

# Chief Executive's Department



Our ref.: BH343/JB

Being dealt with by:

Your ref.:

Ext.

Date: 22 September 1997

Dear Colleague,

## NEUTRAL AND HARMONIOUS WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Further to my correspondence of 18 September 1997 regarding the Joint Declaration of Protection I now wish to advise you that the Chief Officers' Management Team (COMT) is determined to ensure that the Council's policy is implemented in order that a neutral and harmonious working environment is provided for you and your colleagues.

On behalf of the COMT I would therefore seek your commitment and co-operation in implementing the Council's policy which requires:

*"Commitment to promoting and maintaining a good and harmonious working environment in which the dignity of every employee is respected. The Council will only permit the display of flags and emblems authorised in line with the spirit and purpose of this declaration and which are consistent with a neutral and harmonious working environment. The Council prohibits the unauthorised display of posters, graffiti, flags and emblems or the circulation of materials or articulation of slogans or songs which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension to a particular group of employees."*

## EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date for the implementation of this policy will be 6 October 1997.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please remove any personal items which are on display in the workplace which could give offence or cause apprehension to your fellow employees. This applies to any items which belong to you which are of a religious, political, sectarian or sexual nature or any other item which might cause offence.

- 1 -

**Brian P Hanna** FCIEH DMS  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL  
CITY HALL • BELFAST BT1 5GS  
TELEPHONE: 01232 320202 • FAX: 01232 270232 • E-Mail: HannaB@BelfastCity.Gov.UK

22 September 1997

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that our behaviour does not give offence or threaten our colleagues in a way which is not in line with Council policies and which may be discriminatory under equal opportunities legislation. Please remember that, regardless of your intention, what is important is the impact of your actions on the recipient who believes that he or she has been discriminated against.

## **POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE ITEMS/BEHAVIOUR**

The following items or types of behaviour serve to illustrate where or how offence could occur. Please do not view this list as exhaustive but rather examples of things which are unacceptable as they could give rise to problems of harassment:

### **Items**

Post-cards, pin-ups, flags, emblems, posters, graffiti, slogans, pictures, religious items, clothing which could be perceived as sectarian (including football jerseys, ties, scarves etc which might be perceived as having sectarian overtones).

### **Behaviour**

Jokes, banter, insults, threats, threatening notes, physical contact (eg of a sexual nature).

## **POLICY**

Anyone who places items such as those described above on display, or behaves in the manner described, is **not** acting in line with Council policy. You should be aware that breaches of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as misconduct.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF ITEMS ARE NOT REMOVED BY THEIR OWNERS?**

Where items are left unclaimed by their owners alternative arrangements will be made by management for removing them. I seek your support with regard to the removal of such items.

## **PRACTICAL ADVICE**

If you are in any doubt about any aspect of this issue please do not hesitate to contact your Line Manager or Head of Service who will be happy to explain Council policy to you.

## **ON-GOING COMMITMENT**

To create and maintain a neutral and harmonious working environment will require an on-going effort by all of us. I seek your support with regard to this and can assure you of management's intention to carry out regular monitoring of the situation to ensure that this objective is attained.



22 September 1997

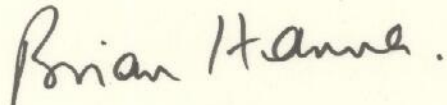
**SUMMARY**

I ask you contribute to the attainment of a neutral and harmonious working environment within the Council by being proactive in supporting management's efforts to implement the Council's policy in this area. Please do not feel that you have to deal with difficult issues on your own - you can always seek help from your Line Manager, Head of Service or Chief Officer.

In conclusion I would ask you to treat this matter with the seriousness it deserves and no matter how trivial you may feel that a particular situation is please remember your colleagues may take a different stance. On behalf of the COMT I wish to assure you we view this matter very seriously and we are anxious to ensure that all members of the Council's staff work in an environment in which their dignity is respected and maintained.

Thank you for reading this letter. I look forward to receiving your full support for this initiative.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Hanna." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name and title.

**BRIAN P HANNA**  
Chief Executive

# Chief Executive's Department



Our ref.: BH345/JB

Being dealt with by:

Your ref.:

Ext.

Date: 18 September 1997

Dear Colleague

## JOINT DECLARATION OF PROTECTION

It is with pleasure that I attach your personal copy of the above which has recently been signed by the Joint Staff Side Secretaries of the Joint Consultative Committee, the Lord Mayor, the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, and the Chair of the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee, on behalf of the Council, and by me on behalf of the Chief Officers' Management Team.

I hope that the successful practice of equality of opportunity will be greatly assisted by having this Joint Declaration.

I wish to assure you of my commitment to ensuring that Belfast City Council is seen as a fair employer and recognises the fact that all employees have the right to work without intimidation or harassment.

I seek your commitment to the same principle and thank you for your on-going dedication to the promotion of a good and harmonious working environment and to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Brian Hanna'.

**BRIAN P HANNA**

ENC

**Brian P Hanna** FCIEH DMS  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL  
JOINT DECLARATION OF PROTECTION

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL, ITS SENIOR MANAGERS  
AND THE UNIONS REPRESENTING THE EMPLOYEES

- 1 Declare and fully accept that discrimination or victimisation in employment is unlawful and unacceptable. We are committed to ensuring that any discrimination or victimisation carried out by employees will be vigorously opposed by both the Council and the Trade Unions.
- 2 Accept that every employee has the right to work free from intimidation or harassment on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, gender or any other such matter relating to equality of opportunity.
- 3 Jointly condemn intimidation or harassment by word or actions, and commit ourselves to take all reasonable steps to prevent the intimidation or harassment in the workplace of employees by persons of another religious belief, political opinion, gender or any other such matter. Such intimidation or harassment should be regarded as an offence of gross misconduct which may warrant dismissal.
- 4 The Council declares its commitment to promoting and maintaining a good and harmonious working environment in which the dignity of every employee is respected. The Council will only permit the display of flags and emblems authorised in line with the spirit and purpose of this declaration and which are consistent with a neutral and harmonious working environment. The Council prohibits the unauthorised display of posters, graffiti, flags and emblems or the circulation of materials or articulation of slogans or songs which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension to a particular group of employees.
- 5 The Council will oppose any attempt to prevent the employment, continued employment or career development of any person in contravention of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Acts.
- 6 The Council is committed to ensuring that no employee is less favourably treated because s/he has taken action or may take action connected with Fair employment (Northern Ireland) Acts.

ACTION

- 7 The Council will issue this declaration to each member of staff and will ensure that the declaration is prominently displayed in the workplace.

REVIEW

- 8 The Council will keep the effectiveness of this policy under constant review and will consult and agree with Trade Unions and employees on any changes which may be required in future.

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Lord Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Booth", written over a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Jones", written over a horizontal line.

Chair of Policy and Resources Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Hanna", written over a horizontal line.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert H. Bennett", written over a horizontal line.

Chair of Policy and Resources  
Personnel) Sub-Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert H. Bennett", written over a horizontal line.