

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 14 February 2022
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Local Government Elections – 2022: Fair Campaigns Pledge
Purpose of Report:	To provide Cabinet with an update on the Fair Campaigns Pledge that was agreed by the 22 Welsh Local Authority Leaders at the end of January. The pledge is attached at Appendix 1.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas, Chief Executive
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	All Councillors were forwarded a copy of the Pledge on 1 February by the Leader of the Council.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report attaches, at Appendix 1, a Fair Campaigns pledge in relation to the forthcoming Local Government Elections in May of this year. The Pledge calls on all Councillors and candidates at May's local elections to commit to a fair and respectful election campaign. • The Pledge has been endorsed by all 22 Welsh Local Authority Leaders following a meeting of the Welsh Local Government Association at the end of January. • Cabinet is asked to consider the report and the Fair Campaigns Pledge and endorse the same. It is also recommended that the Pledge be highlighted at candidate Briefings and also available throughout the Election period on the Council's web site and social media channels. Finally, it is also recommended that a copy of the report and Pledge be distributed to all Town and Community Councils for information and awareness. 	

Recommendations

- 1.** That Cabinet considers and endorses the contents of the report and the appended Fair Campaign Pledge.
- 2.** That the Fair Campaign Pledge be communicated during the Election period and referenced in any Candidate Briefings in the run up to the Local Government Elections.
- 3.** That a copy of this report and the Fair Campaign Pledge be circulated to all Town and Community Councils for information and awareness.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1-3.** To allow Cabinet to endorse the Fair Campaign Pledge and to ensure that it is effectively communicated to raise awareness of the same.

1. Background

- 1.1** This report informs Cabinet and seeks endorsement of a Fair Campaign Pledge for the forthcoming Local Government Elections. Following discussions at the recent Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the 22 Welsh local Authority Leaders have signed up to the pledge. In addition, the Pledge has been circulated to all Councillors in the Vale of Glamorgan on 1 February 2022. The Pledge is attached at Appendix 1. At the recent WLGA meeting, all local authorities were asked to consider adopting local 'Fair Campaign Pledges'.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Fair and Respectful Elections Campaign Pledge is attached at Appendix 1 and has been circulated to all Councillors in advance of consideration by Cabinet.
- 2.2** The joint statement calls on all Councillors and candidates at May's local elections to commit to a fair and respectful election campaign. The Pledge references that all are too familiar with abuse, whether this be on social media channels, in correspondence or in person.
- 2.3** The Pledge references that politics should focus on facts and respectful debate about differences of policy or priorities, not insults or intolerance, misinformation or misogyny, discrimination or division.
- 2.4** The need to attract more diverse people to consider standing for election is referenced alongside the need to reassure and support those candidates who are newer to democratic life, those who are conscious they are in the minority or have already experienced discrimination.
- 2.5** As well as being totally unacceptable, abuse, threats and intimidation undermines the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate.

The Fair and Respectful Election Campaign Pledge sets out to ensure that everyone is treated with courtesy, kindness and respect, traits that are particularly relevant as we enter the key period in the run up to the local government elections in May.

- 2.6** The Pledge calls for participation in a fair election campaign which is based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals and the Pledge encourages all elected members and candidates in the forthcoming election to do the same and to publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** It is proposed to share the Pledge across all communication channels in the run up to the Local Government Elections in May with the aim being to promote participation and engagement on matters that are relevant to our communities.
- 3.2** In addition, the Pledge seeks to encourage diversity in democracy and seeks to attract new candidates to consider standing for election.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** No direct resource of Legal implications over and above those mentioned within the body of the report.

Employment

- 4.2** No direct Employment implications over and above those mentioned in the body of the report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** No legal implications over and above those referenced within the body of the report.

5. Background Papers

None.

Joint statement by the 22 council leaders in Wales:

Fair and respectful election campaign

At Friday's WLGA Executive Board, council leaders agreed to make a joint statement calling on all councillors and candidates at May's local elections to commit to a fair and respectful election campaign:

We are all too familiar with the abuse we see in our inboxes, on our social media feeds or see and hear on our streets or, worse, at our homes.

Politics should focus on facts and respectful debate about differences of policy or priorities, not insults or intolerance, misinformation or misogyny, discrimination or division.

We are committed to attracting more diverse people to consider standing for election. We need to reassure and support those candidates who are newer to democratic life, those who are conscious they are in the minority or have already experienced discrimination.

The council elections are about people who just want to contribute and who want to make a positive difference to our communities.

Unfortunately, we are seeing an increasing number of councillors and candidates being subjected to abuse, threats and intimidation.

As well as being totally unacceptable, this behaviour undermines the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate.

We therefore endeavour to treat everyone with courtesy, kindness and respect and, as leaders, we stand together to call for an end to abuse, intimidation and harassment of any kind. This is particularly relevant as we enter the key period in the run up to the local government elections in May.

We pledge to participate in a fair election campaign which is based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals.

We encourage all elected members and candidates in the forthcoming election to do the same. In addition, we will publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

We all have the right to carry out our civic duties without fear of being attacked or abused.

Any inappropriate behaviour, whether that be verbal, physical or in writing on social media, is totally unacceptable and action will be taken if deemed necessary.

Please be kind and fair in all that you say and do.

Datganiad ar y cyd gan y 22 o arweinwyr cyngor yng Nghymru:

Ymgyrch etholiadol teg a pharchus

Yng nghyfarfod Bwrdd Gweithredol CLILC ddydd Gwener, fe gytunodd arweinwyr y cyngorau i wneud datganiad ar y cyd yn galw ar bleidiau a'r holl ymgeiswyr yn etholiadau lleol mis Mai i ymrwymo i ymgyrch etholiadol teg a pharchus:

Rydym i gyd yn rhy gyfarwydd â'r gamdriniaeth yr ydym yn ei gweld yn ein mewnflychau e-bost, ar ein negeseuon ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol neu'n ei gweld neu'n ei chlywed ar ein strydoedd, neu'n waeth na hynny, yn ein cartrefi.

Fe ddylai gwleidyddiaeth ganolbwyntio ar ffeithiau a thrafodaeth barchus am wahaniaethau o ran polisi neu flaenoriaethau, nid sarhad neu anoddefgarwch, camwybodaeth neu gasineb at fenywod, gwahaniaethu neu rwyg.

Rydym wedi ymrwymo i ddenu mwy o bobl amrywiol i ystyried sefyll ar gyfer etholiad, mae angen i ni roi tawelwch meddwl a chefnogi'r ymgeiswyr hynny sy'n newydd i fywyd democrataidd, y rhai hynny sy'n ymwybodol eu bod yn y lleiafrif neu sydd eisoes wedi profi gwahaniaethu.

Mae etholiadau'r cyngor yn ymwneud â phobl sydd eisiau cyfrannu a sydd eisiau gwneud gwahaniaeth cadarnhaol i'n cymunedau.

Gwaetha'r modd, rydym ni'n gweld nifer gynyddol o gynghorwyr ac ymgeiswyr yn cael eu cam-drin, eu bygwth a'u dychryn.

Yn ogystal â bod yn gwbl annerbyniol, mae'r ymddygiad hwn yn tanseilio egwyddorion rhyddid barn, ymgysylltu democrataidd a thrafod.

Rydym ni'n ymdrechu i drin pawb â chwarteisi, caredigrwydd a pharch ac, fel arweinwyr, rydym ni'n sefyll gyda'n gilydd i alw am roi diwedd ar gam-drin, brawychu ac aflonyddu o unrhyw fath. Mae hyn yn arbennig o berthnasol wrth i ni gychwyn ar y cyfnod allweddol cyn yr etholiadau llywodraeth leol ym mis Mai.

Rydym ni'n addo cymryd rhan mewn ymgyrch etholiadol deg sy'n seiliedig ar ymgyrchu cadarnhaol a theilyngdod, yn hytrach nag ymosodiadau personol a difenwol yn erbyn unigolion.

Rydym ni'n annog pob aelod etholedig a phob ymgeisydd yn yr etholiad sydd ar y gweill i wneud yr un peth. Yn ogystal, fe fyddwn ni'n amlygu'n gyhoeddus unrhyw ymddygiad amhriodol o'r fath ac ni fydd unrhyw oddefgarwch o ran cam-drin.

Mae gan bob un ohonom ni'r hawl i gyflawni ein dyletswyddau dinesig heb ofni ymosodiad neu gamdriniaeth.

Mae unrhyw ymddygiad amhriodol – naill ai ar lafar, yn gorfforol neu'n ysgrifenedig ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol – yn gwbl annerbyniol, a bydd camau'n cael eu cymryd os bydd angen.

Byddwch yn garedig ac yn deg ym mhopeth rydych chi'n ei ddweud ac yn ei wneud.