

POLICY TITLE

Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy

REVISION DATE

February 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy outlines the Council's approach to equality and diversity both in terms of employment practices and the services the Council provides. This policy relates directly to the Council's vision and objectives and underpins all aspects of the Council's work and future development.

WHAT IS MEANT BY EQUALITY?

Equality means:

- treating people fairly, with dignity and respect
- making decisions or judgements about people based on individual merit, not as a result of bias, prejudice, assumptions or stereotyping
- creating a climate where everyone has fair access to employment opportunities and to services.
- recognising the benefits of a more diverse workforce, that everyone is different and that those differences can add value
- developing a work environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying

It is not about:

- providing certain groups with preferential treatment
- pretending everyone is the same
- lowering standards
- political correctness
- irrelevant quotas

SCOPE OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY

This policy is intended for use by The Council as an employer and provider of services. Its scope includes Elected Members, all the Council's staff and all the Council's partners including contractors. It is also intended for all people who apply to the Council for employment and those who use our services.

POLICY AIM

The aim of this policy is to promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all Elected Members, staff, job applicants, customers, partners and any people that the Council comes into contact with during the course of its day to day business.

The Council will aim to make sure that no unlawful or unfair discrimination takes place on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

POLICY STATEMENT

Skegness Town Council is committed to promoting a supportive and inclusive culture for all Elected Members, staff, job applicants, customers, partners and any people that the Council comes into contact with during the course of its day to day business. By integrating people's individual strengths, the Council will maximise its efficiency and its creativity which will improve the services that it provides.

During a person's time with the Council, and irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation they can expect to be:

- treated fairly and without discrimination of any kind
- able to access opportunities for training and development to enable them to develop to their full potential
- supported in balancing their work and home life commitments and to have requests considered objectively in line with business needs
- treated with dignity and respect in a fair and consistent manner, in an environment where inappropriate behaviour is not accepted
- working in a healthy and safe environment where hazards have been assessed and minimised.

DEFINITIONS

In order to assist you to comply with equality legislation, it is important that you understand the terminology that is used:

Direct Discrimination – treating a person or people less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic they have (e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation) or their association with someone with one of these characteristics or because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination – Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your company that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic

Harassment –

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association and might include:

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word of mouth or behaviour
- sending critical e-mails to others who don't need to know about a particular person
- ridiculing or demeaning someone, generally picking on an individual or group
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- misuse of power

- unwelcome sexual advances
- making threats
- deliberately undermining a competent worker, maybe by overloading them with work
- preventing individuals progressing
- making negative remarks about a person's gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, ethnic or national origin, disability or age.

Victimisation – treating a person or people less favourably because of action they have taken under, or in connection with, equalities legislation. For example if someone has made a formal complaint of harassment or given evidence in a tribunal case.

Religious Belief - This can be regarded as any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.

Sexual Orientation - Orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men); orientation towards the person of the opposite sex (heterosexual); orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual).

Disability - a disabled person is defined as someone with 'a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

RESPONSIBILITIES

We are all responsible for making sure that the Equality Policy is fully implemented and that equality underpins every aspect of the Council's work and future development.

As an employer the Council will do this by:

- promoting equality of opportunity for all
- consulting regularly with staff, service users, community groups and all of our partners
- making sure that all staff know about the policy and its contents
- assessing the impact of all of the Council's policies and functions and changing them if they are found to be potentially discriminating
- making sure that the information relevant to the policy is openly available
- taking action against those who are in breach of this policy
- through the Business and Resources Committee monitoring to ensure the policy is implemented
- delegating responsibility to the Town Clerk to make sure that the policy is adopted and implemented.

All Elected Members and all members of staff have responsibility for the successful implementation of the policy and for making sure that their own behaviour is acceptable and in line with this policy.

Members of staff will comply with the following standards. You will:

- co-operate fully with the implementation of the policy
- report any suspected discriminatory act (to do nothing is to discriminate)
- not harass, intimidate or discriminate against colleagues or people using our services
- not unlawfully discriminate, for example, when making decisions on recruitment or selection, promotion, transfers and the provision of services

- not victimise people because they have made complaints or provided information on activities that contravene this policy
- be aware of your own personal attitudes and behaviour and the attitudes and behaviour of the organisation.

Elected Members: In addition to the list above, Elected Members will comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

EQUALITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE

In achieving the Council's corporate vision, quality service delivery and customer care are essential. To achieve quality service delivery, our position on equality will be made clear to all service users and organisations that have or are seeking contracts with the Council.

Wherever practicable we will provide equal access to our services and information for customers throughout the Town, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

All services provided by organisations either in partnership with the Council, or under contract for the Council will be required to operate in a manner consistent with this policy.

COMPLAINTS / GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Harassment and discrimination can happen accidentally or through thoughtlessness and can be unintentional. Often, the person who is causing offence is not aware of the effect their behaviour is having. Once it is brought to their attention that their behaviour is inappropriate an apology resolves the situation.

If you think you are being harassed or discriminated against it is important to make it clear to the person who is harassing you that their behaviour is unwelcome and that you want it to stop.

If speaking to the person in question has failed to stop the problem, you should talk to the Town Clerk or if necessary the Mayor.

If this approach fails or you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can make a formal complaint. All allegations will be investigated swiftly, thoroughly, sympathetically and confidentially under the Council's grievance procedure.

In all cases it is important that you keep a record of any incidents including the date, time, location and a description of the incident. In addition, record any attempts that you have made to deal with the problem. This information will be important in the event of a formal complaint.

Any Service User complaints will be dealt with promptly and efficiently in accordance with our Customer Complaints Procedure.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Equality Policy touches all aspects of the Council's strategy and operations and will help the Council to meet its legal obligations and particularly the duties placed upon it by:

- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2006
- The Equalities Act 2010

POLICY APPROVAL

This policy was approved on Wednesday 17th February 2021 by the Management Committee.

POLICY REVIEW DATE

February 2022