

# NORTHALLERTON TOWN COUNCIL

## EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY & CODE OF PRACTICE

**Adopted 11/12/17**

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### **1 Introduction**

1.1 Northallerton Town Council values the diversity of the community we serve. We therefore strive to ensure that our services reflect the needs of all people within the community. All individuals can expect to receive equal access to employment and our services.

1.2 The Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment by treating the diverse range of employees in a fair and equitable manner and that we do not unfairly discriminate against any job applicant or existing employee.

### **2 Our Commitment under this Equality & Diversity Framework is:**

#### **2.1 As an employer we will:**

- Ensure that our recruitment and selection procedures are fair and equitable.
- Train all employees who participate in recruitment.
- Monitor our workforce.
- Make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to minimise barriers to employment faced by disabled people.
- Consult with employees regarding the development of this strategy.
- Provide a working environment where harassment and bullying is unacceptable behaviour which will be challenged.

#### **2.2 As a Service Provider we will:**

- Minimise the barriers faced by people using our buildings and facilities.
- Train all staff to recognise the diverse needs of the people we serve.
- Produce a range of information about our services and make that information available in various formats, if requested.
- Provide a mechanism through our Comments & Complaints procedures for employees and service users to express their views about our services.

### **3 Who does the policy and code of practice apply to?**

3.1 This policy and code of practice covers all employees and Elected Members.

### **4 Responsibility**

4.1 All employees and Elected Members of the Council are expected to treat each other and members of the public equally and with respect regardless of – Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage & Civil Partnership; Pregnancy & Maternity; Race; Religion & Belief; Sex or Sexual Orientation.

4.2 The Town Clerk will be responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.

## **5 Publicising/distribution of the policy and code of practice**

5.1 Employees will be made fully aware of this Policy and Code of Practice and without exception must adhere to its requirements. Any employee who feels that they have grounds for complaint in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation has the right to pursue their complaint through the relevant internal policies and procedures.

5.2 New employees and job applicants will be informed of the existence of this policy during recruitment and a copy will be provided as part of the induction information.

5.3 A copy of this document can also be viewed via the electronic filing folder, in each sections policies folder or in the Constitution files.

## **6 Code of Practice - Purpose**

6.1 The purpose of this Policy and Code of Practice is to give practical guidance to promote equality of opportunity within the Council for all employees and potential employees in accordance with the principles set out within the document and in the provision of services. The Code also gives advice on the initial measures which need to be taken to achieve equality of opportunity and shows the close link between equal opportunities and good employment practice and fair service provision.

6.2 This Code does not seek to cover all circumstances at this stage. It will be expanded and developed as necessary as the Council identifies areas of concern and will be amended to form a comprehensive guide.

## **7 Training**

7.1 The Council is committed to the on-going training and development of its employees. The principles of equality and fairness must be applied in considering training programmes for individuals and teams within the Organisation.

7.2 The Council will endeavour to provide suitable training relevant to the current and future needs of the individual and the Council. All employees will be given the opportunity to discuss their training needs and the Council will endeavour to organise appropriate training programmes.

7.3 The Council will, within the resources available, introduce procedures within its training programme to assist the implementation of its policy in such areas as staff development, information to Members / employees on recruitment practices, and service provision.

7.4 Appropriate training will be provided for key personnel in contact with members of the community.

## **8 Complaints Procedure**

8.1 Internal and external job applicants who think that they have been unfairly treated during the recruitment and selection process should direct their complaints to the Town Clerk, who will initiate and monitor appropriate action.

8.2 The provisions of this policy will be covered by the Council's established Discipline, Grievance and Comments and Complaints procedures.

8.3 Employees who feel that they have been discriminated against in relation to recruitment, promotion, training opportunities or any other employment terms on the grounds of sex, race, religion, marital status, age or disability should pursue their complaint through the Council's Grievance Procedure. During this process, employees will retain their individual statutory rights should they wish to pursue the complaint further.

8.4 In respect of complaints from prospective employees who feel they have suffered any kind of harassment, as detailed above, they should pursue their complaint through the Council's Comments and Complaints Procedure. During the process, individuals will retain their individual statutory rights should they wish to pursue their complaint further.

8.5 Any employee who commits an act of discrimination or personal harassment will be liable to disciplinary action.

8.6 Any member of the community who has a complaint about a service which has been provided, or not provided, or about an employee of the Council, may complain to the Council under the provisions of its Comments and Complaints Procedure.

## **9 Provision of Services to the Community**

9.1 Provision of services to the community will be based on principles of fairness and accessibility for all sections of the community.

9.2 The Council will comply with the guidance set out in the Code of Practice in force from time to time under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the provision of goods, facilities or services to the community.

9.3 The Council will seek to ensure that all its services are publicised widely and that, as far as reasonably possible, the timing of events and access to facilities and buildings are designed to ensure that minority groups are not discriminated against.

9.4 The Council will seek to consult the community and the community's representatives wherever possible when it proposes changes to its service.

9.5 An Equality and Diversity Policy has benefits for employers, as well as responsibilities, as detailed below.

- Fair treatment in all aspects of employment.
- Right to raise a grievance if employees feel they have been discriminated against.
- Employees are responsible within the policy for providing equal opportunities to both staff and members of the public.

9.6 The commitment of all employees is important in order that the policy can be effective. Staff who may have concerns should contact the Town Clerk for advice.

## **10 Monitoring**

10.1 Monitoring systems will be developed and maintained by the Town Clerk and periodic reports will be presented to the Town Council.

## **11 Dealing with abuses of the policy**

11.1 Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action.

## **12 BEST EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE**

### **Discrimination Based on Stereotyped Decision Making**

12.1 Persons responsible for making decisions affecting access to jobs, training or promotion or in providing goods, facilities or services may unintentionally use stereotypes in their decision making.

12.2 It is the tendency to see others as stereotypes which can lead most easily to discriminatory practices. It has an undesirable tendency for example either to affect negatively the chances of success of certain applicants or to channel them into particular occupations or positions deemed appropriate to the particular stereotype or to discriminate against them in the provision of services.

12.3 It is essential therefore that all employees making decisions affecting access to jobs, training or promotion, or providing services, guard against discrimination based on common assumptions, that individuals because of their sex, race, marital status, colour, nationality, sexual orientation, disability etc. possess characteristics that make them unsuitable for employment in certain types of jobs, or for the receipt of certain services.

### **Recruitment, Selection and Promotion**

12.4 Recruitment and promotion will be based on fair and justifiable job-related criteria. Advertisements and job profiles will reflect clearly the specific needs of the position and any bias which could lead to unjustifiable discrimination either direct or indirect will be eliminated.

12.5 The Council will comply with the guidance set out in the Codes of Practice in force from time to time in respect of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment against disabled people or persons who have had a disability.

12.6 The recruitment, promotion and selection process is of crucial importance to this policy and in order to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination it must be carried out according to consistent and objective job related criteria.

12.7 The main steps in the process to ensure this are detailed below:

### **Vacancy**

12.8 Time Table - recruitment frequently takes place in pressurised circumstances. For the process to be carried out as efficiently as possible, it will be essential that a clear time table is drawn up. This will ensure that interviewers and interviewees know when they need to be available.

12.9 As each vacancy arises or new post is created, a Recruitment Pack will be completed for consideration by the appropriate members / officer.

12.10 The criteria listed should be the considered specification of the minimum requirements of the job and experience essential to meet those requirements and carry out the job satisfactorily. The criteria contained in the job profile should be strictly relevant to the job and not necessarily restrictive or inflated so as to exclude particular disadvantaged groups, for example, care should be taken when:

- (a) requiring specific qualifications rather than the ability or potential ability to do the job.
- (b) age barriers or minimum periods of relevant experience.
- (c) restrictions relating to physical ability etc.

12.11 When publishing vacancies, all applicants shall be informed of the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

12.12 Application Forms - used by the Council, will ensure that the form does not ask questions which are detrimental to the Equality and Diversity Policy in that it requires information which is irrelevant to consideration on merit for the post in question. The application form will not be used as a test of literacy unless a standard of literacy is a genuine requirement of the job.

12.13 Short-Listing - Short-listing will be undertaken by the appropriate members / officer, and must be based on the job and person specification alone.

12.14 Interviewing - All persons making appointments must endeavour to conduct interviews on an objective basis and shall deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job and ability to fulfil the job requirements. Questions asked of candidates must relate only to the job. For example, candidates should not be asked questions about their personal circumstances or family commitments. Where necessary, to ensure their availability for unusual work variations, it should be done in an objective manner and not be personalised.

### **Terms and Conditions of Service**

12.15 Any local agreements and the implementation of National and Local Conditions of Service will be applied fairly to all employees.

### **Disabled Applicants**

12.16 The Council will guarantee an interview to a disabled applicant who meets the essential job/person specification requirements. Applicants must have the opportunity for a fair interview and must be assessed on the basis of their ability, not their disability.

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT**

Northallerton Town Council is fully committed to equality of opportunity in employment and in the way we deliver our services.

We recognise that it is essential to employ the best people to deliver high quality services to our clients and as such we will ensure that prejudice, stereotypes and irrelevant factors are not used to exclude potential candidates for jobs within the Council or to prevent people from doing their jobs to the best of their ability.

We also recognise that equality is part of achieving efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in the way we use resources, including the way we recruit, employ and manage. It is therefore a key element of our core vision, within our Corporate Plan to ensure that all employees are valued equally and equality practices become integral to the way we work throughout the Council.

This Policy therefore seeks to:

- Enhance and promote high quality services which are responsive to the needs of service users, partners and stakeholders.
- Assist in creating a productive and prejudice free working environment which treats all employees fairly and with respect.
- Demonstrate and promote a commitment to equality by challenging discrimination and valuing diversity amongst employees.
- Improve the motivation, performance, skills and morale of the workforce.

We acknowledge that equal opportunity is the responsibility of every employee within the Council, particularly those who have line management responsibility in the workplace.

The Council's commitment to equality of opportunity will ensure that no potential or current employee or anyone using our services will receive less favourable treatment because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage & Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion & Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

All employees will be made fully aware of this Policy and without exception must adhere to its requirements. Any employee who feels that they have grounds for complaint in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation has the right to pursue their complaint through the relevant internal policies and procedures.