

# Equalities and Diversity Policy

Reviewed October 2023

## Policy & Resources Committee (P1235)

### Introduction

- i. Hedge End Town Council is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no 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.
- ii. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All employees are covered by this policy, and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored, and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.
- iii. The Town Clerk has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy and, as part of this process, all personnel policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.
- iv. All 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 Town Council.
- v. Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in the Town Council as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with the senior management team, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Town Council.

## Legal Obligations

- vi. The Equality Act 2010 replaces all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales, namely the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Employment Equality Regulations 2003.
- vii. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. The protected characteristics of the act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- viii. The Public Sector Equality Duty, 2011 ensures that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

## Our Commitment as an Employer

- ix. To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued.
  - a. Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, volunteers and other relevant parties.
  - b. Every employee, worker or self-employed contractor is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
  - c. Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
  - d. Equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
  - e. We will review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

## Recruitment and Selection

- x. The Council will ensure that its method of recruitment and selection does not discriminate either directly or indirectly.
  - a. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will be limited to requirements necessary for the effective performance of the job.
  - b. The Council does not accept CVs, so everyone is providing the same information on an applications form.
  - c. Application forms will be anonymised where feasible prior to shortlisting.
  - d. Shortlisting and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person with mixed gender to eliminate as much unconscious bias as possible.
  - e. Candidates will be informed in advance of an interview of the requirements and if they need any reasonable adjustments to attend.

- f. Candidates will be asked the same set of questions in relation to the requirements of the job and scored on a matrix.

#### Our Commitment as a Service Provider

- xi. We aim to provide services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class.
- xii. We will make sure that our services are delivered equitably and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients.
- xiii. This policy is fully supported by the senior management team.
- xiv. This policy will be monitored and reviewed as required.
- xv. We have clear procedures that enable our clients, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.
- xvi. Breaches of our equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

#### Your Responsibilities

- xvii. Every employee, councillor or contractor is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to Equality & Diversity and prevent unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.
- xviii. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure.

#### Complaints of Discrimination

- xix. If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint.

#### Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with the changes in the law. The Council will review other policies in line with this one to ensure the council strives to remain an equal opportunities employer.