



Be kind



Bydewch yn garedig

COWBRIDGE (ANCIENT BOROUGH) with
LLANBLETHIAN TOWN COUNCIL
CYNGOR TREF
Y BONTFAEN (Bwrdeistref Hynafol) gyda
LLANFLEIDDAN

Staff Security

1. Reason for report

An email received from Cllr Tonkin to the F&G Committee and the Town Clerk on the 24th of April 2023.

2. Background

- The Town Hall Office is at present mostly closed to the public except by appointment only.
- There have been several incidents of abuse directed at town hall staff over recent months from members of the public in the lobby of the Town Clerk office.
- On the 13th April 2023, following a meeting of the Coronation Working Group which ended at 7.30pm, I stayed in the Council Chamber to complete the notes from the meeting.

At approximately 8.15pm, someone tried the locked door of the Council Chamber and knocked the door. When they could not get an answer, they approached the side window directly adjacent to where I was sitting and kept knocking the window and shouting loudly for me to open the door. I heard them remark 'it's a woman'.

There were approximately three men at the window. I sat perfectly still as I did not want to attract further attention and after approximately 10 minutes they moved away from the window.

At this point I stood up turned off the lights and retired in the dark to the Town Clerk office. By this time there were no longer voices outside and I telephoned first my partner then a councillor who lives locally. My partner was travelling back from England and was still 2 hours away.

The Councillor came to the office and walked me to my car.

- In addition to security issues the Town Hall is currently understaffed due to sickness and absence. This has been the case for several weeks and we are unsure when we will again be fully staffed.
- I am covering two full time roles and being a very busy office with continuous visitors and phone calls, I do not have capacity to carry out

reception duties and to meet all other deadlines.

3. Recommendations

- With the agreement of the Staffing Committee, I have approached St David's Recruitment to employ a temporary admin assistant four mornings a week for an initial period of one month.
- To purchase a video doorbell allowing staff to keep the door locked and to review and speak with ad hoc visitors before allowing access.

Appendix One

Email from Cllr Tonkin below;

Unfortunately, I cannot be at this month's meeting and have sent apologies. I assume that the question of making access to the office on an appointment only basis due to staff safety issues will be discussed and I would be grateful if you could note my position.

I am fully aware that, in recent times, some members of the public have become more aggressive and intimidating and that this has to be taken into account. I do not think, however, that restricting public access to a public service is a suitable solution.

I would suggest that in addition to the bolt that is easily accessed from outside that a lock is installed on the bottom half of the door so that this is not easily opened and that if staff are subject to verbal abuse they simply retire to another room until the person leaves; alternatively a glass type upper arrangement be installed similar to those installed in banks and post offices to allow verbal communication but no physical contact.

If there is any danger of physical assault, then staff should retire to a safe room. I would suggest the room where coffee is made where a bolt could be fitted on the inside of the door. The police should be called once inside the safe room.

I was also concerned about Cathy's unfortunate experience after the Committee Meeting recently. I do not wish to criticise her in any way as who knows how any of us would react in the circumstances but as a matter of policy, I would suggest that:

1. No member of staff or council members remain at the Town Hall alone after meetings unless the building is locked
2. Anyone in the building in any fear should immediately retire to the safe room and call the police

If this was followed, the police might apprehend the culprits but otherwise, at least, escort the person to a place of safety. I was concerned that on this occasion assistance was sought from individuals who would, potentially, be putting themselves in danger.

I hope these suggestions might be helpful in the discussion.

With kind regards

Beverly Tonkin