



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Policy on protection of staff from workplace violence and abuse from the public</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 18 May 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources (ext: 3220)
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources (ext: 3220)

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	In May 2010 Belfast City Council Dog Warden service seized a 'pit-bull type' dog from premises. Following extensive investigations and court proceedings Belfast County Court ruled that the dog should be destroyed.
1.2	A media campaign was launched by the Defendant and supporters, in which the Council and the Court were heavily criticised for their respective roles in the case. In the course of this campaign, or contemporaneous with it, abuse, harassment and intimidation was directed towards Council staff (including on-line harassment and physical attacks on property and people). These matters have been referred to and are being investigated by the Attorney General. As a result of the
1.3	inappropriate conduct experienced in this case, Human Resources was asked to review Council policy and procedures to protect staff from abuse by members of the public.
1.4	This review highlighted that while a procedure was in place for staff to report such attacks, a Council policy needed developed and procedures updated to take account, for example, changes in new media.  The attached policy ( <b>Appendix1</b> ) was written with significant contribution from Corporate Health and Safety, Legal Services and the Trade Union Coordinators. It has been equality screened and agreed by full JCC. In line with best practice it recommends a zero tolerance approach to workplace violence and abuse from the public.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The overall objective of the policy is the protection of council staff from abuse by the public and as an organisation the policy recognises that acts of violence in the

	workplace can have negative effects on the individual and colleagues. In addition the council may take legal or other action to prevent any continuing acts of violence, provide legal advice to affected individuals in relation to proceedings against perpetrators and will provide counselling when appropriate.
2.2	<p>The policy aims to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reduce the risk of potential or actual injury to people included within the scope of the policy;</li> <li>- To ensure that staff receive guidance and training appropriate to individual roles and responsibilities in personal safety and the prevention and management of violence; and</li> <li>- To detail the council's commitment to support staff that have been traumatised or affected by an incident of violence.</li> </ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	A comprehensive communication and training plan will be developed to ensure staff and users of Council services fully understand the implications of the revised policy and the council's stance on abuse towards its staff.
3.2	The implementation of this plan will involve costs which can be met by the OD budget.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Equality Implications</b>
4.1	None

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to approve and adopt the attached policy on protection of staff from workplace violence and abuse from the public.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
6.1	Officer Responsible: Karen Russell Tracey Cowan
6.2	Timescales: Implementation will take place over the next six months.

<b>7.0</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	N/A

<b>8.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
8.1	Appendix 1: Policy on protection of staff from workplace violence and abuse from the public.