



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

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1. THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

Thornbury Town Council:

- Recognises and acknowledges that levels of discrimination and inequality continue to exist in society and seeks to redress these inequalities via its commitment to civil liberties and human rights
- Welcomes and celebrates diversity, accepting that the majority view is not always right
- Will develop a shared understanding of the essence of equality, which is to value and treat all human beings humanely, with respect and dignity
- Will strive to build equality of opportunity into its work
- Is committed to continue to work towards ensuring that all service users have equal and independent access to Council services and to creating an environment that is accessible to all
- Will encourage user groups and local residents to participate in the development and shaping of services
- Will not discriminate, through its policies, services, employment contracting and funding practices, on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (the protected characteristics) and will ensure that no service user, employee or job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of these protected characteristics or on the grounds of economic or social status, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown as justifiable
- Will take all possible steps to eliminate any unfair and unlawful discrimination and take positive action to redress and remedy the effects of past discrimination on these groups and individuals
- Opposes all forms of less favourable treatment, unlawful and unfair discrimination (direct or indirect), victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

2. STRATEGIC APPROACH, PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE

Thornbury Town Council:

- Has legal and moral obligations specified in the Equality Act 2010
- Aims for the ethos of equalities to be integrated into mainstream policy development and service delivery
- Recognises that equality is inseparable from quality service provision and represents good management practice
- Recognises that diverse groups and individuals within the community have a right to have their specific needs recognised and addressed with the resources available
- Expects each individual employee, worker and volunteer to promote the spirit of its Equalities Policy. Each employee, worker and volunteer has a duty, both morally and legally, not to discriminate against other employees, workers or volunteers.

This policy applies to all permanent, temporary, agency and casual employees (including employees within their probation period) as well as to volunteers.

3. PRINCIPLES

Equality principles and practices are integral to policy development, decision making and resource allocation.

Celebrating diversity by responding to the specific needs of diverse groups and individuals is a key element in the provision of quality services.

The Council recognises that disability is caused by a failure of society to meet the needs of disabled people.

The Council pledges to:

- Encourage mutual respect for all of our residents
- Recognise and work with every diverse group
- Give high quality inclusive services and facilities
- Make sure our employment policies and practices are fair
- Challenge harassment and discrimination

Under the Equalities Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on any of the following grounds, known as 'protected characteristics':

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Definitions of these characteristics are shown on the attached appendix 1. Types of discrimination are shown on the attached appendix 2.

4. EQUALITIES OBJECTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE

Thornbury Town Council is committed to:

- Valuing the difference between individuals and promoting equality and diversity in the workforce
- Fairness, dignity and respect in the workplace
- Providing equal opportunity to all applicants and employees
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination to employees and customers (when providing services to the community).

The Town Council's overall objectives will be to:

- a) Ensure employment policies and practices are fair and equitable
- b) Ensure equitable access to the Town Council

- c) Develop and support an effective consultation and participation process to enable groups at risk of discrimination and disadvantage to influence the Council's policies and practices
- d) Integrate equalities into mainstream policy, planning and service delivery and monitor and evaluate progress
- e) Aim for the workforce to be representative of all sections of the community and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

5. RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT*

* *To be read in conjunction with the Thornbury Town Council Employee Handbook.*

The Town Council is committed to ensuring that:

- a) Job applicants or existing employees, workers and volunteers will receive no less favourable treatment on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or be disadvantaged by condition or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable
- b) All posts will be advertised and applications will be welcomed from under-represented groups
- c) Equal opportunities will be provided to all applicants and employees, unless there are genuine occupational qualifications or requirements for not doing so
- d) All individuals will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their ability
- e) Employees, workers and volunteers will be protected from harassment and the Council will provide an effective response to deal with perpetrators and support from complainants
- f) Recruitment and selection will be carried out based on equalities principles
- g) Employment practices are developed which reflect the responsibilities of parents and carers.

Thornbury Town Council will ensure recruitment and selection, promotion, appraisal and access to training is based on aptitude and ability relevant to job roles. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop to their potential to ensure talents and resources of the workforce are fully utilised, where appropriate, special training will be provided to progress within the organisation.

The Council is committed to providing a work environment that is free from intimidation, bullying or harassment and promotes dignity and respect to all. This is further defined in the Grievance (Including Bully and Harassment Procedure) and the Code of Conduct.

All management (including redundancy selection), application of terms and conditions of employment and council policies such as Time Off Work and Leave (maternity, adoption, shared parental leave) and Flexible Working will be operated in non-discriminatory ways.

The Council will ensure disabled applicants and employees are not disadvantaged and in doing so will consider reasonable adjustments.

Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and may be subject to the Managing Employees Performance procedure.

6. SERVICE USERS ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL

The Council is committed to working towards ensuring that all service users have equal and independent access to Council Services and to creating an environment which is accessible to all. The Council will:

- a) Collaborate closely with user groups and endeavour to eliminate policies and practices which inhibit equal access to council services
- b) Whenever practical, monitor the use of services to identify the reasons for the lack of use and to take action to remedy the situation within the resources available
- c) Ensure that Town Council buildings are accessible and seek effective solutions to the improvements of access in existing buildings working in partnership with service users
- d) Ensure that its publications are non-discriminatory and present a positive image for all sections of the community, welcoming and encouraging diversity

7. CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

The Council will encourage and support equality interest groups to express their views as service users on ways in which services can be adapted to meet specific needs.

8. INTEGRATING EQUALITY INTO POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The Town Council will aim to produce a culture which enables equality to be put into action. The achievement of equality objectives will be integral to the plans of the Town Council.

APPENDIX 1

The Equality Act 2010 – Protected Characteristics

Age

The Equality Act protects people of all ages. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows the justification of direct discrimination.

Sex

Both men and woman are protected under the Act.

Sexual Orientation

The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Act protects people who are married or in a civil partnership.

Race

‘Race’ includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups.

‘Ethnicity’ is where a group has a long-shared history and cultural tradition, come from a common geographical area, descend from a small number of ancestors, have a common language or literature and a common religion.

Disability

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Religion or Belief

Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Gender Reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

APPENDIX 2

Types of Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 defines the following different types of discrimination.

Direct Discrimination

This occurs when a person is treated less favourable because of a protected characteristic they have.

Indirect Discrimination

This occurs when a condition, rule, policy or practise that an organisation has in place disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic – even if the condition, rule, policy or practise is applied to everyone.

Discrimination arising from Disability

This occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the unfavourable treatment cannot be justified.

Associative Discrimination

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Victimisation

This occurs when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act.

Perceptive Discrimination

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because others think they possess a protected characteristic – even if the person does not actually possess the characteristic.

Harassment

This is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Third Party Harassment

This is when an employee faces unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual by people who are not employees of the organisation.