



## Members' Guide:

### Personal safety when meeting with residents

#### **Purpose**

The Council has a responsibility for ensuring the safety of Members whilst on Council business, as it does for Officers.

A central role Members have is to keep in touch with their residents. This includes helping people with any problems they might have. Overwhelmingly, such contacts are non problematic and are often rewarding for the residents involved. However, this guide sets out some simple personal safety measures and tips which could be taken to prevent and to deal with those rare circumstances when Members may find themselves in potentially difficult situations with residents.

#### **Using suitable meeting rooms**

To ensure the full safety of Members when meeting with residents on their own, it is advised that where possible these meetings take place in an area of the Civic Centre where there is a security presence at all times.

Members sometimes use the meeting rooms within Group Offices, but these areas are isolated and potentially risky and may leave a Member vulnerable.

The advice is that Members, when meeting with residents on their own, should ensure they inform the Group Office's Secretariat, who will then book one of the meeting rooms by the main reception at the Civic Centre. These rooms have glass windows and are located nearby Security Staff, who can assist when required.

Using such rooms near main reception also limits the number people wandering through the Civic Centre and enables the Reception and Security staff to know the names of residents visiting to meet with a Member.

#### **Concerned about meeting a resident?**

A number of the meeting rooms within the Civic Centre are fitted with panic alarms which can provide assistance to Members if they are faced with a potential threat from an individual. If Members are meeting with a resident whom they have not met before, or they believe there may be the possibility of the individual being very frustrated or upset, it is advised that as a precaution they meet in a room where there is a panic alarm.

The Group Offices' Secretariat has a list of meeting rooms within the Civic Centre which have panic alarms.

#### **Ward Surgeries**

The majority of Ward Surgeries are held in public places such as libraries, community centres, one stop shops or the Civic Centre.

However, the arrangements each Member makes for Ward Surgeries will vary according to local circumstance and it is inevitable that not all premises which

are used for Surgeries will meet best security practice.

As such, Members should consider the following simple measures which may prevent against any potential risk:

- If possible do not attend surgeries alone in an otherwise empty building
- Try and ensure that a fellow Member, an officer of the Council or a member of the local party are in close attendance
- In the case of female Members - when they are meeting on their own with a constituent(s), they be accompanied by another Member
- Consider more suitable places for holding Ward Surgeries, such as Council buildings, e.g. libraries
- Surgeries should be held as far as possible during operating hours to ensure there is a security presence
- The Surgery meeting room should be in view of the reception or the public area

### **Members' Car Park**

Whilst Security staff keep an eye on the Members' Car Park at the Civic Centre, in the evening it can still feel a vulnerable area for Members when they use it. The Facilities Manager advises that Members should contact security staff if they feel they would like escorting down to the car park when leaving.

Conservative Group Secretariat:  
01895 250316 (0316)

Labour Group Secretariat:  
01895 250780 (0780)

Councillors Support & Development  
Manager 01895 556250 (6250)

### **Personal Information**

Relevant contact details of all Members are available on the Council's website for residents to use. Some Councillors provide their own personal home or mobile number, others give the Group Office telephone number as their contact.

Members should know that it is their personal choice over which are the best contact details to make public for residents.

Members can seek further advice from their Group Office Secretariat on the do's and don'ts in relation to their personal contact details

### **Training for Members**

Training sessions can be provided to give Members guidance on how to deal with conflict resolution when meeting with residents, helping diffuse difficult situations.

### **Emergency Telephone Numbers**

Members will be provided with a business card which will contain all the emergency telephone numbers, such as emergency security and designated first aiders (including out of hours numbers).

Also all meeting rooms within the Civic Centre will have on display a list of emergency telephone numbers to ensure all Members are aware of who to contact in the case of an emergency.

#### **Security Staff Telephone Numbers**

Office hours (Extension 0616)

Extension 2222 (in the case of emergencies)

First Aid (Extension 0616)