

HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES ON EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Higham Parish Council is committed to the values of equality and diversity, and believes equal opportunities are essential to the values of the Council.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, age, nationality, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, marital status or social class. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
- 1.3 All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed contract, agency workers or temporary, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration 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 talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Discrimination, direct or indirect, based on a person's gender, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, socio-economic background, religious or political beliefs, trade union membership, family circumstances, sexual orientation or other irrelevant distinction is unacceptable.
- 2.2 In addition to being unacceptable, such forms of discrimination represent a waste of human resources and a denial of the opportunity for individual fulfilment.
- 2.3 The Council seeks to involve all sections of staff in the continuing development and implementation of its policy.

3. Members of the public

- 3.1 The Council recognises that many members of the public use its services or visit its premises. The Council takes seriously its responsibility to these people and affirms that they will be treated with the same respect of their rights. Likewise, it is not acceptable for staff to be treated unfairly by service users or visitors

4. Organisational Structure

- 4.1 The Council's Finance Committee is charged with overseeing the implementation, monitoring and reviewing of the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 4.2 The Parish Clerk's responsibilities include communicating the policy and its implications to staff, monitoring its implementation, and advising Members on recruitment and other matters concerning equal treatment.

5. Harassment

- 5.1 The Council is committed to a working environment that is free of unlawful discrimination. Sexual, racial and personal harassment can seriously worsen working and social conditions for staff. Any incidents of harassment will be regarded extremely seriously and can be grounds for disciplinary action.

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 The co-operation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy. However, ultimate responsibility for achieving the policy's objectives and for ensuring compliance with relevant statutes and codes of practice, lies with the Council.
- 6.2 Intentional breaches of the provisions or spirit of this policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the Council's disciplinary policy.

7. Recruitment and selection

- 7.1 All relevant material will state that 'The Council is committed to implementing its Equal Opportunities Policy'. The language and any graphics used in recruitment and selection materials will be examined to ensure that it encourages a broad range of applicants and does not reinforce stereotypes.
- 7.2 Wherever possible and appropriate, all vacancies will be advertised simultaneously internally and externally.
- 7.3 Reasonable steps will be undertaken to ensure that knowledge of vacancies reaches underrepresented groups internally and externally. Wherever possible, vacancies will be notified to organisations with significant membership or involvement of underrepresented groups.
- 7.4 Selection criteria (job descriptions and person specifications) will be kept under review to ensure they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.
- 7.5 Selection panels shall comprise at least two persons and the Chair of the panel will have been trained in good employment and equal opportunities practice.
- 7.6 Where possible, underrepresented groups will be involved in the recruitment and selection process.
- 7.7 The reasons for the selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies will be against person specification and will be recorded.

8. Recruitment and selection training

- 8.1 Staff and Members likely to be involved in recruitment and selection will receive training in good employment and equal opportunities practice.
- 8.2 Staff and Members responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be responsible for drawing up the person specification. Training in this area will include recognition of stereotypical views and the effects which generalised assumptions and prejudices might have on selection decisions.

9. Training and promotion

- 9.1 Wherever possible, training will be provided for underrepresented groups to prepare them to compete on genuinely equal terms for jobs and promotion. However, recruitment to all jobs will be strictly on merit.
- 9.2 Wherever necessary, use will be made of lawful exemptions to recruit suitably qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.

10. Conditions of service

- 10.1 Wherever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- 10.2 Where practicable, work requirements will be varied to accommodate particular cultural and religious needs.

11. Personnel records

- 11.1 In order to ensure the effective operation of the Equal Opportunities Policy only, a record will be kept of all employees' and job applicants' gender, racial origins and disability.
- 11.2 Where necessary, employees will be able to check or correct their own record of these details.

12. Legislation

- 12.1 The policy will be implemented within the framework of the relevant legislation, the main statutes being:
- Equal Pay Act 1970
 - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
 - Sex Discrimination Act 1975
 - Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999
 - Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - Equality Act 2010