# **Ockbrook and Borrowash Parish Council.**

## Safeguarding Policy – Personal Safety, a Guide for Councillors and the Parish Clerk.

### Introduction.

An important role of Councillors and Parish Clerks is to keep in touch with members of the community.

This normally includes helping individuals or groups of people with any problems they may have, and these contacts are usually rewarding and non-confrontational.

The following guidance is to raise the awareness of personal safety and outline the measures that you can take to minimise any risk you may be exposed to.

The risks are thankfully small, but a little time given to preparation and planning can reduce them even further.

A definition of a ‘lone worker’ could be as follows…. Those who work by themselves with close or direct supervision.

**Councillors and Parish Clerks should always assess the level of risk and consider their own safety.**

### General Consideration.

A few general points to consider include:

* Treat people with respect
* Be conscious of people’s body language
* Be aware of the ways to calm a person down if they are angry or frustrated due to the lack of action from elsewhere, this may come with experience or from learning from other colleagues
* Do not isolate yourself
* Where possible, do not arrange to meet an unknown constituent in an isolated placer,
* Inform someone where you are, how to contact you, who you are meeting and what time you are expecting to be back.

### Home Visit Safety.

Councillors will sometimes be asked to visit constituents in their homes, especially if they are elderly, disabled and have mobility or other issues that prevent them attending a ward surgery. It may also be the case that the person is known to them.

Before arranging a home visit, however, Councillors should always consider alternative options:

* Can contact be made by phone or email?
* Can a meeting be arranged in a public place such as the Parish Hall or a café?
* Can another Parish Councillor or another person accompany you if a home visit takes place?

If a home visit is undertaken, the following personal safety issues should be considered and planned before going:

* Arrange the visit in daylight hours if possible.
* Make sure someone knows where you are going and what time to expect you back
* After knocking or ringing the bell, stand back and to the side of the door
* Never be tempted to look through the letterbox
* Ask for dogs or other pets to be secured, where appropriate
* Consider and note how you would leave the room or property if felt threatened at any time, e.g. Sit near to the exit door, are there any other ways out of the room or property
* **If in any doubt or you feel threatened do not enter. Make an excuse and leave**
* Note any other people in the property and their mood
* Only sit down when the resident does
* Where possible sit in an upright chair or sit on the edge of an armchair or sofa
* **If the situation changes and you feel threatened, make an excuse and leave**
* Back out rather than turning your back on the resident.

### Personal Safety in Other Situations.

### Attending Meetings.

Councillors often have to attend meetings in the hours of darkness. It is possible that, depending on the nature and outcomes of a particular meeting, members of the public may leave feeling angry or upset. In these circumstances, Councillors may wish to be accompanied to their car or nearest bus stop by a colleague who is also attending the meeting.

### Parking and General Car Safety.

* Try not to park in dark areas, deserted streets or isolated car parks.
* Park where possible under street lighting
* Always reverse into a parking space so that you can be ready to leave quickly if necessary
* Always lock your vehicle when entering and leaving it
* Do not keep valuables, your briefcase, paperwork etc on display in the vehicle.
* If you have to use a multi-storey car park, try to park on the ground floor away from the stairs and lifts. Always have the correct change ready for the machine and do not linger longer than necessary staying alert.
* Carry a torch with you.
* Hold keys in your hand so that you can get straight into the vehicle.
* Look closely at your vehicle as you approach in case someone is crouching down.
* Look inside the vehicle before entering to ensure nobody is hiding there, even if the vehicle was locked.
* If you are followed in your vehicle, do not stop. Drive to an area where there are people about. Then stop, flash you lights and sound your horn to attract attention.
* Always make sure your vehicle has sufficient fuel for the journey.

### Reporting Incidents.

Depending on the severity of the incident you should always contact the police. Even if an incident is not considered serious enough to involve the police, it should always be reported.

Remember that by taking appropriate action you may help to prevent a similar evet reoccurring.