



## STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

# Strategic Priorities and Policy Standing Committee

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Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors  
From: Keith Hearst, Grant and Policy Writer  
Standing Committee Date: Tuesday, February 6, 2024  
Report Number: LS-2024-006  
Council Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024  
Subject: **Public Conduct Policy**

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### 1. Recommendation:

THAT Council receive this report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council approve the Town of Cobourg Public Conduct Policy to ensure a consistent approach to respond to unacceptable behaviour on Town properties.

### 2. Executive Summary:

The Public Conduct Policy sets out the expectations for appropriate behaviour by individuals and members of the public on Town properties. This policy encompasses interactions between the public, Town staff, Members of Council, and other patrons to promote respectful and harassment-free public spaces. Contraventions of this policy may result in restrictions being imposed on an individual or group of individuals. These restrictions may include blocking the individual's access to municipal facilities for a length of time. Every decision to restrict individual access will be reviewed by an internal panel of senior management staff to determine whether the restriction imposed was appropriate. The purpose of the policy is to ensure an equitable and respectful environment in municipal facilities for staff and members of the public.

### **3. Background**

A Public Conduct Policy is a tool that can be used to set clear expectations for behaviour in public spaces. The development of a policy around public conduct on municipal property was fast-tracked, per Council direction, to respond to the increase in unacceptable behaviour at Town facilities and directed towards Town staff. There have been an increasing number of instances where Town staff are being harassed while doing their work, and upon entering and exiting municipal facilities. The development of this policy is intended to be supplementary to current Divisional practices. The policy is also intended to provide guidelines for when it is appropriate to escalate a response to an individual based on their unacceptable behaviour. The Town has signs at municipal facilities where staff interact with the public saying, “inappropriate language and/or behaviour will not be tolerated.” This policy is meant to strengthen the Town’s zero-tolerance policy towards aggressive and harassing behaviours towards staff and patrons of Town facilities.

### **4. Discussion:**

This policy sets out the expectations for the behaviour of the public on and within Town-owned properties to ensure that the areas where staff work and where residents and visitors access municipal services and programs remain respectful, harassment-free, and safe. The policy outlines what behaviours are deemed unacceptable and what the response to continued unacceptable behaviour will be. Each Division still has the discretion to determine how to respond to individual cases of unacceptable behaviour. However, where poor behaviours become chronic, or when behaviours are deemed to be dangerous, this policy provides a tiered approach of how to respond to these behaviours.

The policy empowers management and supervisory staff to restrict access to Town properties for an individual or group of individuals that have consistently demonstrated unacceptable, dangerous, or aggressive behaviours in Town facilities or on Town property. The restrictions are on a five-step progressive grid based on continued inappropriate behaviour. The lowest restriction (level 1) is up to seven days and the highest restriction (level 5) is up to one year.

The intent of the restrictive measures is to ensure a safe workspace for staff and safe facilities for members of the public to access programs and services without fear of injury or harassment. Decisions to restrict an individual’s access to one or multiple municipal facilities may also be appealed by the individual in writing. Furthermore, all notices of restriction shall be reviewed by an internal review panel of senior management to assess the reasonableness of the restrictions imposed. The panel has the power to uphold or amend restrictions issued to an individual.

### **5. Financial Impact and Budget**

There are no financial implications or budget impacts associated with the approval of this corporate policy.

**6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:**

Thriving Community

N/A

Service Excellence

The Public Conduct Policy demonstrated the Town's commitment to providing excellent customer service and addressing service requests and complaints in an equitable, comprehensive, and timely manner. To do this, it is crucial that the Town has the tools to respond to inappropriate and aggressive behaviours that put both staff and other members of the public at risk. This policy will ensure that staff feel comfortable in their workspace and that members of the public feel safe on Town property.

Sustainability

N/A

**7. Public Engagement:**

N/A

**8. Attachments:**

Town of Cobourg Public Conduct Policy

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Public Conduct Policy.docx
Attachments:	- Public Conduct Policy Draft v.1.docx
Final Approval Date:	Jan 30, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk / Director of Legislative Services - Jan 30, 2024 - 9:44 AM**

**Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Jan 30, 2024 - 12:10 PM**