

Hopesay Parish Council Equal Opportunities Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Parish Council is committed to pursuing an equal opportunities approach in the employment of its staff and in every aspect of Council activity. Council recognises its statutory duties under legislation in terms of service provision and employment and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy. Council aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences and which promotes dignity, equality and diversity and is committed to providing and promoting equal opportunities, eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity in the Community.

2. LEGAL POSITION

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

- age
- disability
- gender, or 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".

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

- political views
- Family or caring responsibilities
- Chronic illness or HIV/ Aids status
- Socio Economic Status.

3. PURPOSE / SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees, volunteers, contractors and elected members of the Parish Council irrespective of their characteristics, and an equality of opportunity in the provision of services and access to Parish Council facilities. It is the responsibility of every employee and Councillor of the Parish Council to ensure that they do not discriminate in any way. All employees and Councillors have a duty to uphold equal opportunities principles.

The Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination whether it be direct or indirect discrimination, victimization or harassment on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 or the identified additional unfair grounds. The Equality Policy underpins all policies, procedures and strategies, therefore providing a strong foundation for equality in the Council and the services it provides.

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4. EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

The commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing Society as a whole.

5. EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The Parish Council is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and access to its facilities. The Council's clients have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment whilst participating in or receiving any of the Council's services or activities. The Council will deliver services that are relevant, of the highest quality possible and accessible.

6. COMMITMENT

The Parish Council will comply with all current and future legislation referring to equality and diversity and will aim to promote good practice in all aspects of the organisation. The Council will publicise this policy on its website and will highlight it in recruitment and relevant official documentation. Equal Opportunities training for employees and members will be provided as appropriate.

7. BREACHES

Employees: Breaches of the Parish Council's equal opportunities policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Employees are entitled to complain about discrimination or harassment or victimization through the council's Grievance procedure.

Prospective candidates: anyone wishing to raise a complaint should do so, in writing, to the Clerk within 15 working days, at the latest, of the alleged incident. An investigation will then be conducted by the Clerk, or an independent person appointed for the purpose, who will report to the Council.

Members: Breaches of the Parish Council's equal opportunities policy are equally serious if made by a member, and should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council as a contravention of the Members Code of Conduct.

Contractors: Council can choose who it contracts with, and reported breaches of the Equal Opportunities Act, or any other enacted legislation, will be a factor in making that choice.

Volunteers: Breaches of the Parish Council's equal opportunities policy will be regarded seriously. All volunteers and helpers should be made aware of the policy in the first instance. The Chairman or the Clerk as appropriate will raise any reported breach informally with the volunteer or helper, and will explain why the breach is unacceptable. Training will be offered as appropriate. Council will not continue to use volunteers or helpers who do not respect, or refuse to abide by, its policies.