

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1.0 Introduction and scope of this policy

1.1 This council is committed to equality of opportunity and to providing services and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no member of the council, applicant or member of staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

1.2 The council values people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All members of the council and employees are covered by this policy and it applies to all areas of council activity and employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion.

1.3 The council has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and diversity policy.

1.4 All members of the council, employees, workers or self-employed contractors whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

1.5 All members of the council will be given the opportunity to attend training and development opportunities in order that they fully develop their role as a representative of the community.

1.6 Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in this council as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. Ultimate responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with the council but individual councillors and all employees have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every member and employee to this policy and application of its principles is essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the council.

1.7 This policy covers the actions of all members of the council, its employees and any volunteers or partners working alongside the council. Where the term employee is used in this policy, that should be taken to include any volunteers or partners.

2.0 The council's commitment as an employer

2.1 The council is committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued
- entitling every employee, worker or self-employed contractor to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff
- understanding equality in the workplace is a good management practice and makes sound business sense
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

3.0 The council's commitment as a service provider

3.1 The council is committed to:

- providing services to which all residents of the parish are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender dysphoria, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our residents
- fully supporting this policy by the council as a body
- selecting those for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit purely on the basis of aptitude and ability
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually
- having clear procedures that enable our residents, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated
- treating breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings
- encouraging all staff to come forward with any issues they need council assistance and understanding with, no matter their background, identity or circumstances, such as if they are victims of domestic abuse or have caring commitments.

4.0 The council's commitment to its members

4.1 The council is committed to:

- Ensuring all residents are advised of the four-yearly election cycle and the means by which they can be nominated for election
- Ensuring all residents are advised where there is a casual vacancy on the council and whether that vacancy will be filled by election or co-option
- All members of the council having the opportunity to attend induction, training and development opportunities for their role as a community representative
- Having mechanisms in place whereby members of the council can raise concerns about the functioning of the council
- Ensuring all members of the council have an equal voice and council and committee meetings.

5.0 Equal opportunity policy statements

Age - This council will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

Disability - This council will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people and
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of loop systems, braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.

Race – This Council will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racists incidents and
- actively promote race equality in the Council.

Sex – This council will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men
- offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

Gender reassignment – This council will:

- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment
- prohibit and respond to all instances of discrimination, both from colleagues and externally.

Sexual orientation – This council will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
- promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Religion or belief – This council will:

- ensure that members' and employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible and
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

Pregnancy or maternity – This council will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

Marriage or civil partnership – This council will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

Ex-offenders - This council will prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Equal pay - This council will ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

Unconscious bias - This council recognises the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work and within council meetings, which is where an opinion is formed about an individual by another person without them necessarily being aware they have formed it.

There are many different forms of unconscious bias, ranging from an affinity towards those of a similar background, to placing too much significance on what one person has said.

The council will work against forms of unconscious bias in all decisions and focus on promoting diversity and inclusion.