



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Melksham Town Council is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, our community, voluntary organisations and any organisations the Town Council engage with, to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

1. Introduction

The Town Council, in providing services and facilities to the community, is committed against unlawful discrimination of all users of those services and facilities.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Town Council is truly representative of all sections of society, and for each Councillor and Officer to feel respected and able to give their best.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect to every organisation we engage with and 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

3. Commitments

The organisation commits to:

- encourage equality and diversity throughout the Melksham Community and the workplace as they are good practice and they are standards which would be expected from a public authority
- create an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of everyone are recognised and valued

This commitment includes training all Councillors and Officers about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include how Councillors and Officers conduct themselves to help the Town Council provide equal opportunities in all Town Council activities and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination

4. Actions to be Taken

All Councillors and Officers should understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their duties against fellow employees and all groups with whom the Town Council engage.

The Town Council takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination made by Councillors, Officers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the Town Council's activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken regarding officers. Councillors would be expected to uphold the code of conduct and complaints against Councillors may result in a code of conduct complaint to the monitoring officer at Wiltshire Council. Particularly serious complaints regarding officers could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, 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.

5. Monitoring

The Town Council will make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all Councillors and Officers, 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 Town Council.

Any decisions concerning Officers will be based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

Employment practices, policies and the code of conduct for Councillors as well as any procedures will be reviewed and updated when necessary to ensure fairness. The policy will be updated when necessary to take account of changes in the law.

The make-up of the Town Council will be monitored regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to encourage equality and diversity, and to meet the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

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

Reviewed and Adopted by Full Council on 13 May 2019