

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Thursday, 22 August 2024

Barriers to Elected Office 2024

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the outcomes from the annual survey of elected members.
- 1.2 Note the actions and recommendations arising out of the elected member workshops.
- 1.3 Agree that the recommendations arising out of the workshops will be actioned as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.
- 1.4 Note that some recommendations arising out of the workshops are acknowledged to be aspirational and would require funding to be allocated as part of the Council's ongoing budget and, therefore, will not be progressed until such time as an appropriate budget is agreed by the Council for these actions.

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Barriers to Elected Office 2024

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks to inform Committee on the outcomes from elected member workshops, supported by anonymous elected member surveys.
- 2.2 Included within this report are details of actions taken by the Council to address, or at least mitigate, some of the barriers to elected office which have been highlighted by elected members throughout this process.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting held on 17 March 2022, the Council considered a Notice of Motion relating to Barriers to Elected Office. The decision of the Council can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 Arising out of that decision, the Committee agreed, at its meeting held on 17 January 2023, to
 - (a) commission a voluntary survey of elected members to provide data on the status of current councillors with respect to protected characteristics, and
 - (b) establish a series of independently facilitated cross party workshops to (i) consider actions that could be undertaken at a Council level and within political parties at candidate selection, to increase the diversity of the councillors as a representative democratic body; and (ii) propose changes to working practices for councillors to support full involvement and limit barriers to participation.
- 3.3 The report included details of a survey undertaken by the Scottish Government at the time of the 2022 local government elections, which all candidates were asked to complete, and which provided statistics relating to the diversity of candidates across Scotland.

4. Main Report

4.1 Following the decision of the Committee in January 2023:

- 4.1.1 An anonymous survey of elected members took place [between 7 March and 4 May 2023] seeking their experiences which they considered were barriers to elected office. The scope of the survey included prior to their election to the Council when they were candidates, and what barriers they have experienced since their election to the Council. The findings of this survey were shared with political Group Leaders/Co-Conveners and the then Chief Executive. A commitment was provided to open the survey on an annual basis.
- 4.1.2 Only 13 out of 63 (20.6%) elected members completed the 2023 survey, therefore, the responses received should be considered as representing the views of a minority of members. However, this does not mean that officers have not given them due consideration.
- 4.1.3 A second survey opened on 6 May 2024 for a period of six weeks. The questions asked differed from the original exercise in that it did not seek information on the experience of candidates for election, as the responses were unlikely to have changed from that given the year previously.
- 4.1.4 23 out of 63 (37%) elected members completed the 2024 survey.
- 4.1.5 Due to the personal data which was provided by some respondents to the surveys, and that some elected members could be identified through their responses, and in order to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, the responses received are unable to be shared, but the issues raised which are specific to individuals will be reviewed by officers to identify possible solutions.
- 4.1.6 Alongside the surveys, a series of elected member workshops took place which were facilitated by the Improvement Service and COSLA. Details regarding the workshop dates, subjects covered and elected member attendance can be found at Appendix 2. Following these workshops, a list of recommendations and actions to be taken forward was agreed by those members attending the final workshop on 30 May 2024.

4.2 Results of the Elected Member Surveys – 2023 and 2024

Pre-Election Period

- 4.2.1 As part of the elected member survey that was completed in 2023, one of the questions related to the pre-election period and the barriers which successful candidates experienced. Many of the responses related to abuse, mostly online, from electors and to the time commitment required to undertake such activities as canvassing, especially for those in employment and/or with caring responsibilities.

- 4.2.2 Officers have considered this issue in some detail and have concluded that it is very difficult for the Council to take any actions which could remove these barriers, or at least mitigate them. The issue of elector abuse is one that is most effectively tackled at a national level through the creation of, for example, a campaign by the appropriate national agency. The Council will, though, explore appropriate communications it could send to support any such national campaign. In terms of time available for individuals to be able to undertake pre-election activities, again, officers consider that this is an area in which the Council can only have limited influence. The Council will encourage political parties to support and advise candidates on ensuring that they maintain an appropriate balance between their election duties and their home and work life and their caring responsibilities.
- 4.2.3 The Council will continue its efforts to encourage all candidates standing for election to complete the Scottish Government's diversity survey.
- 4.2.4 Taking this into account, the 2024 survey removed questions relating to pre-election given that the responses would be the same as in 2023.

Post-Election

- 4.2.5 The 2024 survey and the majority of the 2023 survey focussed on areas which the Council could influence and related to members undertaking their councillor role. The responses received fell into two distinct categories, namely (a) behaviour, and (b) processes.
- (a) Behaviour
- 4.2.6 A number of responses were received which indicated that some elected members had experienced discrimination based on a number of factors, but specifically gender, race and disability. These are issues which must be taken seriously and the Council supports any elected member or officer who experiences discrimination or abuse based upon any characteristic.
- 4.2.7 Where some responses refer to a lack of respect for differing views, this should be read within the context of political debate which happens at Council and committee meetings and which, in some instances, can be robust in nature. This is considered part of the political process which takes place in all local authorities and so, without elected members self-managing their behaviour within such debate to ensure that respect is given to differing views, it is difficult for the Council to regulate this where Standing Orders, the Councillors' Code of Conduct and legislation have not been breached.
- 4.2.8 Where an elected member feels that they have been treated in a way by another elected member which is outside of the above, then they have recourse. In the vast majority of cases this will be to the Ethical Standards Commissioner, which is a body external to the Council. However, with elected members not being employees of the authority, and no legal basis on which to do so, there is no [internal] process open to enforce or punish poor behaviour by elected members.

4.2.9 Where an elected member has experienced behaviour from officers which falls below the expected standard, then they should submit a complaint to the appropriate Executive Director who will ensure that the matter is investigated and, if required, action taken under the appropriate policy.

(b) Processes

4.2.10 The survey raised a number of issues which elected members stated impacted their ability to perform their duties, and these related to the way the Council undertakes its business, especially for formal Council and Committee meetings. For example, the time available to read and understand meeting papers and that some required reports were received beyond the date when the agenda and other reports were published.

4.2.11 In February 2024, the Council agreed changes to Standing Orders - which took effect in August 2024 - which doubles the length of time prior to meetings which agendas and reports will be published. Members will now have six working days to digest meeting papers. It is considered that this an appropriate length of time for publication of papers whilst ensuring that the reports are up to date and still relevant.

4.2.12 At the same time, all services were reminded of the need to ensure that deadlines for submission of committee reports were adhered to and, also, as a result of the changes to Standing Orders, Conveners will now be required to declare an agenda item as urgent to allow its consideration where the report had not been made available at the same time as the agenda for that meeting.

4.2.13 It is accepted that there may be a period for these enhancements to meeting processes to bed-in, however it is considered that these will make a significant improvement for elected members to be able to have the space and time to read and digest reports in advance of meetings.

4.2.14 A further concern raised in the survey was the timing of formal meetings, and their format. All formal meetings are now held on a hybrid basis, which means that all elected members should be able to attend, even if they have difficulty being physically present in the City Chambers. However, the start time for meetings is a matter for the Council to decide and it is within its gift to amend Standing Orders to regulate meeting times or, to agree to amend the start time for individual meetings as and when consideration is given to the timetable of meetings. For ease of reference, the Council unanimously agreed the dates and times of its meetings for the period August 2024 to June 2025 at its meeting held on 8 February 2024.

4.2.15 Within the survey responses, issue was made with the length of meetings and that allowance should be made for those who require breaks. Committee's attention is drawn to Standing Order 9.2 which requires a ten-minute break be taken every two hours, although it is accepted that the

practice is to have such a break at the end of an item of business which may be earlier or later than the two-hour mark. However, this process ensures that all members can have breaks during proceedings to enable them to continue considering business.

4.3 Workshops

- 4.3.1 Six workshops have been held, with details of the dates, subject matter and member attendance, available at Appendix 2 to this report. These workshops were facilitated by the Improvement Service and assisted by COSLA and were provided free of charge to the Council.
- 4.3.2 As outlined in Appendix 2 to this report, each of the workshop sessions covered a separate theme, namely Gender, Disability, Income and Caring Responsibilities and Race, Religion and Ethnicity. Discussion and areas of development were recorded and, for the final workshop held on 30 May 2024, a series of recommendations for future action were presented and considered.
- 4.3.3 Elected members attending the final workshop agreed that some of the proposed actions were ambitions rather than an expectation of immediate action.
- 4.3.4 Details of the workshop recommendations and management response to how these may be achieved are attached at Appendix 3 to this report.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The annual survey of elected members will be undertaken in 2025, 2026 and 2027 with the results feeding into the induction process for new elected members following the local government elections in May 2027.
- 5.2 Officers will progress the actions as listed in Appendix 3 to this report, although there are some which require funding to be made available through the Council's future budgets for them to be able to be implemented, therefore, if that does not happen, these actions cannot be fully actioned.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no financial impact arising from the contents of this report. However, some of the aspirations detailed within Appendix 3 to this report would require funding to be allocated in future Council budgets.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Appropriate actions listed in Appendix 3 to the report will or may already have, where these actions are shown as complete, assist elected members to more easily engage in formal meetings and to digest published information.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There is no impact arising from the contents of this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The issues highlighted by elected members in both the annual survey and the workshops do not amount to a lack of compliance and/or governance, however, enacting the actions listed in Appendix 3 to this report will enable elected members to more effectively carry out their governance role.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 A copy of the report considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 17 January 2023 can be found by following this link [Policy and Sustainability Committee - 17 January 2023](#)

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Decision of the Council at its meeting held on 17 March 2022
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Dates, subjects and elected member attendance information for facilitated workshops
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – Recommendations and actions arising out of the workshops

Decision of the Council – 17 March 2022

- 1) To note that in May 2017 only 29% of Councillors elected across Scotland were women, although they make up 50% of the population.
- 2) To note that subsequently the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) set up a Barriers to Elected Office Special Interest Group (BEO SIG) to look at ways of addressing this issue. The remit was later expanded to include not just women facing to barriers to office but all under-represented groups.
- 3) To note that the SIG had taken a long term approach, and although it had had some notable successes, including undertaking research that clearly identified barriers and a commitment from Ben Macpherson, Minister for Social Security and Local Government, to a joint independent review with COSLA of Councillors remuneration to be undertaken at pace this year, there was much still to be achieved before election results reflected the make up of the population.
- 4) To therefore agree to continue to work to remove barriers that faced women and all under-represented groups in standing as candidates in local Authority elections and carryout the role of an elected councillor.
- 5) To request a short report, giving a breakdown of the numbers of candidates and elected councillors by gender and by under-represented groups to Policy and Sustainability Committee, (or the relevant Committee) at the first meeting after the 5th May election, to inform discussions and further action to be taken.
- 6) To request that this report includes details of work that could be undertaken at a Council level to meet our collective commitment to increase the diversity of the councillor group and to ensure that CEC is a representative democratic body serving all of Edinburgh's communities.

Barriers to Elected Office – Workshops

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Elected Members in Attendance</u>
2 August 2023	Introduction	8
12 October 2023	Gender	8
9 November 2023	Disability	8
29 February 2024	Income and Caring Responsibilities	5
19 April 2024	Race, Religion and Ethnicity	6
30 May 2024	Conclusion and Consider Outcomes	5

Recommendations and Actions Arising from Workshops

	<u>Recommendation/Action</u>	<u>Management Response and Proposed Actions</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
Theme: Members supported with adaptations for disabilities/medical conditions/caring responsibilities			
1	<p>A process should be developed and implemented for induction where a personal support plan/discussion is offered to members to disclose disabilities, caring responsibilities, medical conditions etc. if they wish, recognising that it would be up to each member to decide who the information is shared with. This would be designed with and agreed by elected members, to ensure the roles and boundaries between members and officers isn't blurred.</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> Elected Members receive more adaptations, more quickly to help them carry out their roles and responsibilities, while reducing stigma in political life towards disability, caring, medical conditions etc. This also helps members by reducing the need to continually disclose information</p>	<p>Candidates for election to be asked to submit information they believe the Council should know, should they be elected. Information will be confidentially passed to appropriate officer to identify solutions. This will ensure options regarding required adaptations are considered in advance of election and can therefore be implemented as soon as possible, rather than wait for this process to commence after the election to office.</p> <p>Included in this form will be a summary of support available to elected members upon election so that candidates can see, in advance of becoming a member of the Council, how they may be supported.</p> <p>Consultation will take place with the Elections Manager about incorporating such a form into the nomination pack for local government elections candidates.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	May 2027 local government elections

2	<p>Guidance produced on what support is available to elected members from the council (e.g. Occupational Health), their group (groups to agree this themselves with group leaders supported with guidance) and externally (e.g. VOCAL)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> Elected Members are aware of what support can be provided and by whom, with clearly agreed boundaries set between what the Council and groups can do for elected members</p>	<p>The Elected Members Handbook will be updated to incorporate these details.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	Oct 2024
<p>Theme: The practices surrounding formal meetings are changed to better accommodate underrepresented groups in society to remove barriers to people considering standing</p>			
3	<p>No formal meetings during school holidays (as much as possible)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This supports people with caring responsibilities to be able to attend and fully participate in formal meetings</p>	<p>As far as possible, this is currently the default position. However, due to the significant number of formal meetings required, and the limited number of weeks in the year remaining after holiday and recess periods are removed, there is, on occasion, a need to hold meetings during school holiday periods.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that committee Agenda Planning Meetings should likewise not be held during school holidays, accepting they are not classified as formal meetings. However, as above, diary limitations sometimes requires that this has to occur.</p>	This is a rolling action

		<p>All appropriate officers and elected members will be reminded to ensure, as far as is possible, that meetings are not scheduled during school holidays.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	
4	<p>Meetings not to start before 10am to allow for childcare commitments</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This supports people with caring responsibilities to be able to attend and fully participate in formal meetings</p>	<p>As far as possible, this is currently the default position.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	Complete

5	<p>Meetings to have a specific finish time (no later than x am/pm) to allow people to manage caring responsibilities / employment / medical conditions</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This supports people who have caring responsibilities or employment to provide certainty to when the meeting will be finished</p>	<p>Standing Orders have written into them a requirement that at 4pm for the Council and at 5pm for committees, if the business has not been completed, a formal process is followed whereby business is conducted without debate to facilitate its completion.</p> <p>The Council may, if it so chooses, agree to tighten up this process even further and prescribe a hard-finish time. However, doing so would require items of business not considered to be either rolled over to the next meeting, require a special meeting, or, for example, return the following day to complete business.</p> <p>Officers recommend that the current procedures contained within Standing Orders are sufficient to meet the aspiration of the recommendation.</p>	Complete
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		Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience	
6	<p>On site childcare for council / committees as required</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This would provide childcare for parents to make participation in formal meetings more accessible</p>	<p>The Workshop acknowledged that this was an aspiration and that, if progressed, would need to be available to all employees and visitors. Therefore, a budget would need to be identified.</p>	Not to be progressed
7	<p>If a carer is required to cover attendance at formal meetings, then financial provision is available to reclaim</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This would make it more affordable for parents and carers to make participation in formal meetings more accessible</p>	<p>The payment of additional monies to elected members, over and above that prescribed by legislation and statutory guidance, would not be lawful. Were payments to be made, there would be tax and national insurance implications.</p> <p>The workshop acknowledged that this was aspirational and that the mechanisms to enable it sit outside of the powers of the Council.</p>	Not to be progressed
8	<p>Reports written in plain English</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This would make it easier for people with certain disabilities and for people for whom English is not their first language, to be able to read and understand reports and then contribute more easily to meetings</p>	<p>Report writing guidance, templates and information on the style to be used are already available to all officers on the Council's intranet (The Orb). Communications will be issued to all officers to ensure that they adhere to the principles of the guidance, particularly in respect of plain English.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	TBC
9	<p>Reports for committees to be available 7 days in advance</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This would make it easier for people with certain</p>	<p>Standing Orders were amended, with effect from August 2024, to increase the time before meetings which meeting papers are published from the previous three clear working days to six clear working days, which equates to nine calendar days and</p>	Complete

	<p>disabilities, whose first language is not English, and for people with caring/additional employment to be able to contribute to meetings more effectively as they will have longer to digest and understand papers</p>	<p>therefore exceeds the ambitions of the recommendation.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	
10	<p>No banging on tables during debates</p> <p>(It was agreed at the workshop that this recommendation also includes reference to noisy chatter, calling out and any other behaviour which, intentional or not, causes a disturbance to other elected members)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This makes the meetings more accessible for people who are hard of hearing or have sensory disabilities.</p>	<p>The Committee Best Practice Guidance document, as approved by the Council in December 2023, will be updated to include a section on behaviours within formal meetings. Committee Best Practice Guidance</p> <p>However, the Council and its officers have no formal mechanism available to require elected members to behave to a specified standard and, therefore, a degree of restraint is required by individual elected members.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	<p>August 2024, subject to Council approval of an updated Guide</p>
11	<p>Breaks built into standing orders and not subject to change by the Chair (i.e. minimum break of 15 minutes every 2 hours - can't be cut to 10 minutes etc.)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This makes meetings more accessible and easier to manage for people who have long-term health conditions and disabilities.</p>	<p>Standing Orders have a provision to require a break after every two hours of business within a formal meeting. It is accepted that the lengths of breaks can vary between different meetings and Committee Conveners will be requested to adhere to the ten-minutes prescribed in Standing Orders as a minimum.</p> <p>However, it is considered good practice to conclude consideration of an item of business before a break is</p>	<p>Guidance to be provided to Committee Conveners before the start of the next committee cycle – 30 August 2024</p>

		<p>called and this, therefore, may mean that it is not possible to adhere rigidly to the two-hour requirement, depending on how long a meeting takes to conclude the preceding item of business.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	
<p>Theme: The practices surrounding informal meetings are changed to better accommodate underrepresented groups in society to remove barriers to people considering standing</p>			
12	<p>Protocol developed for officers to follow for putting meetings in elected members diaries – e.g. no double booking, no booking during school holidays without checking.</p> <p>Comment was also made at the workshop that meeting invites should not be inserted into diaries of elected members without a clear explanation of the purpose of the meeting and the capacity in which a member is being invited i.e. committee member, ward member, political group member</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This makes it easier for members to attend informal meetings and feel able to carry out their formal roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>The concerns expressed at the workshop will be forwarded to the Corporate Leadership Team for consideration with a recommendation that a protocol is developed and issued regarding content of meeting/event invites.</p> <p>The workshop acknowledged that due to limited diary availability, it would not always be possible for officers to avoid school holiday periods when organising meetings to which elected members would be invited.</p> <p>All Directors</p>	December 2024
13	<p>Training and briefings to be available via Teams as a hybrid option</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This makes it easier for members to attend informal</p>	<p>As far as possible, these are provided online to maximise attendance. If sessions are to be held physically, where at all possible, a hybrid solution is provided however, there are limited rooms of sufficient</p>	Complete

	meetings and feel able to carry out their formal roles and responsibilities.	size to facilitate a hybrid option. All Directors	
Theme: Support for elected members on personal safety			
14	<p>Personal safety measures available to elected members (alert system for EMs available similarly to what some front-line workers have i.e. social workers)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This helps members who have a higher level of risk of discrimination or physical attack to feel safer and know that there is a way for them to get help if they find themselves in an unsafe situation.</p>	<p>A report is to be submitted to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in October 2024 in response to a Notice of Motion to the Council at its meeting held on 21 March 2024 regarding actions arising out of the recommendations made by the Jo Cox Foundation Civility Commission. That report will detail and outline what is available to elected members to support their personal safety. That report will detail the availability of personal safety devices which, although primarily procured for use by officers in lone working situations, could be utilised by elected members who find themselves in such positions, for example at surgeries.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	Policy and Sustainability Committee - October 2024

15	<p>The Council should ensure it has a process for elected members to report harassment, abuse or intimidation and for this to be recorded and the member supported (by officers, police etc.)</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This helps elected members who have a higher level of risk of discrimination, online abuse or physical attacks to feel safer and know that there is a way for them to report issues and get help if they need it.</p>	<p>A report is to be submitted to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in October 2024 in response to a Notice of Motion to the Council at its meeting held on 21 March 2024 regarding actions arising out of the recommendations made by the Jo Cox Foundation Civility Commission. That report will detail and outline the mechanisms and process whereby elected members can inform officers of issues they have encountered or believe may arise, and what the Council can/will do to mitigate these instances.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	Policy and Sustainability Committee - October 2024
<p>Theme: Better support for Community Council’s to help them thrive and be accessible for Community Councillors, the public and elected members to attend</p>			
16	<p>Encourage and support Community Councils to run hybrid meetings/hold every second meeting online (to help EMs attend and also to help CClrs and the public to participate). This could be progressed through a change to the Scheme of Establishment</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This will help elected members to be able to attend Community Council meetings in the evenings, while also helping a more diverse</p>	<p>Engagement is ongoing with Community Councils to consider ways in which elected members, and also other stakeholders, can attend meetings and otherwise engage with the Community Council without needing to be physically present at their formal meetings. However, the technology required to hold hybrid meetings has a cost which, when replicated across, potentially, all 46 Community Councils, would be significant. No budget is currently available to support the purchase of such equipment so, if this was an area which the Committee felt was of importance, then this would need to be factored into the Council’s</p>	This action is dependent on available budget so, at present, it is not possible to attach a timeline to this recommendation.

	<p>range of people become Community Councillors and/or attend Community Councils which can create a pipeline of potential candidates</p>	<p>budget for 2025/26 and beyond.</p> <p>Political groups are recommended to consider allocating funding, as part of the 2025/26 budget, to Community Councils for hybrid meeting equipment.</p> <p>Engagement will continue with Community Councils on the wider area of engagement between Community Councils and Elected Members.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	
17	<p>Provide more money and support to Community Councils to help them be more vibrant and active in communities to ensure they are attractive civic spaces for a diverse range of individuals who wish to participate in civic life</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> This will support a more diverse range of people to become Community Councillors and/or attend Community Councils which can create a pipeline of potential candidates</p>	<p>A report was considered by the Council at a special meeting held on 27 June 2024. The report will outline work already ongoing in this area.</p> <p>Review of Scheme for Community Councils and their Boundaries.pdf</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	<p>See report to special Council meeting held on 27 June 2024</p>
Theme: Long-term action to tackle gendered violence			
18	<p>City of Edinburgh Council to introduce an education programme in schools to educate pupils on gendered abuse and</p>	<p>It was accepted at the workshop by members present that this recommendation sits outside the scope of the workshop</p>	

<p>violence. This is to help a societal shift in attitudes towards women and girls that creates adverse conditions for female politicians</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> Long-term action is needed to reduce discrimination, and this starts in schools. This wouldn't provide short-term benefits to reducing barriers to elected office but could provide longer term benefits.</p>	<p>and the subject of Barriers to Elected Office.</p>	
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Theme: The political culture of the council could change to be less adversarial, making it a more inclusive environment for individuals who are likely to be on the receiving end of abuse, intimidation, harassment etc. because of a protected characteristic

19	<p>Elected members have a responsibility to be respectful to each other and develop working relationships with each other where conflict is political rather than personal. A more collegiate environment would benefit all members, but especially those at most risk of experiencing intimidation and abuse.</p> <p><u>Who is impacted?</u> Adversarial cultures create more difficult conditions for individuals with certain protected characteristics who are at greater risk of intimidation and abuse. A less adversarial political environment could promote healthy political debates while ensuring individual members were not subjected to personal attacks.</p>	<p>The Committee Best Practice Guidance document, as approved by the Council in December 2023, will be updated as part of its annual review to include a section on behaviours within formal meetings. Committee Best Practice Guidance</p> <p>The Workshop acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic had altered the way in which elected members interact and engage with each other. With fewer occasions where elected members meet outside of committee and Council meetings, it has become difficult to foster good personal relationships.</p> <p>Head of Democracy, Governance and Resilience</p>	August 2024, subject to Council approval
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