



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Supporting Councillors with abuse & intimidation

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Local Context

- Council commissioned an independent, judge-led Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in 2018, with work commencing in 2019;
- Many reports of historic CSE within Telford dating back to the 1970's; (pre the council creation in 1997)
- Significant press coverage at the time, particularly in national tabloid papers
- Community tensions arose
- Abusive and vitriolic social media activity including pictures of senior Councillors, Council Officers and elected officials – of all parties
- Anti-social behaviour at Council offices;
- A social media 'film' broadcast targeting members of the community, police officers and council staff and elected members

Our journey

- Joined the Council in 2019
 - Personal safety training for Councillors every 2 years;
 - Redaction of addresses in Register of Interests;
 - Councillor safety was not a police issue
- Cultural challenge around Members not being employees – Leader keen to see more done;
- Shift in approach from early 2020
 - Risk assessments for councillor activities eg. holding ward surgeries, attending meetings, meeting with individuals;
 - Provided officer support to liaise with police;
 - Blocking some registration numbers with DVLA to prevent searches being carried out to identify drivers and addresses

Our journey

- 2021 – 2022 saw an increase in risk for Members:-
 - Small number of protests against Asian men exploiting white women;
 - ‘Social media film’ focused on Telford;
 - Councillors mentioned by name in videos posted online inciting hatred;
 - Social media activity continued;
 - A flurry of incidents (over a short period of time) of car fires within some communities in the Borough;
 - Some community tensions

Our journey

- Reviewed our support for Members again:-
 - Roll out of Staysafe app;
 - Health & Wellbeing provision = staff;
 - Police liaison at senior level (including critical challenge and raising expectations);
 - Security personnel at public meetings;
 - Risk rated all Members and then introduced additional measures informed by that risk rating, including measures at elected members homes

How risk rating informed our response

Risk rating 1 – 3 which indicated support offered:-

Level 1

Package of signs to display on property;

Level 2

Package of signs to display on property

Video doorbell

Risk meeting with H&S advisor

Updated risk assessments

Advice provided regarding reducing risk factors

How risk rating informed our response

Level 3

- Risk safety meeting;
- Police home safety & security visit;
- Staysafe panic alarms for homes and vehicles;
- Police flags on addresses and telephone numbers for immediate response;
- Updated risk assessments;
- Liaison with social media platforms to remove content

How risk rating informed our response

Level 3

- Police SPOC to refer concerns and complaints to (with support from officers);
- CCTV at home addresses;
- Police risk assessment of high profile roles;
- Advice on reducing risks;
- Contacted TPC clerks to ensure addresses of Borough councillors were redacted;
- Enforcement officers engaging with Democratic Services;
- Police 'safe & well' checks randomly

Takeaways

- Persistence, persistence, persistence.....
 - Persistence with Police at senior level is crucial;
 - Persistence with social media platforms;
 - Persistence with organisational challenge;
- ‘Reporting buttons’ on social media platforms are ineffective – write to legal teams;
- Comms colleagues’ support essential for social media posts;
- Importance of evidence;
- ‘Hearts and minds’ of the organisation

Thank you for listening!

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