



WHITCHURCH TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

(Adopted 25th April 2013)

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITY STATEMENT

The Council aspires to be an Equal Opportunities employer, service provider and community leader. Our aim is to ensure that all employees and service users are not subject to any form of discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation at any time on the basis of age, gender, gender reassignment, ethnic origin, colour, disability, illness (such as HIV or AIDS), marital status or being in a civil partnership, nationality, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or social background.

POSITIVE ABOUT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

This Policy recognises the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Council is committed to providing the highest quality of governance and service and recognises that the implementation of an effective Equality Policy is an integral part of this. It is not a coincidence that an organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users, usually carries out its core business efficiently. Equally a workforce that has a supportive environment is more productive. The Council as a corporate body has responsibilities as an employer, a service provider and a public authority, in which both Members and employees as individuals also have responsibilities as well as rights.

We are committed to ensuring that our services and employment practices are fair, accessible, responsive and appropriate for all residents, clients & service users, voluntary and business organizations and visitors in the community we serve, as well as the dedicated staff we employ and volunteers and partners who work with us.

To achieve this we are working on eliminating all forms of discrimination in accordance with our Equality Statement and ensure that human rights (dignity and respect) are central to the way in which we deliver services.

We will strive to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

POSITIVE AS AN EMPLOYER

The Council is committed to making full use of the talents and resources of all its employees. It will recruit, reward, develop, promote and transfer employees on the basis of the skills, relevant qualifications, experience, aptitude and ability they can bring to the job.

The Council will encourage and develop all employees to support and carry out the requirements of this Equality policy. All employees will be encouraged to identify and disseminate good practice.

Recruitment

The Council recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job, in respect of experience and qualifications. It is against The Council's policy to discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of any characteristic listed in its Equality Statement, at any stage of the recruitment process.

The Council staff must ensure that:

- all job opportunities are open to all applicants
- no prejudgement or assumptions are made by recruiters or managers.
- all applications are given equal consideration
- no decision is made in advance regarding the outcome of recruitment
- all applicants and staff are made aware of the Council policy on recruitment

All recruitment publicity must positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people and should avoid any stereotyping of roles. All publicity should state that The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer and welcomes diversity. All vacancies must be advertised in accordance with the Council's Personnel Policies.

The selection process must be carried out consistently at all levels. It must be fair and non-discriminatory. Application forms where used, must state that The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer. The only criteria to be used in the selection process are those based on the skills, experience and qualifications essential for the job.

All aspects of The Council's recruitment and selection process will be monitored by the Town Clerk to ensure the Council meets its obligations as an Equal Opportunities and quality employer.

Training and Development

Training and development opportunities will be made available to all employees and any form of discrimination whether direct or indirect will not be tolerated. Priority will be given to training or development activity which is linked to the achievement of The Council's aims and objectives. Where resources permit the Council will support training and development beyond the needs of the job which can be returned as a benefit to the Council i.e. increased flexibility, breadth of experience and commitment.

Terms and conditions

All employees will be treated equitably with respect to pay and other conditions of their contracts of employment.

Breaches of Policy

Employees who feel that they have been subject to discrimination should attempt to resolve the issue by talking to the individual whom they feel has acted inappropriately. If this does not resolve the issue then the employee can approach their manager or, if necessary, the Town Clerk under the Grievance Procedure

Harassment

The Council will not tolerate or accept any form of harassment of its employees. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and any contravention of this right may be subject to the appropriate grievance or disciplinary procedure. Harassment policy and processes are included in the Council's Personnel Policies.

Discrimination against people with disabilities

The Council will make reasonable changes to the physical features of its premises or to its method of undertaking business where this can enable an employee to properly undertake their job role. We will think positively about disabled staff as we do with disabled customers.

Religious discrimination

Discriminatory behaviour which fails to acknowledge the rights and needs of people with different beliefs or practices will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Bullying

Workplace bullying is a separate issue from sexual and racial harassment but the effects can be the same. Within the working environment bullying can be described as the use of a position or power to coerce others by fear, oppression or threat.

The Council will not tolerate bullying behaviour at any level and it is the responsibility of all managers to eliminate any form of bullying which they become aware of. Allegations of bullying will be dealt with under the grievance or disciplinary procedures or Councillors Code of Conduct. Any employee who feels they are being bullied should consult any manager or the Town Clerk.

Victimisation

The Council will ensure that no employee is treated less favourably than other people because, for example they have brought proceedings, given evidence, or complained about the behaviour of someone who has been harassing or discriminating against them.

Age

- Recruitment, is based entirely on relevant criteria, this criteria will be specific to the post and will not include age or age related criteria. Person specifications must focus on job needs only.
- All Job advertisements will avoid the use of ageist language.
- Where appropriate, advertisements will be designed to attract a mixed-age response through advertising. Application forms will be reviewed to minimise inferred calculation of age.
- Age related details will be separated from the application form as far as practicable.
- Candidates will be selected on the basis of skills and abilities. Recruitment procedures will ensure that the process is fair, consistent and does not discriminate against a particular age group.
- Only job-related questions should be asked of job applicants. Candidates will be measured against selection criteria to help decision-making.
- All successful applicants will be subject to an employment medical questionnaire irrespective of age. Assumptions about capability or medical fitness will not be based on the age of the applicant.
- Promotion, training and career development opportunities will be provided equally for all staff whatever their age.
- Specific length of service provisions relating to pay and benefits will only be permitted where this can be justified in that the arrangement rewards loyalty, encourages motivation or recognises relevant experience.
- Pay scales and access to other benefits including the occupational pension and bonuses will not be based on age. Any age related criteria will be removed.
- The Council does not have a default age for retirement.
- Any voluntary redundancy scheme will not be based on age related criteria unless such criteria may be justified under the regulations. Selection for redundancy will not be based on length of service alone as this is indirectly discriminatory.

Responsibilities

- All members and employees of the Council have a responsibility to ensure that the Council's Equal Opportunities policy is communicated and its requirements adhered to.
- All Council staff will receive training and development in equal opportunities issues and councillors will be offered this training. The Council policies on managing diversity form part of its Employee Handbook.

POSITIVE ABOUT SERVICE DELIVERY

The Council's clients have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment whilst participating in or receiving any of The Council's services. It will ensure that all recipients of the services delivered directly by the Council are guaranteed the same opportunity.

All aspects of the Council's Equalities Policy impact on the manner in which it directly delivers services to and for its customers.

Adherence to the principles and practices contained within the policy will be monitored on a regular basis. The Council will look for ways that it can make its services accessible to all.

Breaches of this Policy by staff will be subject to the grievance and discipline procedures.

Where any service is delivered indirectly by contractors, partners or volunteers, the Council will ensure that they understand its Equality Policy and adhere to it.

POSITIVE ABOUT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The Council has a local governance and community leadership role. Local residents, members of local organisations, businesses and visitors have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment when engaging with the Council

The Council recognises the diversity within the community and seeks to reflect this in the work it undertakes within that community. All aspects of the Council's Equalities Policy impact on the manner in which it engages with the community.

Adherence to the principles and practices contained within the policy will be monitored on a regular basis. The Council will look for ways that it can make it easier for everyone to engage with it.

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY

Inclusive

The Council believe that as far as possible, disabled customers should be able to obtain services in the same way as other customers who are not disabled. However, given the constraints of operating from existing buildings, there will be some situations where the same treatment is not possible. In such cases, we will come up with a solution as to how best to service our disabled customers, which demonstrates respect for their dignity.

Finding Out

The Council will periodically undertake an audit of its premises and operations to assess as far as possible, what customers with different disabilities may need in order to access our services. We will base this on good practice guidance and where appropriate talk to individual customers about any particular problems they encounter. As necessary, we will seek expert advice on finding solutions.

Existing Premises

We will focus particularly on making reasonable adjustments to the physical features of the premises. Where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled customers to make use of a service, we will take reasonable measures to: remove the features, or alter the features, or provide a reasonable means of avoiding it, or provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available.

Getting Better

We will plan the development of our business with disabled people in mind. We will ensure our staff are aware disability issues and are trained to meet the needs of disabled customers.

POSITIVE ABOUT DEMOCRACY

Where councillors are to be elected, the Council will make information available as widely as possible about the election, and help people who are interesting in standing for election, with the objective of reflecting the diversity of the Parish.

When the Council seeks a co-opted member, it will advertise widely and will ensure that every applicant has an equal opportunity. Selection will be made against objective criteria.

The Council will always promote democracy, encourage all people to engage with it and vote at elections. It will make special efforts to engage with "hard to reach" groups.