

Equality and Diversity Policy: Bury St Edmunds Town Council

This policy document outlines a positive approach for Bury St Edmunds Town Council to seek to ensure equality and diversity amongst its Councillors, staff and service users. It also is intended as a commitment by the Town Council to support and encourage equality and diversity in the carrying out of its duties in the community.

Statement of intent:

Bury St Edmunds Town Council strives to eliminate inequality and exclusion, to make its services accessible to all, and applies integrity to its recruitment and employment practices. In providing goods and/or services and/or facilities, the Council is also committed to acting against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

The aim of the policy is to provide equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time, and of Councillors and service users. It will not unlawfully discriminate under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 that protect individuals whose age, disability, gender or gender reassignment, marriage and/or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The Council aims to oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

The Council commits to encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace, to create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes ensuring managers and all employees understand their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff and Councillors should understand they, as well as their employer if relevant, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, Councillors, customers, suppliers and the public.

The Town Council will take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

The Town Council will make opportunities for training or development available to all staff, Councillors who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully used to maximise their personal wellbeing and for the efficiency of the organisation.

Decisions concerning staff are based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act) and the review of employment practices and procedures are to ensure fairness. From time to time policies will be updated, including the changes in the law.

The Town Council will monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and to meet the aims and commitments set out in the policy. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues

The equality policy is to be fully supported by Councillors and staff. Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in the Policy Files. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance – usually their line manager.

NB: Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.