

Whessoe Parish Council

Equal Opportunities Policy

Version	Date of Review	Reviewed by	Approved	Comments
V 0.1	10 August 2019	Clerk		Original draft
V1.0		WPC	At full Council meeting 9/9/19	Approved Version
V2.0		WPC	At full Council meeting 23/3/20	Approved unchanged
V3.0		WPC	At full Council meeting 24/5/21	Approved unchanged
V3.1	15 May 2023	Clerk		No changes required.
V4.0		WPC	At full Council meeting 22/5/23	Approved unchanged

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Whessoe Parish Council (the Council) is committed to providing the highest quality of provision and service and recognises that the implementation of an effective Equal Opportunities Policy is an integral part of such an approach.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The Council will treat all its employees, partners and customers with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

2 Legal position

- 2.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds, known as “protected characteristics” in section 4 of the 2010 Act :

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

- 2.2 Section 149 of the 2010 Act imposes a Duty on Parish Councils to take into account:

- The need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- To foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

3. Our commitment

- 3.1 The Council

- understands its obligations under the Equality Act 2010
- is fully committed to its duty, imposed by Section 149 of the 2010 Act
- is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and declares its opposition to any form of less favourable treatment, whether through direct or indirect discrimination, on the grounds of the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010
- is an Equal Opportunities employer and provider of services. It is committed to the promotion, maintenance and protection of the rights of individuals. The Council is committed to making full use of the talents and resources of its employees.

- 3.2 The Council will ensure that all recipients of the services delivered directly by the Council are guaranteed the same opportunity.
- 3.3 All policies of the Council will be designed to support the principles and practices of equal opportunity, to foster a fully integrated community and maintain racial harmony.

4. The Council as an Employer

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The Council is making every effort to create a workplace where individuals are valued, listened to and treated with respect.
- 4.3 The Council maintains a work environment that seeks out and values the insight, experience, contribution and full participation of all staff.
- 4.4 Harassment and discrimination in any form is unacceptable behaviour and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action.

5. The Council as a service provider

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 All service users will be treated with respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual.
- 5.3 The Council will, wherever appropriate, work in partnership with other agencies in the area, including the county and district councils, voluntary groups and community organisations to promote equal opportunities.
- 5.4 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.

6. The policy in action

- 6.1 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 Councillors and employees realise 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 Councillors and employees, ensuring opportunities to develop relevant competencies are available to implement the policy;
- 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 public buildings and premises owned or managed by the Council are accessible to all.
- 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 or audio on request;
- complying with all relevant legislation relating to discrimination and equality.

7. Role of Councillors and Employees

7.1 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.

8. Monitoring of Equal Opportunities

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

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