

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

(This Policy was reviewed by the full Council at its AGM held on 14 May 2025, minute 20/25-26.)

INTRODUCTION

The Town Council recognises that many different people live and work in the Town and aims to achieve equality of opportunity in all its activities, as a direct employer of staff and through the various activities it runs and funds.

An equal opportunities organisation is one that uses everyone's talents and abilities and where individual input is encouraged and where differences are valued. It is responsive to the needs of its employees and the community it supports.

DISABILITY

The Town Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in employment of disabled people and actively working towards the removal of barriers that may prevent disabled people from achieving their potential and contributing to the role and functions of the Town Council.

The Town Council aims to give applicants with a disability the full range of career opportunities the opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the job and to make the workplace suitable for them if they are selected. Where appropriate, and possible, job content and the working environment will be adjusted to enable people with disabilities to work with the maximum convenience and efficiency. The Town Council will ensure that where an existing employee becomes disabled the appropriate reasonable adjustments are made such that they may be retained within the workforce wherever practical.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places the Town Council under a general duty to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Town Council welcomes and recognises that duty which is embraced within this Policy.

"A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."

The Town Council will not tolerate any form of racial discrimination, either direct or indirect. If there is evidence of discrimination by a Town Council employee, that employee will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedures.

HARASSMENT

The Town Council will not tolerate any form of harassment whether to members of the public or from whatever source in the workplace. Where an employee is subject to harassment the Town Council will take the appropriate action.

EMPLOYMENT

As an employer the Town Council recognises that staff are its major asset and will strive to ensure that every job applicant or employee is treated fairly in all employment matters, regardless of age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin. It seeks to employ a workforce who reflects the diverse community it serves and it values the individual contributions each member of society can make.

The Town Council will select, appoint and promote individuals solely on the basis of merit. It will treat all its employees with dignity and respect and it will provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

This policy applies to all employment matters and its effectiveness will be monitored by gathering information on existing staff, and on recruitment, training and promotion through regular analysis of relevant records and interviews with staff and staff representatives.

SERVICE DELIVERY

All of the Town Council's customers, internal and external, are eligible for the same quality and level of service, irrespective of gender, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, religious beliefs, ethnics or national origin. The Town Council will promote equality of opportunity for local people by;

- Consulting local people, groups and representatives to ensure the Town Council understands their needs;
- Delivering services in ways which are appropriate to their needs and wherever possible, removing barriers which may dent access;
- Ensuring any complaints of discrimination are dealt with speedily and fairly;
- Ensuring all staff receiving adequate and appropriate training to enable them to provide an informed response to all service users.

The Town Council will, where appropriate and possible, provide suitable interpreting services and will ensure that buildings are accessible to all wherever possible and otherwise provide suitable alternatives.

Eligibility criteria for services will only be used where they are necessary and relevant and will be applied consistently.

COMPLAINTS

If a member of the public feels that they have been treated unfairly or suffered harassment because of their age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, colour, religion, race, ethnic or national origin they should report this without fail to the Town Clerk.

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RESPONSIBILITY

The Town Clerk will have overall responsibility for implementing the Town Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and is the lead on policy information.

The co-operation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy. All employees have a responsibility not to discriminate against any groups or individuals, and to make sure service users and fellow employees are treated with dignity and respect. Behaviour or actions which do not comply with this Policy will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

TRAINING

Employees will receive appropriate and suitable training to ensure that they are able to comply with the corporate and directorate policies and procedures on equal opportunities.

MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Council will strive to ensure that all Members are treated fairly and afforded equal access to the facilities and support services of the Town Council regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, colour, religion, race, ethnic or national origin.

Members of the Town Council support this policy and will work towards the promotion of equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination in all the Council's activities.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored by gathering and analysing information on and from employees. Ongoing monitoring, analysis and subsequent policy review provides the basis of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for the Town Council's employees and customers. This Policy will, from time to time, be subject to formal review.

Much of the information gathered will be reported, not only to the Town Council, but also to the appropriate Government departments and, in some instances, to the public. Personal information will be obtained and kept in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Town Council's commitment is supported by a legal duty to provide all services and employment opportunities fairly, without discrimination

"The Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council recognises that some members of society are discriminated against and therefore it aims to ensure that all of its residents have equal access to all of its services and facilities.

The Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council is an equal opportunity employer and all existing and future employees will be treated evenly and have access to equal employment opportunities."

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The Town Council welcomes its obligations as an employer, as a provider of services and as a leader of public opinion, and will have regard to the following legislation which will support its functions in carrying out equality and its commitment to provide equal opportunities for everybody:

Disability

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Disability Rights Commission Act 1999

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Gender

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended) & 1986

Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) & 1983

Sex Discrimination Act 1986

Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001

Race

Race Relations Act 1976

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Race Relations Act (Statutory Duties) Order 2001

General

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Human Rights Act 1998

Freedom of Information Act 2000