

# ALSAGER TOWN COUNCIL



## EQUALITY POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

The Council is committed to providing the highest quality of provision and service and recognises that the implementation of an effective Equalities Policy is an integral part of any approach based on quality of service and provision. The Council as a corporate body has responsibilities as an employer, a service provider and a public authority, but both Members and employees as individuals also have responsibilities as well as rights.

The Council will treat all its employees, partners and customers with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

The Council will recruit, train, promote and transfer employees on the basis of the skills, relevant qualifications, experience, aptitude and ability they can bring to the job.

The Council will encourage and develop all employees to support and carry out the requirements of this Equalities policy. All employees will be encouraged to identify and disseminate good practice.



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## EQUALITIES POLICY

The Equalities Policy has the commitment of the Council and Town Clerk.

The Council is committed to making full use of the talents and resources of all its employees. It will ensure that all recipients of the services delivered directly by the Council are guaranteed the same opportunity.

The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer, provider of services and contractor. It is committed to the promotion, maintenance and protection of the rights of individuals to equal opportunities in work, in vocational education, training and enterprise, regardless of:

- \* Ethnic origin
- \* Gender
- \* Religion
- \* Disability
- \* Age
- \* Marital status
- \* Sexual orientation

The Council recognises the diversity within the community and seeks to reflect this in the work it undertakes within that community.

### **Objectives**

To ensure that all employees of the Council are themselves given the opportunity, or enable others, to use their skills and talents to the full and that no potential employee or customer experiences discrimination either by operation of terms and conditions or by the behaviour of individuals.

### **Responsibilities**

All employees of the Council have a responsibility to ensure that the Council's Equal Opportunities policy is communicated and its requirements adhered to.

All the Council staff will receive training and development in equal opportunities issues. The Council policies on managing diversity form part of its Staff Handbook of Employment which is part of the Terms and Conditions of Employment for Council staff.

The Council recognises its responsibilities and legal obligations under any current legislation including:

- \* Race Relations Act
- \* Sex Discrimination Act
- \* Equal Pay Act
- \* Disability Discrimination Act

The Council's Disciplinary process will be used to deal with breaches of the Council's Equalities Policies or associated Codes of Conduct.



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## THE COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER

### **Recruitment**

The Council recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job, in respect of experience and qualifications. It is against the Council's policy to discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, religion, disability, marital status, age, at any stage of the recruitment process.

The Council staff should ensure that:

- \* all job opportunities are open to all applicants
- \* no prejudice or assumptions are made by recruiters or managers about the suitability for a job of any applicant by virtue of ethnic origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status or age.
- \* all applications are given equal consideration
- \* no decision is made in advance regarding the outcome of recruitment
- \* all applicants and staff are made aware of the Council's policy on recruitment

### **Recruitment publicity**

All recruitment publicity must positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people and should avoid any stereotyping of roles. All publicity should state that the Council is an Equal Opportunities employer. All vacancies must be advertised appropriately to ensure that all potential applicants are informed of the opportunities.

### **Selection process**

The selection process must be carried out consistently at all levels. It must be fair and non-discriminatory.

Application forms where used must state that The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer.

### **Selection criteria**

The only criteria to be used in the selection process are those based on the skills, experience and qualifications essential for the job.

### **Monitoring of the process**

All aspects of The Council's recruitment and selection process will be monitored by the Town Clerk to ensure the Council meets its obligations as an Equal Opportunities employer.

### **Training and Development**

Training and development opportunities will be made available to all employees and any form of discrimination whether direct or indirect will not be tolerated. Priority will be given to training or development activity which is linked to the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives. Where resources permit the Council will support training and development beyond the needs of the job which can be returned as a benefit to the Council i.e. increased flexibility, breadth of experience and commitment.



## **Terms and conditions**

All employees will be treated equitably with respect to pay and other conditions of their contracts of employment.

## **Breaches of Policy**

Employees who feel that they have been subject to discrimination should attempt to resolve the issue by talking to the individual whom they feel has acted inappropriately. If this does not resolve the issue then the employee can approach their Manager or, if necessary, the Town Clerk.

Any employee who feels they are being bullied should consult their Line Manager or the Town Clerk.

- If grievance is against Line Manager then consult Town Clerk.
- If grievance is against Town Clerk then consult Chairman of Personnel

## **Harassment**

The Council will not tolerate or accept any form of harassment of its employees. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and any contravention of this right may be subject to the appropriate grievance or disciplinary procedure.

Harassment in the workplace can be defined as derogatory or discriminatory remarks or actions by an individual or group, which can cause another individual or group to feel threatened, humiliated, or disadvantaged. It may interfere with job performance, undermine job security or create a threatening or unpleasant work environment.

## **Sexual harassment**

There is no single definition of sexual harassment. In the EU's code of practice it is defined as "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or conduct based on sex, affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct".

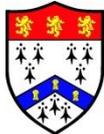
It is behaviour which is unwanted, unreciprocated and uninvited.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. It may be unlawful behaviour, contrary to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It is also improper and unprofessional behaviour which adversely affects morale and work effectiveness.

All allegations of sexual harassment will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially and individuals will be protected against subsequent victimisation or retaliation for making or being involved in a complaint.

## **Discrimination against people with disabilities**

This is against both the Council policy and the law as outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.



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The Council will make reasonable changes to the physical features of its premises or to its method of undertaking business where this can enable an employee to properly undertake their job role. We will demonstrate a positive attitude towards all staff and customers with disabilities.

### **Religious discrimination**

Discriminatory behaviour which fails to acknowledge the rights and needs of people with different beliefs or practices will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

### **Bullying**

Workplace bullying is a separate issue from sexual and racial harassment but the effects can be the same. Within the working environment, bullying can be described as the use of a position or power to coerce others by fear, oppression or threat.

The Council will not tolerate bullying behaviour at any level and it is the responsibility of all managers to eliminate any form of bullying which they become aware of.

Allegations of bullying will be dealt with under the grievance or disciplinary procedures. Any employee who feels they are being bullied should consult any manager or the Town Clerk.

### **Victimisation**

The Council will ensure that no employee is treated less favourably than other people because, for example they have brought proceedings, given evidence, or complained about the behaviour of someone who has been harassing or discriminating against them.



## AGE DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

### Recruitment

Recruitment is based entirely on relevant criteria. These criteria will be specific to the post and will not include age or age related criteria.

- All Job advertisements will avoid the use of ageist language. Phrases such as ‘applicants should be 25-35 years of age’, ‘young graduates’ and ‘mature person’ are discriminatory.
- Person specifications must focus on job needs only. Criteria unnecessarily specifying experience, personal qualities or qualifications will be removed from job advertisements and person specifications.
- Where appropriate, advertisements will be designed to attract a mixed-age response through advertising.
- Age related details will be separated from the application form as far as practicable.

Direct age related details (such as date of birth) will be separated via the equal opportunities monitoring form.

Application forms will be reviewed to minimise inferred calculation of age.

### Selection

The selection of candidates will be based upon individual assessment against the relevant criteria and will not include age or age-related criteria.

- Candidates will be selected on the basis of skills and abilities. Recruitment procedures will ensure that the process is fair, consistent and does not discriminate against a particular age group.
- Only job-related questions should be asked of job applicants. Candidates will be measured against selection criteria to help decision-making.
- All successful applicants will be subject to a pre-employment medical questionnaire irrespective of age. Assumptions about capability or medical fitness will not be based on the age of the applicant.
- Selection panel members must not make judgements about the abilities of a candidate based on stereotypical assumptions about age.



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### **Training and Development**

Promotion and career development opportunities will be provided equally for all staff whatever their age.

- Procedures relating to appraisal, the award of accelerated or discretionary increments and other employment situations where selection is required, will apply to all staff regardless of age. Any such review will focus on skills and ability.
- Management Team/ Section Managers or those to whom responsibility has been delegated must not introduce age cut-off points related to training or development.
- The take-up of training and development from different ages will be monitored.

### **Pay and Conditions of Service**

Specific length of service provision relating to pay and benefits will only be permitted where this can be justified in that the arrangement rewards loyalty, encourages motivation or recognises relevant experience

- Pay scales and access to other benefits including the occupational pension and bonuses will not be based on age. Any age related criteria will be removed.
- All policies will be reviewed to check whether they include reference to age related or length of service related entitlement. Where age or length of service related criteria are used these will be reviewed and revised where necessary.

### **Retirement and Dismissal**

#### **Retirement**

The Town Council does not have a default age for retirement. Please see the Cheshire East Council Retirement Policy for more detail.

Employees have the right to request working beyond the default retirement age. Alsager Town Council will put in place a system to inform individuals that they are approaching retirement age and to consider requests to continue working after retirement age.

The individual may be accompanied at any stage by a Union representative or friend acting in a non-legal capacity.

#### **Redundancy and Voluntary Early Retirement**

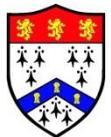
Any new voluntary redundancy scheme will not be based on age related criteria unless such criteria may be justified under the regulations.

Selection for redundancy will not be based on length of service alone as this is indirectly discriminatory. Any Selection Criteria will be designed within the scope of the Regulations.

Redundancy pay will normally be based on the statutory scheme as allowed under the Regulation. The upper age limit of 65 on redundancy payments will be removed. If payments are to be enhanced this will be done within the scope of the Regulations.



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### **Dignity at Work**

Ageist abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying, which includes but not restricted to:-

- Name – calling
- Derogatory jokes
- Unacceptable or unwanted behaviour
- Intrusive questions

is a serious disciplinary offence, and will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.



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### **THE COUNCIL AS A DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERER**

The Council's clients have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment whilst participating in or receiving any of The Council's services.

All aspects of The Council's Equalities policies impact on the manner in which it directly delivers services to and for customers.

Adherence to the principles and practices contained within the policy will be monitored on a regular basis.

Breaches of the policy will be subject to the grievance and discipline procedures.

The above requirements apply to all services delivered directly by the Council.

### **GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Council have made a commitment to promote and demonstrate equality, including in respect of gender in its main Equalities Policy Statement. It does however recognise the additional general and specific duties placed on it by the Equality Act 2006.

The purpose of this scheme is to explain how we will remove any barrier that may currently exist to preventing gender equality. Through this Scheme, the Council commit to:-

- Mainstream gender equality in all areas of the Council's work
- Meet and go beyond its legal duties in making gender equality a reality
- Promote equality of opportunity between the genders
- Raise awareness of gender in equality issues
- Deal with complaints from the public under the Council's Complaints Procedure or from members of staff under the grievance procedure.
- Monitor and review the Scheme and undertake appropriate consultations.

### **POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY**

#### **Inclusive Approval**

The Council believe that as far as possible, customers with disabilities should be able to obtain services in the same way as other customers. However, given the constraints of operating from existing buildings, there will be some situations where equality of access is not possible. In such cases, we will come up with a solution of best service for our customers with disabilities, which meets their needs.

#### **Finding Out**

The Council will periodically undertake an audit of its premises and operations to assess as far as possible, what customers with different disabilities may need in order to access our services. We will base this on good practice guidance and where appropriate talk to individual customers about any particular problems they encounter. As necessary, we will seek expert advice on finding solutions.



### **Existing Premises**

We will focus particularly on making reasonable adjustments to the physical features of the premises. Where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for customers with disabilities to make use of a service, we will take reasonable measures to:-

- Remove the features, or
- Alter the features, or
- Provide a reasonable means of avoiding it, or
- Provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available.

### **Getting Better**

We will integrate positive thinking about disability with the way we run our business. We will ensure our staff are aware of the DDA and are trained to meet the needs of customers with disabilities.

We will plan the development of our business, mindful of the needs of people with disabilities. We will look for premises which can reflect best practice and develop our working practices to ensure we meet the objectives of this policy.