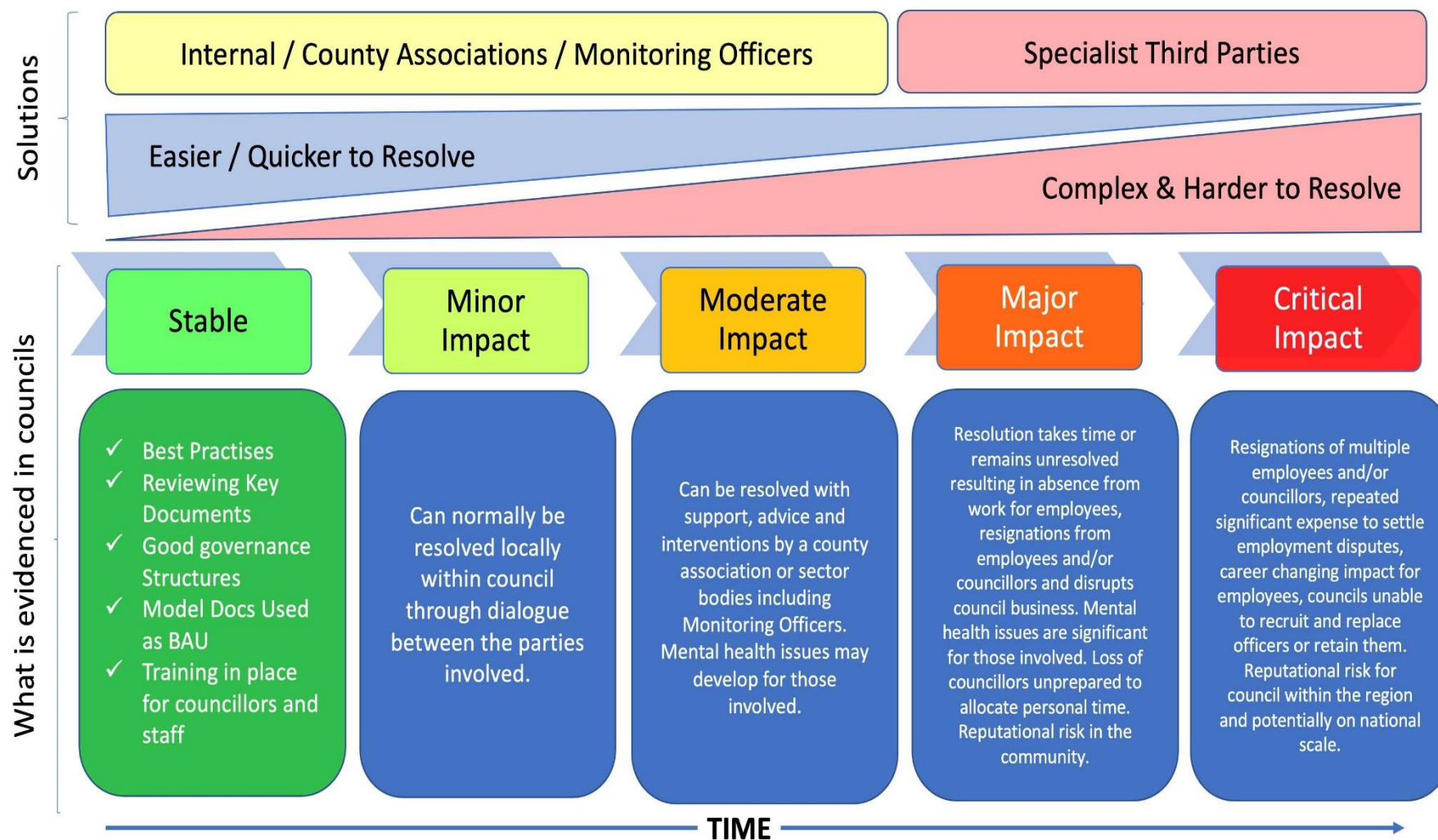# CIVILITY AND RESPECT CONTINUUM

The Civility and Respect Continuum illustrates how issues escalate over time. Our research has indicated that councils experiencing poor conduct or vexatious demands/complaints often experience problems repeatedly over a significant period of time. The longer an issue is permitted to continue, unaddressed, the more complex, time-consuming, and expensive the resolution becomes. This can eventually result in damage to the reputation of the council and health issues for those involved eventually ending with multiple resignations of both staff and councillors. Councils that have up-to-date policies and procedures, well-trained councillors and employees can often manage and mediate issues with or without advice and support from county associations and/or monitoring officers. Where councils become overwhelmed or fail to draw upon the resources available, matters can escalate and come under significant strain and pressure. In these situations, the solutions are often beyond the existing support offered and invariably best resolved by third parties, a costly and time-consuming challenge.

Great Ness & Little Ness PARISH COUNCIL

Civility & Respect

Solutions

Internal / County Associations / Monitoring Officers	Specialist Third Parties

Easier / Quicker to Resolve

Complex & Harder to Resolve

What is evidenced in councils

Stable	Minor Impact	Moderate Impact	Major Impact	Critical Impact
✓ Best Practises ✓ Reviewing Key Documents ✓ Good governance Structures ✓ Model Docs Used as BAU ✓ Training in place for councillors and staff	Can normally be resolved locally within council through dialogue between the parties involved.	Can be resolved with support, advice and interventions by a county association or sector bodies including Monitoring Officers. Mental health issues may develop for those involved.	Resolution takes time or remains unresolved resulting in absence from work for employees, resignations from employees and/or councillors and disrupts council business. Mental health issues are significant for those involved. Loss of councillors unprepared to allocate personal time. Reputational risk in the community.	Resignations of multiple employees and/or councillors, repeated significant expense to settle employment disputes, career changing impact for employees, councils unable to recruit and replace officers or retain them. Reputational risk for council within the region and potentially on national scale.

TIME

The project is identifying solutions to support councillors, officers, councils, and county officers at every stage of the civility continuum, however, whilst governance and training solutions may help with minor and moderate issues, the options for support at the major end of the scale become more limited. Support from monitoring officers and county associations may provide resolution in some instances but often issues have become too complex to resolve without costly interventions from specialist third parties. Every attempt should be made to prevent escalation by addressing potential behavioural issues as soon as they arise, calling out bullying and harassment at the earliest opportunity and standing up for civil and respectful behaviour.

If the issues within a council have escalated to critical, then the options for resolution are still further limited, with costly external resolution and legal support often being required to reach resolutions. Potential action/intervention at this stage is being piloted with a town council struggling with chronic issues. It is being overseen by the joint NALC/SLCC Internal Development Board. If the solution proves successful it may be possible to expand the support programme but much depends on the councils' willingness to make a positive change. Early intervention to head off chronic issues is a far more effective mechanism to handle poor behaviour.