

Kelbrook and Sough Parish Council Equal Opportunities Policy

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Equal Opportunities Policy is to communicate our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment, with the aims of ensuring that all employees and job applicants are treated fairly and equally, and supporting the council's objective of providing a working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination.

The policy applies to all staff within the council including employees and other workers, such as agency workers, temporary workers and contractors. All members are expected to put this policy into practice.

A copy of this policy will be distributed to all members and a copy stored in the clerk's office. Job seekers and applicants will be sent a copy of the policy on request. In addition, all members will be briefed on this policy.

Any questions about the policy should be directed to the clerk.

This policy does not form part of employees' contracts of employment and the council may amend it at any time.

The policy is regularly reviewed and may be amended at any time.

Policy statement

The council is fully committed to providing equality in the workplace and all opportunities for, and during employment, will be afforded to individuals fairly and irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, including colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation ("the protected characteristics"). We aim to create an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment in any form, in which all members, employees and contractors are treated with dignity and respect.

The council will not unlawfully discriminate in the arrangements we make for recruitment and selection or in the opportunities afforded for employment, training or any other benefit. All decisions will be made fairly and objectively. We aim, as far as reasonably practicable, to ensure that all our working practices are applied fairly and consistently and, where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to avoid or overcome any particular disadvantage these may cause and to promote equality.

Kelbrook and Sough Parish Council respects an individual's right to choose whether or not to belong to a trade union and membership status will have no bearing on an applicant's suitability for employment or result in any detrimental treatment.

Specific Responsibilities

The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation and for observing relevant Codes of Practice.

The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy and for ensuring that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices adhere to this policy.

All members have a responsibility not to discriminate or harass others and to report any such behaviour of which they become aware to the clerk.

The clerk is responsible for implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and must apply the policy as part of their day-to-day management of the council.

Forms of discrimination

The following are forms of discrimination that this policy aims to avoid:

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have or are thought to have. Direct discrimination can also occur by way of association, which is when a person is treated less favourably because, for example, their spouse or partner or other relative has the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on people who share a particular protected characteristic. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain.

To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated unfavourably because he/she has raised a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, in relation to any alleged act of unlawful discrimination, against the council or because he/she has supported someone else in doing this.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many different forms and may involve inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments, emails or physical contact that causes offence or are objectionable.

Harassment may involve a single incident or persistent behaviour that extends over a period of time and can occur even if someone did not mean to cause offence. It also means that a person can be subjected to harassment by behaviour that is not aimed at them directly but which they nonetheless find unpleasant.

Harassment is always unacceptable and where it relates to a protected characteristic it will amount to an unlawful act of discrimination.

Discrimination arising from Disability - In addition to the above, it is unlawful to treat a person unfavourably because of something that is the result, effect or outcome of their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Furthermore, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

Creating equal opportunities in the workplace

There are a number of ways in which the council aims to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace, including:

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection procedures will be free from bias or discrimination. Recruitment procedures will be conducted objectively and will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria. Decisions regarding an individual's suitability for a particular role will be based on aptitude and ability.

We will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure that disabled applicants are not substantially disadvantaged.

Wherever possible, vacancies will be advertised as being suitable for flexible working, to encourage applications from individuals seeking work on a part time or job share basis.

The council will consider taking appropriate positive action to enable or encourage applications from persons with a protected characteristic that is under represented in the organisation.

Career development and training

All staff will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

All members will be encouraged to develop their full potential and we will not unreasonably deny an employee access to training or other career development opportunities. These will be identified as part of an ongoing performance management process and will be determined objectively, considering the needs of the business and available resources.

Selection for promotion will be based on objective criteria and decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Terms and conditions

Our terms and conditions of service will be applied fairly and benefits and facilities will be made available to all members who should have access to them, as appropriate.

Employment policies and practices

The council aims to ensure that employment policies and practices, including any rules or requirements, do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In particular we will ensure that all disciplinary decisions are fair and consistent and that selection for redundancy is based on objective criteria.

The council will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the working environment or any work arrangements that would alleviate any substantial disadvantage these cause disabled staff.

We will aim as far as reasonably practicable to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and will consider requests from employees to vary or change their working hours to enable them to care for a dependant.

Working environment

All individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and the council takes reasonable steps to protect staff from discrimination, bullying or harassment and, in the event of a complaint, we will take appropriate action to prevent, as far as possible, a further occurrence.

All members are encouraged to report any incidents of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour at work or that occurs during the course of employment, on or off premises, including at work social events (whether organised by the council or not) or at formal or informal events involving members, customers or other council-related contacts.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

The council will monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.

As part of this process we monitor:

- the composition of job applicants and decisions in recruitment
- the composition of our members
- access to training, promotion and other opportunities and benefits
- the impact of our policies, including use of the disciplinary and grievance procedure
- dismissals and other terminations

Information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

Raising a complaint of discrimination

If you believe you have been discriminated against, you should raise the matter in accordance with the council's Grievance Procedure.

Any member who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, or breached this policy in any other way, will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure, up to and including dismissal. Members will be subject to appropriate formal action that may, depending on the circumstances, involve terminating any contract or agreement.

The council will also take seriously any malicious or, in its opinion, unwarranted allegations of discrimination and will take appropriate action, disciplinary or otherwise, where necessary.

