

Motion to: Council

28 November 2023

Subject: Freedom from Fear campaign

Proposer: Councillor Fulton-McAlister

Seconder: Councillor Giles

This Council notes:

- 1) That Usdaw (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) runs an annual Respect For Shopworkers Week as part of their Freedom From Fear campaign.
- 2) That this is held in the build-up to the busy Christmas period, at a period of particular stress for retail workers, encouraging customers to 'Keep Your Cool'.
- 3) The campaign seeks to highlight the abuse, threats, and violence that workers suffer whilst simply going about their jobs.
- 4) That as part of this campaign Usdaw also surveys thousands of their members in an annual Freedom From Fear Survey.
- 5) This survey shows that during 2022, 7 in 10 shopworkers experienced verbal abuse, 49% were threatened by a customer and nearly 8% shopworkers were assaulted over the year, a marked increase on pre-pandemic levels.
- 6) Excluding pandemic-affected years, the results from 2022's survey show higher levels of violence and abuse than ever before.
- 7) This rise is being driven by the significant rise in retail crime and theft from organised gangs. Nearly a third of incidents against shopworkers are triggered by shoplifting.
- 8) The British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores have both also noted rising abuse, threats and violence against shopworkers.

This Council believes:

- 9) Violent crime, threats and abuse are very real hazards for retail workers and the harassment of staff by customers is an all-too-common event.
- 10) That rising retail crime from organised gangs is driving this upward trend in violence, abuse, and threats against retail workers.

- 11) Abuse is not part of the job. Workers should never have to face abuse, threats or violence when doing their jobs.
- 12) Employers have a legal and moral obligation to make the working environment as safe as possible for employees. Staff should be given the support of management and appropriate training on how to deal with incidents.
- 13) Employers should take every possible step to protect staff, have a robust reporting procedure in place and always take complaints of harassment seriously.
- 14) Trade union recognition and strong workplace organising makes the workplace safer for staff.

This Council **RESOLVES:**

- 15) To publicly support Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign and retail workers in the area with a statement of support and by posting on Council social media platforms using relevant hashtags and to encourage individual councillors to do the same.
- 16) To encourage individual councillors to engage with retail stores in their ward, talk to shopworkers and listen to their experiences.
- 17) To encourage individual councillors to work closely with their neighbourhood policing teams, to identify patrol areas and explore measures to deter retail crime.
- 18) To use links with local police forces and Police Crime Commissioners to ensure retail crime is always treated seriously, incidents are routinely responded to and the often-severe impact on victims is appropriately acknowledged, whilst encouraging strong coordination with local retailers.
- 19) To support initiatives or schemes in the area by police that dedicated to tackling organised crime and repeat and prolific offenders, especially in stores with a high level of incidents.
- 20) To support initiatives encouraging the rehabilitation of retail-crime offenders.
- 21) To use links with local businesses and retail stores to make sure proper workplace procedures are in place, including robust reporting mechanisms, and that front-line staff are appropriately supported, trained, and told not to engage shoplifters for their own safety.