

Motion 1 Fostering a Culture of Respect and Inclusivity in Local Government

Council aspires to promote a culture of respect, inclusivity, and accountability, free from bullying, misogyny, and discriminatory behaviours, ensuring that all staff and elected members are safe to express their opinions without fear of harassment or discrimination.

Council notes:

- That despite progress in recent years, there remains in particular, under representation of women in local government.
- That structural and cultural issues present barriers to women and traditionally underrepresented groups from entering and remaining in local government as councillors as noted by COSLA in its 2022 councillors survey.
- That while progress has been made across society in Scotland and in Scottish local government in tackling discrimination in all its forms, we acknowledge that we are all on a journey and that discrimination and barriers still exist that prevent us from being a fully inclusive profession.
- That while recognising that we are in a political environment where debate and discussion can at times be robust, we must all seek to ensure that we are inclusive in our behaviours and in the words we use, to ensure that every voice is heard with respect.
- The Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (SLARC) recommendation for fair compensation to attract a more diverse range of candidates underscores the need for systemic change to create a safer and more equitable environment in elected office positions.
- The SLARC Report in February 2024 that notes that councillors are subject to increasing abuse via social media which can be particularly targeted at young female members and that SLARC notes recent correspondence from the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to council chief executives saying *"We are aware that the long-standing issue of political culture and at times, the toxicity of debate, both within councils themselves but also across the broader political landscape and wider society as a whole – something that is particularly evident in online discourse – can act as a major barrier to diverse representation"*.

Council therefore:

- Reaffirms its commitment to diversity, equality, and fair representation in local government and to upholding standards of behaviour and respect amongst all elected members as guided by the Councillors Code of Conduct.
- Calls on the leadership of all political parties to promote clear and consistent messaging that all discriminatory behaviours are unacceptable, especially amongst elected representatives at every sphere of representation.
- Agrees to engage with appropriate organisations to ensure that we are a welcoming organisation where discriminatory behaviours are unacceptable.
- Recommends that the Cross Party Leaders Group considers standards of behaviour and respect as a standing item on its agenda, encourages the development of appropriate training on all forms of discrimination for councillors and directs a review of our policies and procedures to be carried out (including the Member/Officer Protocols) in relation to discriminatory issues and related behaviours with any recommendations to Cabinet Committee or Council as appropriate.

Proposed by Councillor Aude Boubaker-Calder
Seconded by Cllr Jan Wincott