

Re-adopted at P & F Committee meeting 17/09/2024 under minute number 30 and revised at Full Council 31/03/2025 under minute number 77.

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

2025 - 2028

1. POLICY

The Town Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In the implementation of this policy the Town Council will:

- ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity leave, gender orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction described in the protected characteristics of Equality Act 2010 s4).
- promote diversity and equality for all staff, volunteers, Councillors and prospective Councillors and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds
- promote and sustain an inclusive and supportive work environment which affirms the equal and fair treatment of individuals in fulfilling their potential and does not afford unfair privilege to any individual or group
- treat part time staff fairly and equally
- challenge inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable
- promote greater participation of under-represented groups of staff by encouraging positive action to address inequality
- promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all staff.

2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Town Council has ultimate responsibility for the effective implementation of the policy. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years, to ensure it remains commensurate with the law and best practice. The Town Clerk will oversee the implementation of this policy.

The Policy and Finance Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all equal opportunities policies and procedures and reporting on the progress made in achieving equalities targets to the Full Council. The Town Clerk has overall delegated (under LGA 1972 S101) responsibility for co-ordinating the day to day operation of the policies and procedures.

3. RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

All members of staff remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law (Equalities Act 2010). The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all staff perform their duties in a lawful manner and that proper training and support is provided accordingly under the Equality and Diversity Act 2010 to all staff, volunteers and Councillors. In certain circumstances the Town Council could be vicariously liable for actions carried out by staff purportedly in the Town Council's name. Any member of staff, volunteers and Councillors may be personally liable if, whilst on Council business and despite guidance and training from the Council, they behave illegally.

4. RELATED POLICIES

All Council policies and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they comply with the Equality and Diversity policy. The following directly relevant policies and procedures support the Town Council's implementation process:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Age Retirement Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Annual data monitoring and action plans will be developed and maintained as appropriate in relation to areas such as race, disability, age, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment and work-life balance. Appropriate objectives will be set. Equality and diversity awareness will be built into all planning and review processes.

All related policies, procedures and action plans will be implemented with the co-operation of and in consultation with staff and Trade Union representatives.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Policy and Finance Committee will monitor the implementation of the policy and all associated equality action plans, reporting annually to the Full Council.

6. ACTION PLANNING

6.1 Staff Recruitment and selection procedures.

Recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed and updated in the light of emerging equalities legislation and guidance offered to all relevant staff on drafting job descriptions and person specifications. Annual data monitoring will be undertaken in relation to recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion, pay, grading, disciplinary

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cases, grievances and harassment in respect of gender, age, disability and race/ethnicity. Areas of identified inequality will be addressed.

- 6.2 Positive action measures will be put in place to support under-represented groups in specific areas, such as women seeking management posts and the employment of ethnic minorities and disabled staff.

6.3 **Training**

All employees, volunteers and councillors undertaking recruitment and selection will be trained in equality issues. Equality and diversity training will be included in induction sessions and induction packs for all newly appointed staff. Line Managers with responsibility for staff will receive training in equality and diversity matters, including the relevant law and their duties. Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff attend equality and diversity training within three months of their appointment.

7. **COMPLAINTS**

- 7.1 Any member of staff may pursue a grievance relating to their employment via the Grievance Procedure. Staff who experience bullying or harassment should follow the procedure outlined in the Harassment Policy.
- 7.2 The Harassment Policy is available in the Staff Handbook.
- 7.3 Further details on reporting issues of concern are available in the Town Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

8. **EQUALITY AIMS – PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

Gender reassignment - Gender reassignment The Equality Act states that a transsexual person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. It is difficult to establish the numbers in this protected group. There were no questions in the 2011 Census regarding gender identity. The Gender Identity and Research Society has estimated that nationally 1% of the population may be gender variant to some degree, with 0.2% of the population likely to seek medical treatment, at some stage, to present in the opposite gender. The Town Council will publish a Gender Equality Scheme in accordance with the Gender Equality Duty.

Age - The Town Council will eliminate unlawful age discrimination and will review policies (including retirement) to ensure that they comply with age discrimination legislation. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

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Sexual Orientation - The Town Council will eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

Disability - The Town Council will remove barriers to participation by disabled people, wherever possible. Implementation will be monitored and targets reviewed in relation to increasing numbers of disabled staff. Staff who become disabled whilst working with the Council will be offered reasonable adjustments to enable them to continue working.

Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Race/Ethnic Origin - The Town Council will encourage participation of black and minority ethnic groups in all its activities. All policies will be reviewed and amended as appropriate in line with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and in accordance with the Race Policy. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Religion or Belief - The Town Council includes people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and will respect the needs and requirements of people who adhere to a range of cultural and religious beliefs. This will include staff needs in relation to dietary requirements, and requests for leave and facilities for religious observance.

Marriage and Civil Partnership - The Town Council will not discriminate against employment because a person is married or in a civil partnership.

Pregnancy and Maternity - in pregnancy and maternity focus on ensuring fair and equitable treatment, eliminating discrimination, and promoting equal access to care, including protection against unfair treatment and dismissal, and ensuring access to maternity leave and pay.

Sex - The Town Council will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, particularly regarding protected characteristics like sex, which includes being male or female. The act protects individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on sex and other protected characteristics

Ends