



# BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

# EQUALITY POLICY

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# **1 Aim and Scope of the Policy**

To ensure equal opportunities and fairness among staff, members, customers, clients, service users and organisations considering contracting with the council.

Blandford Forum Town Council recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the council, its employees, members, citizens, service users and visitors to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the council to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The council aims that its workforce is representative of all sections of society and each employee and member feels respected and able to give of their best. The council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. To that end, the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and to all its members.

# **2 The Policy**

All employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, and members will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees and members will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

Council employees or members will not discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customer or clients because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation in the provision of council services. These are known as protected characteristics.

This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, full account will be taken of any guidance or Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, any government departments, and any other statutory bodies.

## **The council's commitment**

1. To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all its employees and members are recognised and valued.
2. Every employee and member is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
3. Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all employees and members.
4. To promote equality in the workplace which the council believes is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
5. The council will review all its employment practices and procedures and member procedures to ensure fairness.
6. Breaches of the equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings or in the case of members, a possible breach of the code of conduct.
7. This policy is fully supported by members and the town clerk and has been discussed with employees.
8. The policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years.

## **Responsibilities of Management**

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the members and the town clerk who will ensure that they and employees operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination.

Managers will ensure that:

1. All their staff are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy;
2. Grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible;
3. Proper records are maintained;
4. The town clerk is responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy in respect of employees and job applicants.

## **Responsibilities of Employees and Members**

Responsibility for ensuring there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all employees and members and the attitudes of employees and members are crucial to the successful operation of fair employment practices. In particular, all employees and members should:

1. Comply with the policy and arrangements;
2. Not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
3. Not victimise, harass or intimidate other staff, members, individuals or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics;
4. Ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic;
5. Inform their manager/Chairman of Council if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

## **Related Policies and Arrangements**

Staff Employee Manual  
Councillor's Code of Conduct

All employment and member policies and arrangements have a bearing on equality of opportunity. The council's policies will be reviewed regularly, normally every three years, and any discriminatory elements removed.

## **Rights of Disabled People**

The council attaches particular importance to the needs of disabled people. Under the terms of this policy, the council will:

1. Make reasonable adjustment to maintain the services of an employee or member who becomes disabled, for example, training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: managers are expected to seek advice on the availability of advice and guidance from external agencies to maintain disabled people in employment);
2. Include disabled people in training/development programmes;
3. Give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their particular aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

## **Equality Training**

Briefing sessions will be held for members and employees on equality issues. These will be repeated as necessary. Equality information will also be included in the induction programme.

## **Monitoring**

The system will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on employees and members by gender, marital status, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion/ beliefs, grade and length of service in current grade. Information regarding the number of staff or members who declare themselves as disabled will also be maintained.

There will also be regular assessments to measure the extent to which recruitment to first appointment, internal promotion and access to training/development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all groups.

The council will maintain information on staff or members who have been involved in certain key policies: disciplinary, grievance and bullying and harassment.

Where appropriate equality impact assessments will be carried out on the results of monitoring to ascertain the effect of the council's policies and its services may have on those who experience them.

The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential.

If monitoring shows that the council, or areas within it, are not representative, or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the council, then an action plan will be developed to address these issues.

This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, the council's policies and practices as well as consideration of taking legal 'positive action'.

## **Grievance/Discipline**

Employees have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation via the council's grievance policy and procedure, and bullying and harassment policy and procedure.

Discrimination and victimisation by employees will be treated as disciplinary offences and they will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary policy and procedure. Discrimination and victimisation by members will be referred to NDDC's monitoring officer.