

# Oxspring Parish Council Equal Opportunities Policy

## Introduction

Oxspring Parish Council's intention is to be an effective Equal Opportunities organisation. It is committed to ensure that everyone has equal access and is treated with respect, in relation to employment opportunities, its provision of services and all its activities.

The Council, as a corporate body, has statutory duties under legislation to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.

## Legal Position

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds (known as 'protected characteristics'):

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- race;
- religion / belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- marriage / civil partnership; and
- pregnancy / maternity.

## As an Employer

All employees, are required to treat one another with mutual respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual, irrespective of the position they have within the organisation.

The Council is committed to creating a workplace where individuals are valued, listened to and treated with respect.

The Council maintains a work environment that seeks out and values the insight, experience, contribution and full participation of all staff.

Harassment and discrimination in any form is unacceptable behaviour and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action.

Recruitment processes will be equitable and fair so that the best people are appointed on the basis of relevant experience, skills and abilities, unless a genuine occupational qualification exists for a specific post.

## As a Service Provider

The Council will strive to ensure that all services provided by, or on behalf of, the Council are made accessible to all individuals and groups equally and without discrimination.

All service users will be treated with respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual.

The Council will, wherever appropriate, work in partnership with other agencies in the area, including the Borough Council, voluntary groups and community organisations to promote equal opportunities.

The Council will ensure that all contractors directly supplying goods and services or executing works for, or on behalf of, the Council comply with this Council's stated policy on equal opportunities.

## **The Policy in Action**

As an employer, the Council aims to achieve the policy by:

- ensuring its employees are made aware of their rights and responsibilities to each other, the customer and the organisation regarding equal opportunities issues;
- providing a way in which individuals can communicate any concerns via competent named personnel;
- treating any unacceptable behaviour seriously;
- ensuring all employees and Councillors are aware they have a key role in implementing this policy and are expected to take personal responsibility in ensuring its success;
- providing awareness training for all employees and Councillors where necessary, ensuring opportunities to develop relevant competencies are available to implement the policy;
- meeting the commitments and living the aims of being a “Positive about Discrimination” employer.

As a Service Provider the Council aims to achieve its policy by:

- providing training for all staff in equal opportunities awareness and customer care, emphasising equality of treatment in service delivery;
- ensuring that no member of the public is disadvantaged, or treated less favourably than others, in terms of access to Council services. Where the Council’s practice, policy or procedures are found to make access impossible or unreasonably difficult, we will take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to change these practices, policies or procedures;
- ensuring that, wherever practical, all premises owned or managed by the Council are accessible to all. Where this is impractical in the short-term, we will provide reasonable alternative methods of access so that no member of the public is disadvantaged by physical barriers;
- recognising the importance of communication in attaining equity and quality services which are responsive to the needs of all local people, for example through the provision of information in large print and on audio tape on request;
- complying with all relevant legislation relating to discrimination and equity.

## **Role of Councillors and Employees**

All Councillors and employees are responsible for implementing the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy. It is important that all individuals who are employed by the Council appreciate that they have a responsibility and a role to play in the provision of equal opportunities.

## **Monitoring Equal Opportunities**

The Council will have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy, both as an employer, involving staff as appropriate in the monitoring process, and as a service provider, involving local community and voluntary groups in the monitoring process.

Any breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be dealt with through the relevant legislation and the Council’s Disciplinary Procedures. Serious offences, such as harassment and victimisation, may be treated as gross misconduct.

Complaints from staff about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with as laid down in the Council’s Grievance Procedures.

Complaints from members of the public about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with through the Council’s Complaints Procedure.