



Corporate Equality Policy

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Hart District Council believes that interests of residents, staff and the Council are best served by the creation and implementation of clear and consistent policies and procedures. This policy statement details the Council's policy on and commitment to equality and diversity, and takes into consideration all current legal requirements.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Council's vision for Hart is a district that appreciates and celebrates its diversity, challenges intolerance and discrimination, and positively promotes equality. It also, through the effective delivery of services and activities, is a district where all residents have the opportunity to contribute towards and benefit from the district's success.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to working towards the elimination of discrimination, and to achieve equality of opportunity and outcomes for the residents and communities of Hart, and all employees of the Council.

2. What is Equality and Diversity?

- 2.1 Equality is all about making sure everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities. It is not about treating everyone the same.
- 2.2 Diversity is about recognising and valuing individual differences and raising awareness about them.

3. Why do we need an Equality Policy?

- 3.1 As a service provider and an employer we are committed to ensuring fair treatment and equal access to our services, to information and to employment: everyone can expect the same standards of treatment regardless of their protected characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as: age; disability; gender reassignment; sex; sexual orientation; religion or belief; race; pregnancy & maternity; and, marriage & civil partnership.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 introduced new duties on the public sector, including local councils, some general and others specific. The general equality duties (the 'aims') requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - Encourage good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- 3.4 In addition, the Public Sector Equality duty placed specific duties upon local authorities to:
 - Publish information to show their compliance including publishing information in relation to the make-up of the overall workforce with respect to their protected characteristics in comparison to the protected characteristics of the local population (where the organisation has 150 or more staff).

- Prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives which will help the Council meet the three aims of the Equality Duty, at least every four years.

3.5 In addition to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has further obligations to our staff as an employer including ensuring non-discriminatory recruitment, equal pay and the rehabilitation of offenders.

4. The Council's Commitment to Equality and Diversity

4.1 The Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. We will:

- Ensure equality of opportunity for all
- Ensure fair treatment of all
- Ensure equality of access to services, to information and to employment
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics of our employees and service users
- Promote good relations between different groups and individuals within our community
- Actively seek to address inequality, taking a lead where necessary, to ensure quality services for everyone in the community

5. Responsibility and Accountability

5.1 The ultimate responsibility for implementing this policy and achieving change lies with the Joint Chief Executives, Heads of Service and Managers. However, the policy is the responsibility of all Members and employees, who are all accountable for their actions and must follow the principles and standards set out below.

6. What You Can Expect From the Council

6.1 Leadership and Corporate Commitment

6.1.1 The Council will:

- Ensure that unlawful discrimination is challenged and addressed
- Ensure the council has due regard to the aims of the general equality duty, by understanding the impact of our services on equality
- Ensure that the Council uses equality information and analysis, at the right time as part and parcel of the decision making processes.
- Undertake effective consultation with our community on key decisions and policies that will affect them
- Provide staff and elected members with training to confidently implement the requirements of this policy and challenge any discrimination
- Agree at least one measurable Equality Objective (see section 7) which will help the Council further the three aims of the Equality Duty
- Work with partners as appropriate, to ensure our services reach all groups within our community

- Monitor the effectiveness of our equality and diversity approaches through regular reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Ensure that all contractors, agents and suppliers are aware of and adhere to the Councils Corporate Equality Policy
- Respond promptly and fairly to any complaints about our services, including those relating to equality or discrimination

6.2 Service Delivery and Customer Care

6.2.1 The Council will:

- Provide quality services which reach all relevant communities
- Make sure our communication and consultation processes take into account equality
- Consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of formulating new policies and procedures to ensure the elimination of unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and encourage good relations
- Ensure the Council Offices and Leisure Centres provide suitable access for all parts of the community
- Provide clear information on our services in appropriate formats including meeting any requests we receive to provide information in alternative formats and languages where we perceive there to be a genuine need

6.3 Employment and Training

6.3.1 The Council as an employer will:

- Be committed to providing equality in all areas of employment including recruitment, promotion, training and development, and terms and conditions of employment
- Ensure managers and employees know about their rights and responsibilities under the Council's equality policy including ensuring that everyone who is responsible for recruiting and managing employees receives appropriate training and guidance on the Council's equality and employment policies
- Advertise vacancies in appropriate media to target the best available talent and expertise
- Maintain and develop equality monitoring information on the workforce
- Keep all employment policies and procedures under review
- Ensure an equal pay structure
- Recognise the role of trade unions in working for equality in employment and services
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all. Communicating to all employees and Members that unfair discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying are unacceptable

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary policies and procedures, and appropriate action will be taken
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation