



Lancing Parish Council

Equal Opportunities Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lancing Parish Council is committed to:
 - a. encouraging equality and diversity
 - b. promoting dignity and respect for all, where individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued
 - c. creating an environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination
- 1.2 Lancing Parish Council is committed to ensuring training and development opportunities for all staff and Councillors, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their skills and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- 1.3 Lancing Parish Council, in providing services and facilities, is committed against the unlawful discrimination of members of the public.
- 1.4 Lancing Parish Council is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among its Members and employees and eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- 1.5 This policy is intended to outline the equalities commitment by the Council to members, employees, residents and members of the public generally.

2.0 LEGAL POSITION

- 2.1 It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds:
 - a. age
 - b. disability
 - c. gender reassignment
 - d. marriage and civil partnership
 - e. pregnancy and maternity
 - f. race
 - g. religion or belief
 - h. sex or gender
 - i. sexual orientation

Under the Equality Act 2010 these are known as “protected characteristics”.

- 2.2 The Council oppose 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.

3.0 PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council provides equality, fairness and respect for all staff, Councillors, members of the public and any other agency that comes into contact with the Council (the press, contractors or local government officers in addition to access into the Parish Halls, for example).
- 3.2 This policy is to ensure that the Council does not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics as listed above (2.1)

3.3 Through this policy, the Council endeavours 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.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 All Councillors and staff are required to read and understand their responsibilities under this policy.

4.2 The Clerk has overall delegated responsibility for co-ordinating the day-to-day operation of the policy and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures. The Clerk will ensure that complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination are dealt with in a serious manner.

4.3 Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the council's grievance and disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. This will be reported to Council.

4.4 The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that staff and Councillors are trained and informed in relation to this policy. This includes acknowledging rights and responsibilities under this policy in addition to understanding that staff and Councillors can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, against staff, councillors, and members of the public.

4.5 All Councillors and staff have a responsibility to ensure that their actions comply with both the requirements and the essence of the Equality of Opportunity Policy. This includes not just adhering to the policy but to actively promote inclusivity, to be aware in their daily work of anything they or others do that may put some groups at a disadvantage and to develop inclusive working practices.

4.6 Councillors and staff are entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. This is further defined in the Dignity at Work policy adopted by the Council.

4.7 The Council, on approving this Equal Opportunities Policy, takes responsibility for implementing and reviewing its effectiveness. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that this policy is updated when deemed necessary and when legislation is introduced or amended.

5.0 COMPLAINTS

5.1 Anyone who believes they have been treated unfairly or not in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy may complain to the Clerk by following the Council's Complaints Procedure.

5.2 Any reported breaches of this policy will be subject to an investigation.

5.3 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.