

# **GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL**

## **POLICY ON PUBLIC PROCESSIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS**

### **Background**

Glasgow is a multicultural city in which, over many years, communities and individuals of different backgrounds and persuasions have found a home. At the beginning of this new century, Glasgow is a city looking to the future. At the same time, however, it remains conscious of the importance of its history. One aspect of this is its tradition of public processions and demonstrations. The use of the term 'procession' in this policy covers all parades, marches, cavalcades and demonstrations etc whether organised by civic, cultural, political, arts or religious organisations, community groups or other interest groups.

Whilst this tradition can have positive aspects, there have been occasions when participants in processions (or followers) have displayed an overtly controversial political or religious affiliation which has caused offence to others and, in a small number of cases, provoked public disorder. Such conduct cannot be condoned and is inconsistent with a friendly, inclusive and tolerant city. It also has a negative impact on how Glasgow is perceived by the wider world.

During summer 2004 the Council circulated widely a draft policy on public processions and demonstrations for comment. This policy is based on the comments received. It operates within the context of Section 62 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act (1982), as amended by the Public Order Act 1986. The Council will review the operation of the policy by the end of 2005.

### **Policy aim**

This policy recognises the need to achieve balance between the legitimate desire of people to protest, to celebrate their history and cultural traditions, or to raise awareness of issues that they regard as important, and the legitimate right of non-participants to go about their daily lives with minimal disruption and inconvenience.

It is critical to its success that the Council work with the Police and procession organisers to ensure that the policy is applied equally to the broad range of organisations that might wish to hold events in the city, is implemented fairly, adhered to on a consistent basis and monitored properly.

The policy is intended to be a general one which applies to those who organise processions, and those who wish to take part.

## **Key principles**

The following key principles underpin the Council's policy on public processions and demonstrations :

- The rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression as outlined in the European Convention on Human Rights are fundamental rights which the City Council believes should be open to all.
- These rights are not absolute, however; they must be balanced by the responsibility to ensure that the rights of others are not infringed.
- The exercise of these rights brings specific responsibilities both to those organising and participating in processions, especially in relation to those residents whose lives may be disrupted by a particular procession.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE COUNCIL**

The Council's policy aims to make clear to organisers, participants and members of the public, those issues which it considers important when dealing with the notification of a procession. This represents a general approach; each procession will be assessed on its own merits and according to circumstances.

Responsibility for a procession and its participants lies first and foremost with the procession organiser who must ensure a pre-planned, well-organised and peaceful event that has as little negative impact as possible on local residents and communities. The Police, too, have a critical role in upholding the law in and around processions and demonstrations.

In considering notifications of processions, the Council will take into account the volume, timing and route of the proposed procession and any possibility of public disorder.

### **Number of processions**

In terms of the volume of processions, the Council will consider :

- the number of processions that have taken place within the area affected by the proposed procession within the last year and, in the light of this, the potential for the procession to cause excessive disruption to residents and businesses in the area and to motorists, pedestrians and public transport users along its proposed route. The greater the number of processions, the greater the likelihood of some restrictions.

## **Timing of processions**

In terms of the timing of processions, the Council will presume that :

- processions will take place between 7.30am and 9.00pm and that no music will be played before 9.00am or later than 6.00pm, unless good reasons are presented as to why these conditions should not apply. In terms of the playing of music, further restrictions may be required after considering the type of premises on the proposed route e.g. residential developments, places of worship, football grounds and public houses.

## **Procession routes**

In terms of procession routes, the Council will consider :

- the impact of the route on residents, businesses and transport users and seek to balance the desire of the procession organisers for a particular route with the impact on other people affected by that route. The presumption is that processions will avoid residential areas and should, where practical, keep to main arterial routes;
- before seeking to alter proposed routes to limit disruption in local areas, organisers' proposals for stewarding and other arrangements that maximise opportunities for the Police to ensure that traffic and pedestrian movement is disrupted as little as possible.

## **Public disorder**

In terms of likely threats to public disorder, the Council will consider :

- Police advice regarding public safety or potential public disorder in relation to any proposed procession, as well as Police reports on the extent to which previous processions have involved anti-social behaviour on the part of participants or followers;
- representations from residents and businesses whose activities are likely to be affected by the proposed procession regarding the expectation of disruption, public disorder and anti-social behaviour;
- whether, having assessed these reports, it should :
  - make alterations to the route;
  - ask for stewarding arrangements to be strengthened;
  - seek to prevent a procession to ensure that anti-social behaviour is not promoted.

The Council will consider the impact of a procession in its totality and the likelihood of any restriction will be greater where the procession or its followers have previously caused public disorder or damage to property, been involved in anti-social behaviour or failed to comply with Police instructions on the day.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISERS**

The organiser of a procession will be required to agree to certain conditions when notifying the Council of his/her intention to hold a procession. In practice, there will be a degree of flexibility in how far the guidelines operate to reflect local circumstances. **(Changes in bold)**

### **All organisers should :**

- provide 28 days notice to the Police and the Council of the intention to hold a procession, **except in those circumstances where this period of notice would be impractical;**
- give notification as early as possible in those cases where a series of similar processions is proposed;
- co-operate with the Council and the Police from the time of submission of the notification of a procession until the procession disperses;
- identify himself/herself to the Police Officer in charge at the commencement of the procession;
- ensure that all participants have been informed of any conditions imposed on the procession (change to timing, change to route etc);
- ensure anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not allowed to participate;
- ensure an appropriate ratio of stewards or marshals to participants (one to ten) and that all stewards :

are briefed by organisers and given guidance/instruction on their role prior to the procession;

carry proof of status;

co-operate with the Police as required;

are highly visible and easily identifiable;

conduct themselves in a proper manner;

ensure that participants comply with directions regarding their own public safety and that of members of the public;

- ensure that, wherever possible, processions follow main roads, rather than going through residential housing developments;
- ensure that all participants do not march more than four abreast, keeping to the near or left hand side of the street except on one-way streets where they will keep to the right side;
- ensure that the Police are assisted in guaranteeing that passage is allowed for traffic and pedestrians;
- ensure that the procession is split into sections in order to avoid serious dislocation of traffic and to facilitate the crossing of pedestrians who have a right of free access and passage to or through any public area;
- ensure that all playing of music ceases when approaching and passing places of worship while services are in progress, as instructed by the Police;
- ensure all participants disperse as soon as the procession concludes;
- ensure that the behaviour of participants could not reasonably be perceived as being **deliberately aggressive** (ie threatening, abusive, **homophobic**, sectarian, or racist);
- accept that he/she is responsible for the behaviour of all participants, including bands where appropriate, (as well as followers) and for ensuring general compliance with the Council's policy on public processions and Police instructions;
- note that the conditions of Section 62 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to the use of loudspeakers shall be observed;
- note that the terms of the Public Order Act 1986 in relation to the prohibition of the wearing of uniforms signifying association with any political organisations etc shall be observed;
- note that the terms of the City of Glasgow District Council (Prohibition of the consumption of Alcohol) Byelaws 1996, in relation to the prohibition of the consumption of alcohol by any person in a designated place shall be observed;
- note that the Council may take into account any public disorder, anti-social behaviour or damage to property resulting from a specific procession if notification is received from the organiser for a similar march.

## GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

### All participants in processions should :

- behave with due regard for the rights, traditions and feelings for others in the vicinity of the procession, particularly in areas where there has previously been public disorder around processions;
- behave with due respect at 'sensitive' areas such as places of worship;
- refrain from using words or behaviour which could reasonably be perceived as being **deliberately aggressive** (ie threatening, abusive, **homophobic**, sectarian, or racist);
- obey the lawful direction of procession organisers, stewards and the Police at all times;
- keep to the designated route as directed by the Police;
- refrain from consuming alcohol or drugs prior to or during the procession;
- not display flags relating to proscribed organisations or which are likely to cause offence;
- disperse in good order as soon as the procession concludes.

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