



FAIRFIELDS PARISH COUNCIL

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

Policy Statement

Fairfields Parish Council (the Council) is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination in the role of employer and as a provider of services. The Council aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences and that promotes dignity, equality and diversity whilst encouraging individuals to develop and maximise to their true potential. The Council is committed, wherever practical to maintaining a workforce that reflects the local community in which we operate.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide fairness and equality to all employees, councillors, officers and the community which we serve. To not discriminate on the grounds of age, belief, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, parental responsibility, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

The Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

All employees, councillors and volunteers, working full time, part time or on a temporary basis will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment or promotion will be on the basis of skills and ability.

Principles

The Council's commitment to Equality & Diversity is:

- To create an environment in which all individual differences and contributions of all employees and officers are recognised and valued.
- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- To ensure training, development and progression is available to all.
- To regularly review all employment practices and procedures to ensure that all are treated equally.
- To regularly review services to ensure they are accessible and appropriate to all groups within the community.
- To treat breaches of the equality policy seriously and to take disciplinary action when required.
- To provide information and training to all employees and councillors so that they are aware of the issues relating to Equality & Diversity and their responsibilities.
- To ensure the policy is fully supported by the Council.
- To monitor and review the policy annually.

Procedures

The Council will act positively in using the Equality & Diversity policy as a means of making public its intention to provide equal opportunities to all employees and councillors now and in the future.

The Council will encourage all employees to apply for suitable opportunities to seek training for promotion or in particular skills.

Any form of discrimination by an employee or councillor will be treated very seriously and where appropriate will be dealt with using the disciplinary procedure.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination is illegal and the recruitment of 'quotas' of particular groups is also illegal. Discrimination in selection to achieve or secure a balance of person of different racial groups is also not allowed under the Race Relation Act 1976.

Recruitment

Job descriptions and person specifications

Job descriptions and person specifications are prepared for all posts. The job description indicates the responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the job holder. The person specification describes the qualifications, skills and abilities required. Care will be taken to ensure that neither the description nor the specifications are discriminatory on the grounds quoted in the policy statement.

Advertising

The Council will use a range of advertising methods in order to attract the widest pool of appropriate candidates. Vacancies for new and existing jobs will normally be advertised internally and externally. All advertising will:

- Contain the statement that Fairfields Parish Council is an 'Equal Opportunities Employer'.
- Ensure that we do not exclude, discriminate against, or discourage any particular group from applying nor make it difficult for anyone from such a group to apply.
- Refer to the job description and person specification in order to give information about the requirements of the job.
- Give clear instructions about obtaining the application pack.

Applications and short listing

All applicants will be asked to fill out an application form which contains only information essential and relevant to the appointment.

Applications will be short listed by at least 2 people. Short listing will be performed on the basis of objective criteria and the extent to which candidates have shown, on the application form that they meet the required person specification, and are able to carry out tasks and responsibilities required of the post-holder. Formal qualifications will only be taken into account when they are recognised as necessary for a particular job.

Short listed candidates will be invited to interview. Staff and councillor who are responsible for the short listing, interviewing and selection of candidate will be:

- Clearly informed of the selection criteria and the need for their consistent application
- Given guidance on the effects which generalised assumptions about people from groups quoted in the policy statement can have on selection decisions.

- Made aware of the possible misunderstandings that can occur between persons from different cultural backgrounds.

Interviewing

All interviews will be carried out by a minimum of two people, (in most cases by the Chair and the Parish Clerk).

The questions asked will seek to gather objective evidence in support of the job description and person specification. The same questions will be asked of all candidates applying for the job.

Candidates with a disability will be asked, in advance if they need support during the interview process and if selected, adjustments will be made accordingly, should they accept the offer/position.

Notes will be taken and evidence gathered against the job description and person specification. All candidates will be asked about their eligibility to work.

Selection

All candidates will be scored against the job description and person specification. The highest scoring will be offered the position.

Offers will be made subject to satisfactory references and DBS check (where required).

All unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the result of their application.

DBS Policy

For certain positions we will request enhanced disclosures for all employees and volunteers.

This requirement will be clearly stated in the application pack.

Ex-Offenders

The Council will not discriminate against ex-offenders with un-spent convictions, unless required to do so because of the nature of the post. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Induction and Training

All employees and volunteers will be required to follow an appropriate induction process to ensure they are equipped to do the job.

All employees and volunteers will receive training on the Equality and Diversity policy, procedures and action plan as part of their induction.

Promotion

All vacancies will be advertised internally and externally, where appropriate.

Training

All employees and volunteers will have access to a wide range of training opportunities which are regularly circulated.

Training opportunities will be discussed during supervision sessions and selection will be made on the basis of both the needs of the Council, as set out in business plan and the personal development of the individual.

Special needs requirements for people with disabilities or caring responsibilities will be taken into account wherever practicable and methods sought to help them overcome disabilities in taking up training opportunities.

Induction training will include an explanation of the Equality and Diversity Policy and a requirement to undertake formal training within the probationary period of employment.

Terms and Conditions

Annual Leave & Religious Holidays

The Council will not ask about an employee's religion and will not discriminate against anyone wishing to celebrate their festivals. Employees are required to use part of their annual holiday entitlement to cover time off for these and must follow the normal holiday booking procedure.

Cultural and religious needs

Where employees or volunteers have particular cultural and religious needs the Council will consider whether it is reasonably practicable to meet those needs while maintaining the efficiency of the Council.

People with disabilities

The Council will take reasonable steps to make the workplace and individual jobs accessible to people with disabilities.

The Council will regularly review its facilities for employees and volunteers with a disability and will try to overcome any problems faced wherever practicable and within the resources available.

The Council will endeavour to ensure that people have maximum access to employment opportunities and to meetings and events, regardless of any disability.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

The Council will take seriously any complaints of discrimination and will not victimise people who make such complaints.

Staff will be made aware as part of the induction process of their responsibilities in relation to Equality & Diversity and any reported/perceived discriminatory behaviour will be fully investigated and dealt with using the disciplinary process.

Bullying and Harassment

The Council upholds the right of all employees and volunteers to be treated with respect and dignity and to work in an atmosphere free of bullying and harassment.

All employees and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour is sensitive to others and for ensuring that they do not condone or support the bullying and harassing behaviour of others.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously and should be raised using the grievance procedure. All complaints will be investigated and where appropriate, the disciplinary procedure will be followed.

Service Provision

The Council will endeavour to ensure that its services to and for the community are sensitive and appropriate to respond to the needs of all, wherever practicable, i.e. taking account of the needs of minority groups.

The Council will take care to avoid unintentionally discriminatory passages appearing in published, printed or spoken material.

The Council will continue to take a lead role in combating any form of discrimination.

The Council will work with others to ensure that the diversity of the residents in Fairfields Parish is recognised and celebrated.

Responsibility

It is the Chairman's responsibility with the support of the Council, to ensure the implementation of the Equality and Diversity policy. Appropriate funds will be provided to implement approved aspects of the policy which require special and additional resources.

All employees and volunteers have the individual responsibility to:

- Follow procedures introduced to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination
- To draw the attention of management to suspected or alleged discriminatory practices
- To refrain from harassing or intimidating other employees, volunteers and residents of Fairfields Parish on any grounds cited in the policy statement.