

SEFTON LABOUR GROUP
COUNCIL MOTION - 18TH APRIL 2024

Moved by: Councillor Atkinson

Seconded by: Councillor Prendergast

Support to Women in Public Life

45% of Sefton Councillors are women, with Sefton Council recently appointing its first female leader in its 50 year history.

Sefton is a positive reflection of how increasing numbers of women are participating in politics and wider public life, including being elected to public office, attending political events, and making their voices heard. Even in societies where women do not have equal rights, they often risk their lives to speak out and are not prepared to be silent partners in the future of their countries.

But despite the progress women have made in this country and in this instance in Sefton, there is the ever present spectre of misogyny, particularly on social media. Unfortunately, we are all aware of the level of abuse many, if not all, female councillors experience. This can involve inappropriate language of a sexualised nature, threats, accusations, complete lies, foul language, humiliating negative comments about looks, body size and shape, to name a few. The sole aim of this disgraceful behaviour, given it is specifically targeted at women, is to seek to undermine all that is female. The trolls all have one thing in common...their hatred of women.

In recognition of this serious problem and the desire of this council to demonstrate its continued support to women in public life:

This council resolves to

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to this behaviour and help protect female councillors in Sefton.
- Agree to treat those individuals (with the appropriate evidence,) who are guilty of this despicable behaviour as vexatious complainants to deter further insult and degradation to women because of their gender.
- In light of this motion, ask officers to review the Council's Vexatious and Unfocussed Complaints Policy.
- Work closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police to hold to account and work toward full prosecution of those who are guilty of those behaviours.
- Work with newly elected female councillors to advise them of those who have been identified as vexatious complainants because of the inappropriate behaviour in order they take a robust approach and protect themselves from these attacks.