



## **STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL**

### **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Stotfold Town Council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment, eliminating discrimination, and celebrating diversity amongst our community. This Equality and Diversity Policy is intended to assist the Town Council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

This policy applies to all employees (part-time, full-time, and temporary), contractors, councillors, residents, and users of our facilities. It covers recruitment, training, career development, and promotion for staff, as well as ensuring all residents and facility users receive fair and equal treatment.

The Town Clerk is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy, but all employees and Councillors must uphold its principles. Discrimination or failure to comply may result in disciplinary action or a complaint to the Monitoring Officer under a breach of the Code of Conduct.

#### **2. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY LAW**

##### **2.1 Legal Framework**

The Equality Act 2010 aims to simplify, strengthen and harmonise legislation to support progress on equality in employment, provision of goods and services, and public functions.

##### **2.2 Protected Characteristics**

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (which includes colour, nationality, caste, and ethnic or national origins)
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

#### **3. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

##### **3.1 Legal Requirement**

The Public Sector Equality Duty is a legal requirement arising from the Equality Act 2010 for public authorities to consider the impact of their policies and decisions on people with protected characteristics.

## **3.2 Council Responsibilities**

As a public authority, Stotfold Town Council has a general duty of equality related to provision of its services and event organisations to consider how its functions will affect people with different characteristics. This duty also applies to the Town Council's policies, programmes, and services.

## **4. TYPES OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION**

### **4.1 Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### **4.2 Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### **4.3 Harassment**

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

### **4.4 Associative Discrimination**

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

### **4.5 Perceptive Discrimination**

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they do not.

### **4.6 Third-party Harassment**

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

### **4.7 Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010.

## **5. THE COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER**

### **5.1 Fair Treatment**

All employees, whether part-time, full-time, or temporary workers, will be treated fairly and with respect.

## **5.2 Employment Practices**

The Town Council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy.

## **5.3 Reasonable Adjustments**

The Council will make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers caused by disability.

## **5.4 Recruitment**

Person and job specifications will be limited to necessary requirements for effective job performance. Candidates will be assessed objectively against job requirements. Disability and personal commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary

## **5.5 Working Practices**

The Town Council will consider any possible discriminatory effect of its standard working practices when considering requests for variations and will refuse such requests only if it has good reasons unrelated to any protected characteristic.

## **5.6 Equal Opportunities Commitment**

The Town Council will:

- Create an environment where individual differences and contributions are recognized and valued
- Promote dignity and respect for all, with zero tolerance for intimidation, bullying or harassment
- Monitor workforce composition and take appropriate action to address any issues identified
- Review practices and procedures to ensure fairness
- Treat breaches of this Policy as misconduct that could lead to disciplinary proceedings

## **5.7 Training**

Training and development opportunities will be available to all staff

## **5.8 Employee Responsibilities**

Every employee must assist the Town Council in providing equal opportunities and avoiding unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable for acts of unlawful discrimination. Discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation are disciplinary offences and may constitute gross misconduct

## **5.9 Grievances**

The Town Council's grievance procedure should be used to make complaints of unlawful discrimination. Complaints will be taken seriously and resolved promptly. Complainants will not be penalised for raising grievances unless complaints are both untrue and made in bad faith.

## **6. THE COUNCIL AS A COMMUNITY LEADER AND ADVOCATE**

Stotfold Town Council is committed to creating a socially inclusive and cohesive community by:

- Promoting equal opportunity and equal access to employment, services, and information
- Identifying and addressing barriers to participation in community life
- Working towards ensuring fair and equitable resources
- Respecting and celebrating diversity as a vital part of community strength
- Working with others to ensure our community is a safe place
- Listening and responding to community views through accessible consultation
- Ensuring communications and events positively reflect and promote diversity

## **7. THE COUNCIL AS A SERVICE PROVIDER**

### **7.1 Service Provision**

The Town Council will not discriminate against or harass members of the public when providing services or goods.

### **7.2 Accessibility**

The Council will make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability, including removal, adaptation, or alteration of physical features.

### **7.3 Service Commitments**

The Town Council is committed to:

- Delivering services in ways sensitive to everyone's needs
- Ensuring all employees, contractors and partners provide equality of opportunity
- Making community halls accessible to all
- Providing accessible information about services
- Consulting with all community sections in policy development

## **8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMITMENTS FOR SPECIFIC PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

### **8.1 Age**

Treat all individuals with dignity and respect

Ensure equal access to employment, training, and development opportunities

Challenge age-related stereotypes and discrimination

### **8.2 Disability**

Provide reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility

Challenge assumptions about disabled individuals

Improve access to information, services, and physical spaces

### **8.3 Race**

Oppose racism and respond swiftly to incidents

Actively promote race equality in the workplace and community facilities

### **8.4 Gender**

Promote gender equality in employment, pay and service provision

Prevent discrimination against individuals undergoing gender reassignment

### **8.5 Sexual Orientation**

Ensure an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals

Promote positive representation and challenge stereotypes

### **8.6 Religion or Belief**

Respect and accommodate religious beliefs and observances where possible

Ensure expression of beliefs does not infringe on others' rights

### **8.7 Pregnancy and Maternity**

Support employees during pregnancy and maternity leave  
Prevent discrimination and ensure equal opportunities

### **8.8 Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Ensure fair treatment and prevent bias based on marital status

### **8.9 Ex-Offenders**

Prevent discrimination against individuals with an offending background unless there is a safeguarding risk

### **8.10 Equal Pay**

Guarantee equal pay and benefits for work of equal value

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#### **Document History**

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