

Report Title: Zero Tolerance Policy

Date of meeting:	21 January 2025		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)		
Report of:	Executive Director – Operations and Partnerships		
Portfolio:	Communities and Partnership Engagement		
Wards affected:	All		
Is this a key decision:	No. The decision by Overview and Scrutiny is not a Key Decision but subsequent decisions of Cabinet will be	Included in Forward Plan:	No. Not in respect of this report but details of subsequent reports to Cabinet will be
Exempt/confidential report:	No		

Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet have agreed that the Council’s Executive/Scrutiny Protocol be updated to include the following paragraph (paragraph 6.13):

“Executive Directors and Assistant Directors, whose responsibilities fall within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, should seek the views of the Committees on all strategies and plans prior to submission to Cabinet and Council; and that if it is not possible, due to time constraints, to submit the final strategy or plan for consideration, then an outline or synopsis be submitted to the Committees to allow an oversight of the proposals to be considered and commented upon.

The purpose of this report is to comply with the above decision and to provide details of the

Zero Tolerance Policy and supporting documents.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee considers the Zero Tolerance Policy with supporting documents and the submission of views to Cabinet or Council.

1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations

The Zero Tolerance Policy has been created as a whole council message regarding any form of abusive or discriminatory behaviour but also as a guide for staff who might experience this whilst carrying out their duties. The policy acknowledges that certain staff are more at risk of this due to their protected characteristics and seeks to clarify the support that employees should receive. Employee feedback through forums such as the staff networks have made it clear that this message is wanted and an important step towards equity and inclusion within the council workforce.

The Additional Guidance for Managers provides information around providing a supportive work environment and the steps to take in the event of abuse, discrimination or harassment. A key aim of this document is to provide best practice in developing relationships with employees, so that they feel confident and safe in raising concerns should they need to.

The Guidance for Racial Abuse and Discrimination towards Staff is intended to provide specific information around the protected characteristic of ethnicity (race). This document shares the types of discrimination staff could experience, examples and reasons why they might feel reluctant to report incidents. It also describes how a work environment can be developed to ensure Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff feel supported and understood in their workplace. This has been of particular importance following the riots in Sefton this summer (2024). The Diverse Ethnic Background Staff Network have provided their views, feelings and experiences to support the integrity of this document.

The intention is for similar guidance to be developed around other protected characteristics such as disability, gender reassignment, religion and care experience, where in time all marginalised groups will have a similar document that explains their lived experiences and how they best feel supported.

2. Financial Implications

None

3. Legal Implications

Supports the 2010 Equality Act and Sefton's Public Sector Equality Duty.

4. Risk Implications

None

5. Staffing HR Implications

None

6. Conclusion

This report has been submitted to comply with Paragraph 6.13 of the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None. There is a need to comply with Paragraph 6.13 of the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol.

Equality Implications:

The essence of this policy and its guidance is aimed at addressing equality implications broadly and has been developed in consultation with staff networks.

(Please note that Council have agreed care experience should be treated like a protected characteristic.)

Impact on Children and Young People:

Whilst this policy and its guidance is aimed at the workforce, it should improve understanding of children and young people who identify with a protected characteristic. It also clarifies the council's stance on any abusive behaviour from Sefton residents towards its staff.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will have a Neutral impact. The policy is about behaviour between staff and residents and how they treat one another.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7891/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5991/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision:

Immediately following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer:	Emma Stewart
Telephone Number:	07890892455
Email Address:	emma.stewart@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Zero Tolerance Guidance: Racial Abuse and Discrimination towards Staff
- Manager Guidance

Background Papers:

None