

Ms Mairi Millar
Director of Legal & Administration
Glasgow City Council

By email - mairi.millar@glasgow.gov.uk

Item 6(c)**11th September 2025**

21 August 2025

Dear Ms Millar

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2025. I have shared and discussed your letter and the Council's motion of 26 June 2025 with Standards Commission Members.

The Standards Commission welcomes the Council's motion and is pleased to support any work being done to make politics less toxic and safer for elected representatives. For information, the Standards Commission is currently taking part in an initiative being led by COSLA to promote civility in public life.

The Standards Commission notes that point six of the motion requests the development of formal guidance and support mechanisms, similar to those promoted by the Local Government Association in England, to protect councillors from online abuse, ensure appropriate reporting mechanisms are in place, and offer mental health and digital safety support to affected members. While the Standards Commission can look to strengthen its Guidance and Advice Notes on social media and how councillors communicate with members of the public (for example, by noting it is not disrespectful for a councillor to refuse to engage with someone online), its remit only covers promoting the Codes of Conduct, helping councillors and members of public bodies adhere to their provisions and adjudicating on complaints that they have failed to do so. The Standards Commission's remit does not extend to the provision of more general advice to elected representatives. Therefore, while the Standards Commission is happy to provide support to other organisations in developing guidance and support mechanisms, it does not have the remit or resources to undertake or lead on such work.

The Standards Commission further notes point nine refers to exploring the viability of offering a service to elected members who have been the targets of significant levels of abuse. It may be of interest to advise that the Standards Commission and Ethical Standards Commissioner sent a joint letter, last year, to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government requesting that support be made available for elected members who were the subject of bullying and harassment complaints. The Cabinet Secretary had advised that there was no legal requirement for Scottish Ministers to fund or provide welfare support to anyone who made a complaint or was the subject of proceedings under the Codes of Conduct for councillors or members of devolved public bodies. The Cabinet Secretary had noted that if a Complainer was an employee of a council or public body, it could be assumed they would have access to welfare support through their employers' employee assistance programmes. Similarly, the Cabinet Secretary noted that there should be no real barrier to

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a council choosing to provide support to its elected members through their employee assistance programmes.

I hope this response is helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions or wish to discuss any matters further.

Yours sincerely

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Executive Director

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