



ST AGNES PARISH COUNCIL

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Equal Opportunities Policy

Adopted 9th August 2019

Context

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010. The legislation covers a prescribed set of protected characteristics detailed further in this policy document. It also covers prohibited conduct including discrimination, adjustments for disabled persons, victimisation and harassment; services and public functions; premises; employment; contracts; and, advancement of equality. The latter provision specifies a public-sector equality duty, which applies equally to Town and Parish Councils.

Scope

This policy is designed to value diversity and to ensure equality of opportunity and access to services and that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of:

- Age
- Sex (formally known as gender)
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Race
- Ethnic background
- Colour
- Religion or belief (and those with none)
- Economic or Social background
- Political Belief
- Gender reassignment status
- Marriage and Civil Partnership status
- Pregnancy and Maternity status
- Trade Union or political activities
- Caring responsibilities

This list is not exhaustive.

Overriding principles

The task of promoting social inclusion, tackling discrimination and encouraging equal opportunities are key issues and the Council is committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups.
- Fostering good relations between different groups.

To promote equality and diversity with other partners the Council will:

- Promote tolerance and respect between diverse groups and individuals
- Acknowledge and celebrate, wherever possible, the variety of lifestyles and cultures within the parish
- Challenge all forms of discrimination within the Council and the wider community
- Support the development of communities and assist them in challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.
- Ensure that appropriate language and references are used by staff and Members in the enacting of Council business.

Implementation

The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In the implementation of this policy the Council will:

- Ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction.
- Promote diversity and equality and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds.
- Challenge inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable.
- Promote greater participation of under-represented groups by encouraging positive action to address inequality, promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all staff, Councillors, contractors and visitors attending the Council's offices or meetings.

The Council is committed to Equality and Diversity and to the vision of improving the quality of life for local people. The Council aims to be:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| • Accessible | • Proactive |
| • Accountable | • Professional |
| • Fair | • Responsible |
| • Inclusive | • Transparent |

The Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity and valuing diversity in all aspects of its work:

- Through the delivery of services to the community by ensuring that within reason, these services are accessible to all and that the Council fully recognise the diversity of people's needs.
- In the Council's leadership role, working with partners to promote the importance of treating every individual with dignity and respect.

Responsibility and Liability

All members of staff and Councillors remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that staff perform their duties in a lawful manner and that proper training and support is provided accordingly. In certain circumstances the Council could be vicariously liable for actions carried out by staff purportedly in the Council's name. Any member of staff or Councillor may be personally liable if, whilst on Council business and despite guidance and training from the Council, they behave illegally in respect of the Equality Act 2010.

Employment

The Council is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to ensuring within the framework of the law that the Council's workplaces are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination. Recruitment and management of staff will always adhere to the Equal Opportunities commitments within this policy and as set out in law.

Review

The policy will be reviewed once every four years as a minimum.