

## **Council – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

### **Notice of Motion**

#### **Gender Neutral Language in the Council**

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is committed to supporting woman and minority groups to take part in local government and appreciates that use of male universals (such as ‘chairman’ to refer to all people), references to marital status (such as ‘Councillor Mrs’ when a similar title is not used for men) and other gendered language (such as Mr Mayor and Madam Mayor), can give the impression that local government is only accessible to certain people, which could discourage women and minority groups from engaging in local politics.

Council notes that there is inconsistent use of gender-neutral language in Southend-on-Sea Borough Council’s constitution, policies and communications (both online and offline, written and verbal) and believes that language reflects and influences attitudes, behaviours and perceptions.

The use of gender-neutral language helps to avoid word choices that could be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm, which helps to reduce gender stereotyping, promote social change and achieve gender equality.

#### **Council resolves to:**

- Remove male universals, such as ‘chairman’, from the constitution, policies and all written and verbal communications and to replace them with gender-neutral terms, such as ‘chair’.
- Desist from making reference to a person’s marital status unless they expressly request it is included.
- Use gender-neutral language where an individual’s sex or social gender are not relevant or not known.
- Communicate these changes to all departments and members of staff within Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

Proposed by: Cllr Helen McDonald

Seconded by: Cllr Matt Dent