



Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

Nantwich Town Council recognises that it has moral and legal responsibilities to be fair and is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. This means treating people fairly, valuing difference and removing barriers that prevent people from participating fully in public life and reaching their full potential.

This Equality and Diversity Policy outlines our legal responsibilities and the commitments we have made which help us to ensure equality is an integral part of the way we reach decisions, provide services, recruit staff and work with other organisations.

2. Legal Requirements

The Equality Act came into force from October 2010 and brings together all legal requirements on equality.

Under the Act everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using a service. It protects people from discrimination on the basis of certain characteristics, known as “protected characteristics”, these are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage & civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex & sexual orientation

Through the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Act also requires that public bodies including Parish Councils have a due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conducted prohibited Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

3. Purpose

3.1 This Policy demonstrates that Nantwich Town Council will seek to ensure that every member of the public has equal access to its employment and development opportunities, to its services and to all its activities.

3.2 The Policy will act as a guide and reference for the Council's employees and members so that they can implement its equal opportunity objectives. As a result, managers, employees, and members will know what their responsibilities are and that they too will be treated fairly.

3.3 The Policy will help the Council to meet its legal and moral responsibilities to be fair, and members of the public will, through publicity of this Policy, have confidence in the Council's objectives in terms of both employment and service provisions.

4. Objectives

4.1 Nantwich Town Council is committed to Equality and Diversity and to the vision of improving the quality of life for local people. The Town Council aims to be:

- Accessible
- Accountable
- Fair
- Inclusive
- Proactive
- Professional
- Responsible
- Transparent

4.2 Ensure all employees, members, contractors and users of our services and facilities are informed about our Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.3 Apply equal opportunities principles to work undertaken for the council by external contractors, other organisations in receipt of council funding and in work with our partners.

4.4 Rectify any elements of our work which have the potential for discrimination and prejudice.

4.5 To promote equality and diversity with other partners we will:

- Promote tolerance and respect between diverse groups and individuals.
- Acknowledge and celebrate, wherever possible, the variety of lifestyles and cultures within the town.
- Challenge all forms of discrimination within the Town Council and the wider community.
- Support the development of communities and assist them in challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The Town Clerk will be responsible for ensuring the Equality and Diversity Policy is developed, implemented, effective, monitored and updated.

5.2 The Town Clerk will be responsible for ensuring that monitoring takes place with regard to applications for employment and employment trends within the Council (e.g. promotion, re-grading and training) and for organising any equal opportunities training.

5.3 Employees and members have responsibilities to ensure that:-

- They understand and comply with the Policy and actively participate in measures introduced by the Council to ensure that there is equality of opportunities and non-discrimination.
- They do not discriminate as a decision-maker, or encourage others to discriminate, in matters of recruitment and selection, promotion and training and service provision.
- Council services are provided to members of the public fairly and equitably.
- They report to The Town Clerk any discriminatory practices.
- They support the proper investigation of complaints.

6. Employment

Nantwich Town Council is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to ensuring within the framework of the law that the Council's workplaces are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination. Good employment practices are essential to ensure the elimination of discrimination, not only as they relate to the employment of employees, but also to the way those employees deliver services.

6.1 The Council will, unless there is a valid reason for not doing so, publicly advertising vacancies in media readily available to everybody with a clear indication that the Council is an 'Equal Opportunities Employer'.

6.2 In terms of the skills, knowledge and experience required for job performance, no criteria will be classed as "essential" unless this can be justified. Specifications will be produced for all vacancies.

6.3 All vacant posts will be processed under the Council's agreed recruitment procedures.

6.4 Any practical or psychometric tests used in the selection process are justifiable and would not lead to indirect discrimination.

6.5 All employees/members involved in the recruitment and selection process are competent and able to perform the task and should receive training in the provisions of appropriate legislation and non-discriminatory selection techniques.

Further information on the Councils policy in respect of employment can be found in the Equality / Dignity at Work Policy contained in the staff handbook.

7. Training and Development

7.1 The Council recognises that training and development are crucial to ensure that employees and members have the skills, knowledge and appropriate behaviour to implement its Equal Opportunities Policies.

7.2 General guidance will be issued to employees to increase awareness of how discrimination operates at both individual and institutional levels and to ensure awareness of the Council's moral and legal obligations and practices and procedures.

7.3 In terms of employment, managers and members will be given training in recruitment and selection, discipline and grievance where necessary, so that they are able to interview effectively and objectively and deal with disciplinary and grievance issues such as harassment, victimisation and discrimination.

7.4 All employees will have equal access to training (subject to the availability of resources), career development and promotion opportunities. Positive action will also be taken to retain and/or redeploy existing employees who become disabled.

8. Elected Members

8.1 Nantwich Town Council will ensure elected members are aware of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and their legal responsibilities and rights when exercising Council duties and functions.

8.2 Nantwich Town Council will maintain a working/meeting environment that is inclusive, free of discrimination, harassment and bullying, where individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

8.3 Nantwich Town Council will encourage members to highlight discrimination and challenge unacceptable language and behaviour.

8.4 Nantwich Town Council will make reasonable adjustments where necessary, so that any obstacles a person faces as an elected member relating to a protected characteristic, are removed, reduced, or prevented.

8.5 Nantwich Town Council will publicise Council vacancies publicly and widely within the community.

9. Council Decision Making and Services

9.1 Nantwich Town Council will ensure that we treat people with dignity and respect.

9.2 Nantwich Town Council will try to understand how different people will be affected by our activities so that our policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

9.3 Nantwich Town Council recognise that people's needs may be different. We will take account of this when making decisions about policies or services.

10. Service and Facilities

The Council recognises its duty as the provider of services and facilities and as far as reasonably possible will ensure:

- All members of the public will be treated fairly and consistently.
- All services shall be provided without unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- Those using Council properties and facilities will be offered all possible assistance to ensure that they can access these, with special attention being given to those who find it difficult to access facilities on the grounds of their age or disability or other Protected Characteristic.
- All application forms shall state that the Council will treat all applications equitably and take due consideration of those with Protected Characteristics.
- All licence agreements – including allotment tenancy agreements – shall refer to this Equality Information statement.

11. Complaints

11.1 Employees/Members who feel they are the victims of discrimination through, for example:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment

may make a complaint under the Council's grievance procedure.

11.2 Members of the public who feel that they have suffered from discrimination should make a complaint to the Town Clerk.

11.3 The Council requires that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect and will not accept any form of discrimination. It will take seriously any complaints made by either employees, members or the public and will thoroughly investigate these complaints.

12. Monitoring

12.1 The Town Clerk will ensure that complaints are formally recorded, and where necessary reported to Staffing Committee or Full Council.

12.2 Nantwich Town Council will regularly review its policy so improvements can be made and in line with amendments to the law.

12.3 The Town Clerk will monitor all applications for employment and employment trends within the Council to ensure compliance with this Policy.