



NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Based on an ACAS template (January 2022) and NALC LTN 78
(August 2023)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 North Horsham Parish Council is committed to encouraging equality and diversity within its organisation and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The Parish Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
- 1.2 The aim is for employees to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each member of the organisation to feel respected and able to give their best.
- 1.3 The organisation - in providing services and facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

2. WHO DOES THE POLICY APPLY TO?

- 2.1. The Policy applies to all employees of the Parish Council.

3. THE POLICY'S PURPOSE

- 3.1. The purpose of the policy is to:-
 - 3.1.1. provide equality, fairness and respect for all in the Parish Council's employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
 - 3.1.2. not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
 - 3.1.3. oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in 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. TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION?

- 4.1 **Direct discrimination** – when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.
- 4.2 **Indirect discrimination** - occurs where an individual's employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is 'neutral'.
- 4.3 **Harassment** – unwanted conduct related to a relevant Protected Characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. You may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards you personally.
- 4.4 **Victimisation** – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance about unlawful discrimination or are suspected of doing so.

5. NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 North Horsham Parish Council commits to:
 - 5.1.1. encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
 - 5.1.2. create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

- 5.1.3. 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.

- 5.1.4. Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- 5.1.5. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, councillors, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, 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.

- 5.1.6. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- 5.1.7. Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

6. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Staff have a responsibility to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

- 6.2 All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, councillors, customers, suppliers and the public.

7. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 7.1 All public authorities, including local councils, must comply with the public sector equality duty. It requires them to take steps to :

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equal opportunities for all
- Foster good relations between individuals

- 7.2 They must consider also how their policies and decisions impact on people with protected characteristics.

- 7.3 The EHRC website contains a useful guide for the duty (<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationdownload/essential-guide-public-sector-equality-duty>).

8. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

- 8.1 Subject to any new legislation or changes in case law which require immediate amendment, or the requirements of the Parish Council, the Equal Opportunities Policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review will be before October 2028.

9. GOVERNING STATUTES

- The Equality Act 2010;
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (part repealed);
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999;
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Regulations 2003;
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997