

**Committee: FULL COUNCIL**

**Date: 18 October 2022**

**Title: For members to consider the Civility and Respect policy**

**Purpose of Report**

For members to consider the Civility and Respect project

**Recommendation:**

Members resolve that Ilminster Town Council signs up to the Civility and Respect project by agreeing to the Civility and Respect Pledge statements as outlined in the report.

**Background:**

1. Throughout the Local Government sector, there have been growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project.
2. On the 14 July a document was sent out to all members of Ilminster Council from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and SLCC (Society Local Council Clerks) that outlined the background behind the decision to set up the Civility and Respect project. This is contained in **Appendix 18A**.
3. The Civility and Respect Project Working Group set out a mission statement summarising the core aims and values for securing permanent change in the sector:
  - I. '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.
  - II. The intimidation, abuse, bullying and harassment of councillors, professional officers and staff, in person or online, is totally unacceptable; whether that is by councillors, professional officers, staff or members of the public.

- III. This can prevent councils from functioning effectively, councillors from representing local people, discourage people from getting involved including standing for election, and undermine public confidence and trust in local democracy.
  - IV. National Association of Local Councils (NALC), county associations of local councils and One Voice Wales (OVW), as the membership organisations representing the first tier of local government in England and Wales, and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) as the professional body for clerks, are committed to working together to promote civility and respect in public life, good governance, positive debate and supporting the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff.
  - V. To that end the Group will be working to deliver tangible resources, actions and interventions in four main areas: providing councils with the tools to support good governance; lobbying to strengthen the standards regime and encourage more people to get involved; training; and processes to intervene to provide support to struggling councils.'
4. Ilminster Town Council has already adopted the NALC Code of Conduct which has been adjusted to include a voluntary level of sanctions within the document. This was done to show that the council placed value upon treating people in a respectful and appropriate way and that poor behaviour would not go un-noted.

## **Report**

5. Councils throughout the country are being asked to resolve to support a series of statements devised by the Civility and Respect Project Team and that will reinforce the council's code of conduct. The statements are:
- I. Ilminster Town Council has agreed it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.
  - II. Ilminster Town Council has committed to training councillors and staff.
  - III. Ilminster Town Council has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors.
  - IV. Ilminster Town Council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.
  - V. Ilminster Town Council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.

- VI. Iminster Town Council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens.
  - VII. Iminster Town Council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model / champion council e.g. via the Local Council Award Scheme.
  - VIII. Iminster Town Council will support the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.
- 6. In addition to the Pledge members are asked to share and display the various posters that have been provided in **Appendix 18B**.
  - 7. Members resolve that Iminster Town Council signs up to the Civility and Respect project by agreeing to the Civility and Respect Pledge statements as outlined in the report.

**Mark Tredwin**  
**Town clerk**  
**October 2022**