

5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## SLCC Press Release Parish Council Meeting Goes Viral

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) is aware of the recent news concerning Handforth Parish Council and the zoom meeting, the video of which has gone viral. Regrettably, this behaviour affects a proportion of the 10,000 local councils in England and Wales and is by no means insignificant. Its consequence for the clerks and officers of those councils is often profound and traumatic. It is not, however, reflective of the consistently high standard of work and debate carried out by the majority of local councils throughout England and Wales.

Whilst it is not for the SLCC to offer comment on specifics of the meeting we must recognise that workplace bullying remains high on the list when it comes to our members seeking advice. Therefore as a professional, member-led organisation, the SLCC is working hard on improving professional standards in the sector working towards a single model code of conduct for all tiers of local government, developing a toolkit to support clerks and monitoring officers who are experiencing problems with standards and behaviour and aligning ourselves with partners in the sector who have influence and support our efforts to improve standards.

The SLCC recently commissioned a survey from Hoey Ainscough Associates, the high number of respondents reflects the largely negative impact that code of conduct issues have on the working lives of our members and the importance of the SLCC lobbying on their behalf for change.

The dedication and hard work of clerks across England and Wales largely goes unrecognised but throughout this pandemic it is the work of local councils with closest links to their communities who have been the backbone of efforts to keep their residents safe, secure and well-informed.

Any officers who have been affected by the issues raised by this incident can access advice and counselling services at the SLCC, [www.slcc.co.uk](http://www.slcc.co.uk)

### Key messages

- This behaviour exists in our sector and is an ongoing concern to our members but is not representative of the majority of the 10,000 town, parish and community councils in England Wales which are doing outstanding work in the service of their communities – particularly in supporting those communities through the difficult months of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Workplace bullying and eliminating it from the professional lives of our members remains high on the list of priorities for SLCC
- We have worked closely with the Committee on Standards in Public Life and partners in the sector to press for actions and measures to improve the standards of behaviour in our sector and in public life more widely
- We recently completed a survey of our membership about their experiences of bullying and poor behaviour and will be presenting its findings this month.
- As the professional body for clerks and officers of local councils we have no comment to make about the specifics of what took place and would refer any queries in this regard to our colleagues at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).