

Mairi Millar
Director of Legal and Administration
Chief Executive's Office
Glasgow City Council

Reference: mm/lc/ibruce

3 September 2025

Dear Ms Millar

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2025. I have carefully considered its terms as well as those of the Council's motion.

I and my office are committed to supporting work being undertaken to improve on civility in public life. I and the Standards Commission for Scotland, amongst other organisations such as the Scottish Government and the Jo Cox Foundation, are participating in an initiative being led by COSLA seeking to improve such conduct, including in online forums. I am personally already a signatory to the Jo Cox Foundation and Compassion in Politics Civility Pledge.

These partner organisations are in the process of developing jointly an action plan. I have no doubt that COSLA will welcome the Council's commitment to improving this aspect of public life and any thoughts that you may have, including those set out in the motion, on practical steps that may be taken to do so.

I note that the motion calls on me to closely examine organised complaints campaigns and have due regard to the fact that they might be contributing to organised or stochastic harassment.

I can confirm that I have already committed publicly, whilst providing evidence to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee of the Scottish Parliament, to conducting research on civility in public life. That research is already underway. Thus far, our findings do not point to any undue impact of organised complaint campaigns, although this may relate to the fact that our own data is limited to complaints made about councillors. From those that we have reviewed, there are no clear patterns emerging other than the fact that complaints about incivility in public life appear to be on the increase.

Notwithstanding this, I am happy to commit to reviewing whether we are able to identify such campaigns and the impact that these may be having on the number and type of complaints that we receive in the future. There is an upcoming meeting with

the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR) in our calendar. At that meeting we will seek to assess the extent to which local authority monitoring officers may be able to assist with this endeavour.

I trust that this response is clear and helpful to you and to the Council but please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Ian Bruce
Ethical Standards Commissioner