

**Teignbridge District Council  
Governance Committee  
Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026  
Part i**

## **Adoption of the Local Government Association's 'Debate not Hate' campaign**

### **Purpose of Report**

To review the adoption of the Debate not Hate campaign.

### **Recommendation(s)**

The Governance Committee RECOMMENDS that Full Council:

- (a) Adopt the Local Government Association 'Debate not Hate' campaign and sign up to the 'Debate not Hate' public statement available on the Local Government Association website.
- (b) In doing so, makes a clear public statement that the Council is adopting a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, intimidation, and harassment of Members and Officers.
- (c) Asks for Officers to share the appropriate 'Debate not Hate' resources with all Councillors.
- (d) Agrees for the Chair of the Council, on behalf of the Council, to write to the local Members of Parliament and the Police on the Council's adoption of the campaign.
- (e) Agrees that the Council continues to engage with the Police and Operation Ford, ensuring that Councillors are aware of the reporting mechanisms available to report abuse and intimidation.
- (f) Asks the Governance Committee report annually on the adoption of the campaign and review the safety of Councillors.

### **Financial Implications**

The financial implications are expected to be minimal and can be met from existing budgets. Expected implications would relate to Officer time and capacity.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: [charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk)

### **Legal Implications**

No direct legal implications arise from this report, it is a voluntary adoption. Whilst there is no specific statutory requirement to adopt the campaign, the proposal supports the Council's duties under:

- The Local Government Act 1972 (effective discharge of functions);
- The Localism Act 2011 (promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct); and
- The Council's duty of care to Members and officers.

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Email: [charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk)

### **Risk Assessment**

No direct risk implications arise from this report. Breach of the Code of Conduct by

Members is included on the Strategic and Corporate Risk Register, adopting this campaign would be a mitigation against this risk.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: [charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk)

### **Environmental/ Climate Change Implications**

No direct environment or climate change implications arise from this report.

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

Email: [charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk)

### **Report Author**

Charlie Fisher – Democratic Services Manager & Monitoring Officer

[charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@teignbridge.gov.uk)

### **Executive Member**

Councillor Richard Keeling – Leader of the Council.

### **Appendix**

#### **1. Introduction**

At its meeting on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026, Full Council agreed a recommendation that:

“The Monitoring Officer report to the Governance Committee on the adoption by the Council of the Local Government Association (LGA)’s Debate Not Hate campaign and in particular the Ending Abuse in Public Life Council Self-Assessment toolkit as a means of creating a culture of safety and respect for members within and without the Council Chamber”.

This report fulfils that recommendation and provides more information on the Debate Not Hate Campaign.

#### **2. Main Body**

The Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation. Serving in public office is both a privilege and a responsibility, yet it comes with its share of challenges which can include abuse and harassment from the public.

Debate Not Hate was launched in 2022 following the Councillor’s Census. This Census [found that seven out of 10 councillors](#) had experienced abuse from the public in the previous year. Further research by the LGA in 2022 and 2025, reinforced concerns that abuse in public life and public discourse is becoming normalised and seriously impacting civic life and local democracy.

As a result, the LGA launched a national campaign highlighting that “debating and disagreeing with one another is a healthy part of democracy, but abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory”.

As part of the campaign, Councils are able to undertake a self-assessment of their Councillors and the LGA provide a range of resources and guidance on promoting the campaign.

Councillors and Councils can sign up to a public statement aimed at lobbying the Government, Police, Political Parties and Social Media companies:

*“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”*

Over 800 Councillors have signed up the public statement. Locally, Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Torbay Council have signed up as a Council to the campaign by passing resolutions by Full Council.

For further information on the LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign: [Debate Not Hate | Local Government Association](#)

## **Commitments under the campaign**

If approved, the Council will commit to:

### **2.1 Zero-tolerance approach**

- Publicly affirm that abuse and intimidation toward Members and officers will not be tolerated in any form (including online).

### **2.2 Reporting and monitoring**

- Establish or strengthen a formal system for Members to report incidents of abuse or harassment.
- Maintain oversight through the Monitoring Officer and the Governance Committee.

### **2.3 Support for Members**

- Provide guidance, training, and access to support (including wellbeing support where required).
- Ensure Members are aware of available protections and reporting routes.

### **2.4 Partnership working**

- Work with local police and relevant agencies to ensure clear escalation

pathways for threats or criminal behaviour.

### **2.5 Leadership and culture**

- Promote respectful debate in all Council meetings and communications.
- Encourage Group Leaders to reinforce expected standards of behaviour.

### **2.6 Advocacy**

- Write to local Members of Parliament to support national action on abuse of elected representatives.

## **3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact**

Implications and risks are covered on page 1 of the report.

## **4. Alternative Options**

This is a voluntary campaign to sign up to; the Council does not have to sign up to this campaign.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Committee is asked to review the report and recommendations regarding the adoption of the Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate Campaign.