



# **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

*STAFF DOCUMENTS SERIES*

# **EQUALITY POLICY**

Last reviewed – January 2020

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010, which harmonises, strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation, came into force in October 2010. The legislation covers a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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.

## 2. POLICY

The Town Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In the implementation of this policy the Town 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 task of promoting social inclusion, tackling discrimination and encouraging equal opportunities are important to the Town Council 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

## 3. COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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

The Town Council aims to be:

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

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

a) Through the delivery of our services to the community by ensuring that within reason, these services are accessible to all and that we fully recognise the diversity of people's needs

b) In the Town Council's leadership role, working with partners to promote the importance of treating every individual with dignity and respect.

#### 4. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

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:

- Race (i.e. colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality or citizenship).
- Gender reassignment
- Disability
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religion or belief
- Caring for others
- Trade Union or political activities
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

This list is not exhaustive.

#### 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

5.1 To improve delivery, information and access to services we will:

- Ensure all employees, contractors and users of our services are informed about our Equality and Diversity Policy

- Apply equal opportunities principles to work undertaken for the council by external contractors, other organisations in receipt of council funding and in work with our partners
- Rectify any elements of our work which have the potential for discrimination and prejudice.

5.2 To promote equality and diversity with other partners we will:

- Promote tolerance and respect between diverse groups and individuals
- Acknowledge and celebrate, wherever possible, the variety of lifestyles and cultures within the town
- Challenge all forms of discrimination within the Town Council and the wider community
- Support the development of communities and assist them in challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

### 5.3 Responsibility and Liability

All members of staff and Councillors remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law. The Town 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 Town Council could be vicariously liable for actions carried out by staff purportedly in the Town 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.

## 6. EQUALITY AIMS

6.1 Age - The Town Council shall not permit unlawful age discrimination.

6.2 Sexual Orientation - The Town Council shall not permit unlawful discrimination.

6.3 Disability - The Town Council will remove barriers to participation by disabled people, wherever possible.

6.4 Race/Ethnic Origin - The Town Council will encourage participation of minority ethnic groups in its activities.

6.5 - Religion The Town Council respects people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and will give due regard to the needs and requirements of people who adhere to a range of cultural and religious beliefs.

## 7. EMPLOYMENT

Dorchester Town 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.

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