

STONE PARISH COUNCIL

Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

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

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

The Council has adopted the following Policy Statement:

Policy Statement

“Stone Parish Council recognises that there are groups in society who are discriminated against and therefore aims to make sure that all the people it serves have equal access to all facilities and services.

The Council is an equal opportunity employer and all existing and prospective employees of the Council will be treated fairly and have equal access to all employment opportunities.”

Service Delivery

All of the Council's customers, both 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, ethnic or national origin. The Council will promote equality of opportunity for local people by:

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

The Council will endeavour to provide suitable interpreting services where necessary and appropriate, and will ensure that buildings are accessible to all wherever possible or that a suitable alternative is provided.

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

Employment

As an employer, the 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 gender, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin. It seeks to employ a workforce which reflects the diverse community at large, and it values the individual contribution each person can make.

The 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.

Disability

The 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 Council.

The 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 necessary, job content and the working environment will be adjusted to enable people with disabilities to work with the maximum convenience and efficiency. The 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.

Whenever it invests capital in new or refurbished premises, the Council will make every reasonable effort to provide for the needs of staff and members of the public with disabilities.

Harassment

The Council will not tolerate any form of harassment whether to members of the public or from whatever source in the workplace. The Council, as employer, has a separate policy 'Dignity in the Workplace' which enables it to deal effectively with complaints of this nature. Where an employee is subject to harassment perpetrated by other than a fellow employee, the Council will take appropriate action.

Racial Discrimination

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places the 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 Council recognises and welcomes 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 Council will not tolerate any form of racial discrimination, either direct or indirect. If there is evidence of discrimination by a Council employee, that employee will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Policy.

Complaints

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

Responsibility

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

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.

Members of the Council

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

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

Training

Staff will receive regular and suitable training to ensure that they are able to comply with the corporate and directorate policies and procedure on equal opportunities.

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 Councils' employees and customers.

This Policy will, from time to time, be subject to formal review.

Much of the statistical information gathered will be reported, not only to the 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.