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**T O W N C O U N C I L**

# **DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL EQUITY, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

**DATE OF ADOPTION:** Full Council 19th September 2023

**DATE OF REVIEW:** Three years or in line with changes in legislation

# EQUITY, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

## 1. OUR COMMITMENT

Downham Market Town Council (the Council) is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. Equality means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination. Inclusion means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution. Diversity means the celebration of individual differences amongst the workforce. The Council will actively support diversity and inclusion and ensure that all employees are valued and treated with dignity and respect.

All Councillors and staff are expected to address the impact of prejudice, stereotyping, victimisation, bias (conscious or unconscious) harassment and victimisation.

## 2. LEGAL DUTIES

The Council is bound by The Equality Act 2010. This act was implemented to replace a number of anti-discrimination laws by simplifying equality law and removing inconsistencies, thus enabling a better understanding and ensuring it is easier to comply. The purpose of the act is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and with respect whilst at work or whilst using the Council's services. It protects **everyone** from discrimination based on the nine "protected characteristics":

- . Age.
- . Disability.
- . Gender reassignment - which must include people who identify as a gender that is different to that assigned at birth.
- . Marriage and civil partnerships.
- . Pregnancy and maternity.
- . Race - to include colour, creed, nationality, ethnicity, or national origin.
- . Religion or belief.
- . Sex.
- . Sexual Orientation.

Councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

**DIRECT DISCRIMINATION** - this occurs where, because of a "protected characteristic", a person receives worse treatment than someone who does not have that characteristic. For example, not employing a non-binary person as it is believed they will not gain the respect of the team. In limited circumstances, an employer can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

- . **INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION** - this occurs when an organisation has a particular policy or way of working that applies to everyone but may put people with a “protected characteristic” at a disadvantage. An example could be inflexible dress code that discriminates against anyone who needs to dress appropriately for their religion or cultural needs.
- . **HARASSMENT** - this occurs when someone is made to feel humiliated, offended, or degraded. This could be unwanted conduct towards a member of staff, insults, pranks or teasing, or a member of staff displaying an emblem, flag or publication that may cause offence. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
- . **VICTIMISATION** - this occurs when someone is treated less favourably than someone else. For example, because they have complained about discrimination or given evidence in support of a colleague.

**Downham Market Town Council expects all Councillors, staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors and visitors to behave in accordance with the provision set out.**

### **3. OUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Full Council, Town Clerk and staff are responsible to own and monitor the implementation of this policy.

- . The Town Clerk is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of this policy, and if the need should arise to procure training and advice on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- . It is the responsibility of Councillors to act as role models and champions of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- . It is the responsibility of Councillors and staff to respond quickly and effectively to any allegations of discrimination and harassment.
- . It is the responsibility of Councillors and staff to equip themselves with the knowledge and understanding of Equality and Diversity and ensure they prioritise any training provided.

### **4. ENFORCEMENT**

The effectiveness of the policy’s aim and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

#### **4.1 PEOPLE NOT EMPLOYED BY THE COUNCIL**

The Council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the Council. Any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the Council should be reported to the Town Clerk, who will take appropriate action.

## 4.2 **GRIEVANCES**

- . Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through the Council's Grievance Policy.
- . Any service user who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy, should make a complaint through the Town Clerk. If the complaint is about the Town Clerk, this should be made through the Chair of The Human Resources Committee (HR).
- . Any job applicant who believes they has been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy, should raise the issue with the Town Clerk or Chair of HR.
- . Incidents of victimisation or harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Bullying and Harassment Policy. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Policy.

## 5. **MONITORING**

This policy will be monitored periodically by the Council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed every 3 years.

**END**