



## **OAKLEY AND DEANE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **POLICY FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Introduction**

Oakley & Deane Parish Council in serving the local community has the duty to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in regard to all its services and activities.

The council has a legal duty to adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Act not only seeks to eliminate discrimination in employment but places a general responsibility on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in the services it provides.

#### **Equality Act 2010**

The Act seeks to remove discrimination in regard to protected characteristics. The Act defines protected characteristics as being in regard to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Section 149 of the 2010 Act imposes on public authorities in the exercise of their functions, a duty to take into account the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

#### **Equal Opportunity Statement**

Oakley & Deane Parish Council are committed to achieving equality of opportunity both for those who use its services and for the employees who provide them.

Equal opportunities, fairness in the workplace and providing good quality services to the local community are all inter-linked. It is recognised that individuals and groups continue to be unfairly discriminated against and it is the Parish Council's responsibility to promote good community relations, equality of opportunity and to tackle unlawful discrimination in all of its forms. This new and comprehensive statement is to demonstrate the Parish

Council's wholehearted commitment to action in tackling inequality. Such action is the responsibility of all members and staff of the Parish Council.

### **Commitment**

- To provide services that are equally accessible to all people, free from prejudice and discrimination and sensitive to the needs of all sections of the community.
- Value people and their differences and enable all employees to achieve their full potential, creating vitality within our organisation and the services we deliver.
- Seek to influence the work and contribution of partner organisations from all sectors by ensuring that equality issues and considerations are fully taken into account when developing strategies.
- Work actively towards eliminating all forms of discrimination, both of a direct and indirect nature.
- Encourage partnership and participation in the development and application of council policy and practices.

### **Policy into Practice**

- Ensure that all policies and practices are in line with relevant employment legislation, anti-discrimination legislation and good practice guidelines.
- Integrate equality of opportunity into all aspects of its activities.
- Recruit and value a workforce that reflects the make-up of the community.
- Ensure all employees / members understand the values and expectations of the Council and the standards of behaviour that is expected from each of them.
- Make clear the action an employee who feels unfairly treated may take.
- Provide training to relevant employees / members so that they can actively put this policy into practice.
- Provide equal access to all service users and potential service users according to need. • Give people who use or might use Council services the opportunity to influence the way their needs are met.
- Seek to influence partner organisations in a collective commitment to equality of opportunity.
- In line with Government guidance, encourage voluntary organisations to provide evidence of their commitment to equality in terms of their personnel policies and delivery of their services, as a criterion in determining the award of grant aid from the Council.
- Ensure that the Council has policies that result in services sensitive to the needs of all sections of the community.
- Use socio-economic data to ensure compliance with the policy, where appropriate
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policy and practice on a regular basis as determined by law
- Develop a well-defined complaints procedure in dealing with alleged contraventions.

In **employment** the aim is to provide a non-discriminatory working environment where discrimination, harassment or bullying is unacceptable and which will not be tolerated. Employment policies, procedures and practices will promote equality of opportunity and all decisions regarding recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career management will be based solely on objective and job related requirements.

In **access to services** the aim is to ensure that all those who receive from the Council or wish to use a Council service can do so without fear of discrimination or disadvantage.

All people are entitled to be treated fairly, in a consistent manner and with dignity and respect.

## **Employees & Recruitment**

1. The Parish Council shall provide an environment free from discrimination and harassment and it recognises the contribution made by staff from all backgrounds especially from those within the above Protected Groups.
2. The Parish Council will take full account of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 when recruiting staff. Section 60 of the 2010 Act relates to the recruitment process and specifically covers the enquiries that can be made before employment. An employer is not permitted to ask questions about a job applicant's health before offering work or, where not in a position to offer work, before including the applicant in a pool of applicants from whom the employer intends (when in a position to do so) to select a person to whom to offer work. If an employer does ask health questions before a job is offered and subsequently does not offer the person a job, the burden of proof will be on the employer to prove that there was no discrimination. An applicant cannot bring an action solely on the grounds that a prohibited question on health was asked. However the Commission for Equality on Human Rights (CEHR) has powers under the Equality Act 2006 to enforce a breach of these provisions.
3. Advertisements for recruitment will not request applicants from a particular age range; neither will the application form request dates of birth or other age related details.
4. All application forms shall state that the Parish Council encourages applications from all, including and especially those from the Protected Groups.
5. In order not to discriminate against younger people, all application material will emphasise the importance of skills and potential, as well as experience.
6. The Parish Council will ensure that there is no age discrimination in relation to the dismissal of staff.
7. Any age discrimination shown to staff by other Staff Members, the Public or by the Council Members will be treated as a serious offence.
8. A job description and person specification must be drawn up for every vacancy and be provided to all prospective employees. Person and job specifications shall be strictly limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job.
9. Information about job vacancies must be made available to all sections of the community (except in situations where, in line with relevant employment legislation and the Council's Employment Policy, external advertising of vacancies is restricted).

## **Service Provisions to the Public**

1. All Members of the Public will be treated fairly and consistently
2. All services shall be provided without unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
3. Those using Parish Council properties and facilities will be afforded all possible assistance so as 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.
4. All application forms – including Conditions of Use forms – made to the Parish Council shall state that the Parish Council will treat all applications equitably and take due consideration of those with Protected Characteristics.

5. All licence agreements – including allotment tenancy agreements – shall refer to this Equality Information statement.

#### **Training and Development Opportunities**

1. The Parish Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in the development of both its staff and councillors.
2. All employees/members will be supported to undertake the training and development which they need to help them achieve and maintain a high standard of performance and will be given encouragement and support to achieve their full potential.
3. Where employees/members with disabilities undertake training and development, appropriate arrangements will be made as necessary to ensure that all opportunities are equally accessible.

#### **Monitoring the Policy**

Issues relating to the implementation of this policy should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

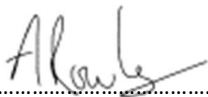
The Parish Council shall appoint on an annual basis a Parish Councillor to lead on the development and monitoring of the policy.

The Parish Council will receive an annual report on compliance with the policy.

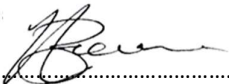
The Policy was brought into effect 1st July 2016 and was readopted 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to be reviewed every two years.

Oakley and Dean Parish Council

Chairman

  
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Paish Clerk

  
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