

## Use of Gender-Neutral/ Gender-Inclusive Language in Gloucestershire County Council Constitution

### What is gender-neutral language?

Gender-neutral language or gender-inclusive language is language that avoids bias toward a particular sex or social gender. This includes use of nouns that are not gender-specific to refer to roles or professions, as well as avoidance of the pronouns *he/she*, *him/her* and *his/hers* to refer to people of unknown or indeterminate gender.

There are professions and roles that are not gender specific but which have traditionally had a gendered word to describe them. For example, *fireman* has become *fire fighter*; *policeman* has become *police officer* etc.

Particularly relevant to GCC and the practice within the democratic function of the council is the use of the word *chairman*, which prevails both in spoken usage, in the constitution and within other documents such as meeting minutes and agenda.

### What are we already doing at GCC?

Within the GCC Constitution, the majority of references to the role of the Chair are either *chair* or *chairperson*, but there are also references to *chairman* within the constitution.

Within the constitution, when reference is made to members of the public, they are subsequently referred to as *he or she*.

Within the wider council, especially in public facing areas, the practice is far more up to date. For example, from the register a death service, there is extensive use of gender-neutral language to refer to an individual of unknown gender: “**Their** bus pass and/or blue badge, if **they** had one”

### What can we change?

1. Tidy up the language relating to the position of chair – not only in the constitution, but also in documents such as meeting agendas and minutes, i.e. *Chairman* becomes *Chair* or *Chairperson*.
2. Within the constitution, change references to ‘*he/she*, *him/her* and *his/hers*’ to ‘*they/them/theirs*’.

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