHT CONTROLLED CROSSINGS**

**Proposed by Councillor S Akers Smith and Seconded by Councillor L Anderson**

**Background**

Traffic light timings are presently timed to prioritise traffic flows. In line with the councils climate change ambitions they all need reviewing especially if they are just to cross the road rather than a junction, to change either immediately the button is pressed or within 5 seconds. Waiting at a light controlled lights in the pouring rain does little to encourage active travel. In addition we need many more zebra crossings to facilitate crossing our fast moving roads, zebra crossings provide a safer point to cross the road rather than no crossing point at all. In the borough and in particular Congleton we have so few crossings it doesn't support the council's ambition to get more people out of their cars.

Presently light controlled crossings are put in place through the planning process or in response to a killed or serious injury collision. Can this be amended to put in a light controlled crossing based on community support and support from the parish council? Every town in the borough needs more road crossing points and the criteria for putting them in stops them from being installed.

In 2021/2022 out of a request for 95 crossings, 56 were looked into and only 1 crossing was installed. The reason is the criteria for road crossings is footfall, but there isn't the footfall because there isn't a road crossing. This clearly



needs looking at because I don't believe any councillor or resident of this borough would prefer someone to die before installing a road crossing.

### **Motion**

That a report be prepared for the relevant Committee which will enable the Council to review the criteria for traffic light timings and to review the criteria for the installation of zebra crossings and light controlled crossings with the ambition to installing more each year.

## **8 HYDRAULIC FRACTURING ('FRACKING').**

### **Proposed by Councillor N Mannion**

Last month the Government announced the lifting of the moratorium on fracking that had been in place since 2019 following earth tremors and environmental concerns.

It is understood that certain areas of Cheshire East may have geological conditions, shale rock, suitable for the hydraulic fracturing process to extract shale gas.

As admitted by the British Geological Survey, the risk of large tremors from fracking 'remains a scientific challenge for the geoscience community'.

In addition to the risk of earth tremors there remain significant unresolved environmental concerns around the contamination of ground water and associated public health and safety issues.

Therefore, it is proposed that:

1. Cheshire East Council not support any activity associated with the exploration, extraction or storage and transportation of shale gas on land it owns, leases or manages.
2. That where necessary, the council's environmental, mineral and planning policies be updated to deter all activities associated with fracking and shale gas exploration, extraction or storage and transportation within Cheshire East.
3. Local Members of Parliament be lobbied to support this position.