

Personal for: [gillian.beasley@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.beasley@peterborough.gov.uk)

November 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

Dear Gillian,

Thank you for your correspondence with regard to the Council motion on violence and threats against elected representatives.

May I first reassure you that I understand the impact that this sort of behaviour is having on the Council. The abhorrent actions of Jo Cox's killer will continue to have a deep impact on the elected community, and combatting this kind of hate crime is something I shall continue to champion. As an elected official myself, I watched with dismay the comments of the councillors during the debate, and I agree that candidates and councillors cannot be considered outside by the rules of law, or indeed common politeness, simply due to the office they hold.

In terms of urgent and substantial action, I would expect the police to respond to any credible threat of violence made to a member of the public, and I am glad to see that the police are working proactively in Ely following the apprehension of an offender. In terms of firm, swift and transparent actions, I would equally expect no less from the Constabulary in the case of any member of the public being threatened. While all police activity must be taken within the context of government directives around tackling those crimes which represent the greatest risk of harm, such as terrorism, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking, I will continue to push for strong legislative action to tackle the kind of behaviour the Council has faced.

In terms of online abuse, the great strength of social media is its ability to expand the voice of the minority, but in turn this offers an opportunity to the distasteful few who use it to bully, threaten and intimidate those whose view does not align with their own. I personally find this kind of behaviour detestable; threats and offensive messages of any kind to those seeking to represent their communities are morally repugnant and I am glad to note the larger online community shuns this behaviour.

However, under Articles 9 and 10 of the 1998 Human Rights Act, every citizen is entitled to the Freedoms of Speech and Expression, and while this does need to be balanced against a need to prevent crime and protect the rights of others, the justice system sets an understandably high bar as to what constitutes illegal behaviour. The police will act if there is a proven danger to your person, but professional judgement has to be exercised in such cases as we push forward in our stand against cybercrime, cyber-enabled terrorism and online fraud.

I too am keen to welcome a broader input into our system and encourage people from all areas of our community to stand, but they must be aware that there is a risk inherent in placing yourself within the public eye. The Constabulary will continue to mitigate that risk, and I will strongly support the Chief Constable with any initiatives proposed to combat this, but a wider educational and societal campaign is needed to truly eliminate this from our system.

Yours sincerely,



Jason Ablewhite  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner