

ODCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

EQUALITY POLICY 2017

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 took effect on 1 October 2010 and replaces the previous antidiscrimination legislation. It simplifies the law removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It also strengthens the law in order to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The Public Sector Equality Duty is a key measure in the Act which came into force on 5 April 2011. All public bodies and organisations carrying out public functions have a duty to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. The Public Sector Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities for everyone who comes into contact with Odcombe Parish Council, irrespective of their characteristics (unless there are genuine occupational qualifications or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken).

LEGAL POSITION

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds:

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

Under the Equality Act 2010 these are known as “protected characteristics”.

The three aims of the general equality duty:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

COUNCIL’S COMMITMENT

Odcombe Parish Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, whether it be direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

(a) 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.

Odcombe Parish Council will create a workplace where individuals are valued, listened to and treated with respect.

Odcombe Parish Council will maintain 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.

(b) AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

The Parish Council will have due regard to the three aims of the Equality Duty and it will take a proportionate approach when complying with it.

Odcombe Parish 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;

Odcombe Parish 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;

Odcombe Parish 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:

Odcombe Parish 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 Managers 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 employees and Councillors, 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

Odcombe Parish 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 public buildings and 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 of Equal Opportunities

- the Council's Staffing Committee will have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy as it applies to Odcombe Parish Council as an employer, involving staff as appropriate in the monitoring process;
- the Council will have responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy as it applies to Odcombe Parish Council as a service provider
- 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.

THIS POLICY IS FULLY SUPPORTED BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

Adopted at the Council Meeting held on 17th May 2017