

Kesgrave Town Council

Equality and Diversity Policy

Kesgrave Town Council is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among its workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The Town Council values diversity, recognises any differences and treats everybody with respect. It believes that everybody has a right to equality of opportunity, regardless of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, background or personal circumstances.

The Town Council expects its staff, councillors, volunteers, contractors and community stakeholders to play an active part in promoting equality and challenging discriminatory behaviour.

The Town Council expects anybody who feels unfairly treated, is upset by thoughtless comments or jokes, experiences any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or abuse to tell the Council. The Town Council takes any form of discrimination and harassment very seriously. If anybody witnesses any discriminative behaviour then the Council should be informed.

The aim is for its workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Council - in providing its services, facilities and activities - is also committed to no unlawful discrimination of local residents', the public, councillors, volunteers, contractors, community stakeholders and all involved with the Council's business.

The policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time;

- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation;
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities;

The Town Council commits to:

- Encourage equality and diversity in the workplace, as not only is this lawful, it is respectful, and good practice, and it also makes good business sense;
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued;

This commitment includes training all employees and councillors about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the Council provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination;

All staff should understand that they, as well as the Council as the employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course' of their employment, against fellow employees, local residents/the public, volunteers, councillors, community stakeholders and suppliers;

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, local residents, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the Council's work activities;
- Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Council's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice;
- Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence;
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Council, for the benefit of local residents';
- Decisions concerning staff being based on merit, (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act);
- Review employment practices, policies and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law;
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality and diversity policy;

- Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality and diversity policy, and any action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues;

Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found within the Staff Handbook. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance – usually their line manager.

Use of the Town Council's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Compliance – The Town Council will aim to ensure that due regard is given to the aims of this policy by considering all of its functions in order to determine compliance:

- Councillors – All Councillors are bound to adhere to equal opportunities principles by the Code of Conduct for Suffolk. The Town Council's staff will make every effort to accommodate councillors with particular' needs.
- Employees – The content of this policy in relation to employees is available in the Staff Handbook. All employees will be equally encouraged to apply for suitable training and employment opportunities appropriate to their respective role. Whenever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, for example, considering job sharing and part-time working.
- Vacancies – Vacancies, where appropriate, will be advertised internally and externally, widely across all sections of the community to ensure knowledge of the positions reaches underrepresented groups.

The selection criteria will be kept under constant review, to ensure it is justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

- Positive Action – If candidates for a role were both as qualified to be recruited or promoted, the Town Council would be allowed to take into consideration perceived disadvantages or under-representation in the workforce, when deciding who to recruit – this means the Council would be able to favour the candidate from the under-represented or disadvantaged group.
- Premises – The Town Council premises and the Millennium Jubilee Hall are compliant with, (or will be practicably adapted to comply) with the Equality Act 2010 whenever possible. Where buildings are not in compliance, the Council will do all that is reasonably possible to ensure that service users are able to access facilities. All staff will respect and be sympathetic to the needs of minority groups and ensure that they receive the same level of service as other members of the community.

The Town Council has a formal Complaints Procedure Policy, including for any anonymous complaints.

Members of the public should refer to the Town Council's Community Engagement Policy and its Business Plan.

Town Council staff should refer to the Staff Handbook.

The Town Council is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage. It endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity to all sectors of the community and its workforce is an integral part of this commitment.

Policy to be Approved by full Town Council on 14th May 2018

Next Review – May 2019.

