

WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

As an employer, Woodley Town Council has a duty to encourage and promote equality in providing its services and in carrying out its public functions.

The Town Council recognises the importance of its employees in achieving the Council's aims and their role in providing quality services. We aim to create an environment where all people are able to give their best; free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying - where everyone feels valued and motivated and decisions are based on merit.

OUR INTENT

Woodley Town Council is committed to fairness and equality.

We will:

- Carry out employment practices, provide services and carry out public functions in a way that ensures that no employee, potential employee or service user is treated unfairly on the grounds of their sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, disability, gender-reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or any other grounds which cannot be justified, either job related or in law.
- Promote equality of opportunity for service users, employees and potential employees.
- Work with our partners to tackle prejudice where it occurs and promote understanding between different groups.

The commitment of the Town Clerk and councillors as well as the cooperation of employees are vital to the success of equality strategies.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

Members, employees and those acting on behalf of the Town Council, including other organisations and persons commissioned or contracted to deliver public functions, are responsible for implementing and supporting equality and diversity and have a duty to challenge all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The policy is applicable to any employment matter in which equitable treatment of a current or potential employee may be an issue.

We acknowledge our responsibility to promote and encourage equality in the provision of services, employment practices and will include appropriate obligations in contracts with other organisations and persons commissioned or contracted to deliver services on the Town Council's behalf.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We recognise the obligation to provide equitable treatment to current and potential employees and the need to refrain from any discriminatory practice that may impair the Council's ability to make full use of skills and aptitudes of potential or existing employees.

When advertising jobs, writing job descriptions and person specifications, shortlisting and interviewing we will take care to ensure that unlawful discrimination does not occur and that

processes do not exclude members of a particular group that may face barriers in gaining employment.

Where possible and appropriate we will support people to access employment opportunities from under represented groups.

We aim to ensure equality and fairness in employment matters.

We have robust recruitment and selection practices in place.

All job applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria for a job vacancy will be interviewed and considered on their abilities.

For employees who become disabled we will make every effort to enable them to continue to work for the council and will offer retraining where appropriate.

We will make reasonable adjustments for existing employees and those attending for interview where required.

TRAINING AND LEARNING

We are committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of training opportunities. We wish to engender a working environment that is safe and supportive and where employees are able to learn and develop and work to the best of their abilities.

SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE

The Council regularly seeks the views of residents on the quality of our services and their suggestions for improvements. We will seek to find out more on whether our services are meeting the needs of users and where possible and appropriate include actions to meet the needs of people who are under represented or disadvantaged because of particular equalities issues.

Partnership working

We consult and work in partnership with several organisations and groups in the town and seek to promote equality and diversity.

Procurement

In procuring contracts for works the Town Council aims to ensure that all businesses have fair access to opportunities to work with the Council. In the delivery of these contracts we will ensure that evaluation models, specifications, contract conditions, quality requirements and monitoring procedures fully address equalities issues. We aim to ensure compliance with equalities legislations and use positive action provisions in assessing the commitment of firms tendering to the aims and value of this policy.

Community engagement

We aim to ensure that equality and diversity are part of community involvement and in doing so to try and meet the needs of different groups in an appropriate and sensitive manner. Involving local people and our partners is central to our work at the Town Council. Our policies will have a more lasting impact and services more responsive to local need if they are influenced by those they directly affect. We will continue to seek feedback and suggestions from the town's residents and our customers through the bi-annual residents survey and on specific service or provision projects as they occur.

LEGISLATION

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act replaced existing anti-discrimination laws with a single act.

The main provisions of the Equality Act include:

- Protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment, services, public functions and premises
- Protection from discrimination by association and perception
- Enhanced protection for disabled people, their carers and families, including protection from discrimination arising out of disability and in recruitment procedures
- Extending protection from third party harassment to all equalities groups
- Allowing employers to take positive action in recruitment and promotion
- Requiring employers to report on gender pay gaps and making pay secrecy clauses unenforceable
- Require public bodies to take account of 'socio-economic disadvantage' when making strategic decisions
- Extending the existing race, gender and disability duties on public bodies to age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment and sexual orientation requiring the Town Council to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between all persons
 - foster good relations between all persons

Human Rights Act 1998 (implemented October 2000)

Rights include freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and the right to privacy and not to be discriminated against in respect of these rights and freedoms.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Woodley Town Council will address any of the following:

Direct discrimination - applying a policy, criteria or practice which, although applied to everyone equally, treats a person unfavourably on the grounds of their sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, disability and gender re-assignment and which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Discrimination arising out of disability - treating a person less favourably because of something connected to their disability.

Combined discrimination - treating a person less favourably because of a combination of two equalities issues, for example race and sex.

Discrimination by association - treating a person less favourably because of their association with another, eg a disabled person.

Perceptive discrimination - treating a person less favourably because of particular perception, eg a person who is perceived to be gay.

Victimisation - a person being given less favourable treatment than another in the same circumstances because it is suspected or known that they have brought proceedings under legislation or given evidence or information relating to those proceedings or alleged that discrimination has occurred.

Harassment and bullying - unwanted conduct either intentional or unintentional, which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another person. This includes harassment of a sexual nature or related to gender re-assignment. Harassment can be on any basis including sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender re-assignment - and extends to harassment by third parties and by association. Bullying is where someone uses their power or strength to undermine an employee or a groups of employees.

Vicarious liability - employers are liable for acts of unlawful discrimination by their employees, even if the employer did not approve or even know about the acts in question, unless they can prove they took such steps as were reasonably practical to prevent the discrimination.

Woodley Town Council is committed to promoting an environment where employees can work without fear of being intimidated, harassed, bullied or being subject to physical or verbal aggression.

WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As an employer and service provider, the Town Council has a responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity and is responsible for discrimination, harassment or victimisation by any employee, councillor or organisation delivering services on its behalf, whether or not it was done with the Town Council's approval.

The Town Council requires its employees and councillors, irrespective of their position on the Council to have responsibility in ensuring they read and understand policies and by being involved in their creation and implementation. Appropriate obligations will be included within any contracts with other organisations or persons commissioned or contracted to deliver services on behalf of the Town Council.

Responsibilities:

Town Clerk - to assess employment practices in relation to this policy and advise on remedial action, where required and to coordinate the provision of advice, training and guidance to employees on equality and diversity in employment and delivering services.

Managers and supervisors must recognise their responsibility to adopt employment practices and provide services that are consistent with this policy and should promote an awareness of the principles involved to their colleagues.

Employees must cooperate with any measures to develop equality and diversity and refrain from any discriminatory actions or decisions as explained in this policy.

Councillors - Members must recognise their responsibility to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Human Rights Act. Equality and diversity training will be offered to all councillors.

WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITMENTS

- To ensure that the necessary resources are available to monitor equality and diversity.
- To ensure that employment practices and services are carried out in a way that ensures that no employee, potential employee or service user is treated unfavourably.
- To promote equality of opportunity.
- To promote good relations in the town.
- To ensure that all employees are aware of this policy.
- To provide guidance and training to all employees and councillors to ensure they understand their responsibilities under the law and this policy.
- To review policies and procedures and change them should they be found to be discriminatory.
- To monitor the existing workforce and job applicants.
- Publish relevant equalities information demonstrating the Town Council's progress in meeting on matters relating to the Equality Duty.
- Take disciplinary or any other appropriate action against any employee or councillor who breaches the Equality and Diversity policy.

In terms of service delivery:

- We will ensure that employees delivering services do not discriminate on any of the grounds set out in the Equality Duty.
- We will continue to assess and improve access to our facilities and services.
- We will review our services regularly, via the bi-annual residents survey and as a one-off exercise for specific projects, to make sure they meet the needs of everyone in the community.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Where appropriate, we will include equalities information in reports to the Town Council and its committees and working parties, including equality objectives where relevant and progress on any objectives set.

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