

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

Diversity and equalities policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010. The legislation covers a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 1.2 Dunstable Town Council fully supports the principle of equality and diversity and aims to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all and to encourage, value and manage diversity.

2. Policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to outline Dunstable Town Council's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and equal treatment for staff, members, volunteers, residents and customers in terms of employment and access to services; and to provide guidance on anti-discriminatory practice.
- 2.2 In the implementation of this policy, the Town Council aims to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to the Council's performance and to develop an organisation culture that positively values diversity.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The policy applies to employees directly employed by Dunstable Town Council, to workers employed via agencies, contractors, members, volunteers, residents and customers in terms of service provision.
- 3.2 The policy is designed to value diversity and to ensure equality of opportunity and access to services. It applies specifically to discrimination and equality of opportunity in respect of 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and aims to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of:
 - (a) Age
 - (b) Disability
 - (c) Race
 - (d) Sex
 - (e) Religion or belief
 - (f) Gender reassignment
 - (g) Marriage and civil partnership
 - (h) Sexual orientation
 - (i) Pregnancy and maternity*(This list is not exhaustive)*
- 3.3 The policy applies across the range of employment policies and practice, including those relating to Discipline, Grievance, Harassment and Complaints.

- 3.4 Employees, volunteers and members have a duty to co-operate with Dunstable Town Council to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination.

4. Aims

- 4.1 Dunstable Town Council's core values are to:
- Be an advocate and campaigning voice for the people of Dunstable
 - Work to the highest standards of integrity and openness and deliver services to the best of our abilities
 - Work in partnership with other organisations to improve services and deliver value for money for the Dunstable council tax payer.
- 4.2 In upholding those values, Dunstable Town Council aims to:
- Promote equality of opportunity
 - Celebrate and value diversity
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- 4.3 Discrimination can be direct, associative, perceptive, indirect, harassment (including by third parties) or victimisation. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.
- 4.4 Dunstable Town Council aims to ensure that staff, contractors, volunteers, members, residents and customers will not be discriminated against in relation to any of the protected characteristics set out above.
- 4.5 Dunstable Town Council will provide equality of opportunity and equal treatment as an integral part of good practice. The Council committed to creating a harmonious working environment, which is free from harassment and bullying and in which every employee is treated with respect and dignity. We will support our staff, members, volunteers and contractors in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other organisations or residents and customers.

5. Equal Opportunities Policy Implementation

- 5.1 Dunstable Town Council is committed to Equality and Diversity and will ensure that it acts in such a way that no individual or group referred to in this policy is discriminated against, in particular:
- by providing information in a way that is accessible;
 - by meeting in premises with facilities which are physically accessible to those participating;
 - by making training in discrimination awareness and equal opportunities available to all members, paid workers and volunteers
 - by ensuring that all employees, contractors and users of our services are informed about our Equality and Diversity Policy

6. Dunstable Town Council as Service Provider

- 6.1 In developing its services, Dunstable Town Council will seek to ensure access to its customers. This will include, wherever practicable, making specific access arrangements for its customers with disabilities or learning difficulties, or any other protected characteristic which may apply, such as religion and belief. Dunstable Town Council will attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.
- 6.2 As a local council, the Town Council is committed to ensure that due regard is given to the three main aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, stated below:
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conflict that is prohibited by the Act.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3 In every aspect of the planning, management, access, provision and monitoring of services, the Council, its staff and volunteers shall seek to promote equality of opportunity in accordance with this policy, in particular:
- by seeking to identify and respond to the needs of those groups experiencing discrimination, altering priorities and methods of service delivery where necessary;
 - by seeking the views of clients through annual service Feedback Questionnaires.

In addition to the Public Sector Equality Duty, Dunstable Town Council may choose to take proportionate positive action for the advancement of equality across all that it does.

7. Dealing with Third Parties

- 7.1 Dunstable Town Council will not unlawfully discriminate in dealings with third parties.

8. Employment Practices

- 8.1 Dunstable Town Council aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in the context of the policy. The Council will recognise and respond to the individual needs of staff, volunteers and members, especially those who are carers or who have disabilities, and ensure that, within available resources, the necessary support is provided to enable them to work effectively.
- 8.2 Selection, recruitment, training, promotion and employment practices will be subject to regular review to ensure that they comply with the Diversity and Equalities Policy.

9. Recruitment and Selection

9.1 The recruitment of paid workers shall be undertaken in accordance with this policy, in particular:

- by ensuring that posts are advertised in such a way as to encourage applications from groups experiencing discrimination;
- by preparing job descriptions which clearly set out what the worker is to do, and person specifications which recognise that relevant experience can be as valuable as qualifications or previous paid employment;
- by ensuring that in all selection procedures only factors relevant to the requirements of the post are taken into account, and that the spirit of the policy statement is adhered to;
- by sending a copy of this policy to prospective applicants for all posts.

9.2 Under section 159 of the Equality Act (2010) Dunstable Town Council may choose to take positive action in recruitment and promotion of those with protected characteristics.

10. Training

10.1 All training opportunities will be made available to all appropriate employees and not in such a way so as to exclude particular groups.

11. Retirement

11.1 Dunstable Town Council adheres to the Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provision) Regulations (2011), and will not require an employee to retire unless Dunstable Town Council can justify it or the employee agrees to it.

12. Bullying and Harassment

12.1 Dunstable Town Council regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff, volunteers, members, customers or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

12.2 The definition of harassment is the unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

12.3 The definition of workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate, offensive behaviour, which is often an abuse of power or position. It can be direct or indirect, either verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

12.4 Examples of bullying and harassment are given in the Council's Dignity at Work Policy.

12.5 The Council's Dignity at Work Policy sets out the procedure to follow if any employee believes they may have been subjected to bullying and harassment.

13. Complaints and Sanctions

13.1 Dunstable Town Council will treat seriously any complaints of unlawful discrimination on any of the stated grounds made by employees, volunteers, members, residents, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

13.2 All complaints made by external parties will be investigated in accordance with Dunstable Town Council's Complaints Procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

13.3 In the event of an investigation concerning a complaint against a member of the Council, this will be managed by Central Bedfordshire Council's Monitoring Officer.

13.4 In the event of an investigation concerning a complaint against an employee or volunteer, Dunstable Town Council's Grievance Policy and Procedures will be followed and any action necessary dealt with under Dunstable Town Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

13.5 Employees who believe they have been the subject of harassment or bullying or any form of discrimination, should report the incident to a manager or supervisor as soon as possible to enable the Council to deal with the matter, in accordance with the Council's Dignity at Work Policy.

14. Responsibilities

14.1 Management has the primary responsibility for ensuring that individuals who work for Dunstable Town Council are selected, promoted and otherwise treated solely on the basis of their relevant aptitudes, skills and abilities. In order to achieve this they must:

- not discriminate in the course of employment against employees or job applicants
- not induce or attempt to induce others to practise unlawful discrimination; and
- bring to the attention of employees that they may be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure for unlawful discrimination of any kind.

14.2 Everyone who works for Dunstable Town Council also has responsibility for contributing to the aims of this policy by:

- not discriminating against fellow employees, customers, clients, suppliers or members of the public with whom they come into contact during the course of their duties
- not inducing or attempting to induce others to practise unlawful discrimination; and
- reporting any discriminatory action to their manager.

14.3 Members should draw the attention of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

14.4 The Town Clerk and Chief Executive is responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues, and to ensure the Policy document is kept up to date.

15. Data Collection

15.1 Dunstable Town Council complies with the requirement of the Data Protection Act. Any data, either qualitative and or quantitative, required in order to monitor the requirements or the impact of the Equalities Act 2010, will be collected where it is reasonable, proportionate and practical to do so. Any such requirements will be notified to Dunstable Town Council customers and will follow a common data format.

Reviewed Jan 2019

*(Finance and General Purposes Committee, June 2015
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