



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy

### 1.0 Introduction

Axminster Town Council is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our town residents, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Council - in providing services and amenities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of the public and visitors to our town.

### 2.0 Our duties under the Equality Act 2010

2.1 As a Council, we are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty which was introduced in the Equality Act 2010. This duty requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation
- c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 The other important pieces of legislation that we need to adhere to and which impact on the work of both the inclusion and prevention agenda are the 1998: Human Rights Act and the 1996: Employment Rights Act.

### 3.0 Purpose

3.1 The policy's purpose is to:

- a) provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part time or full-time, and the wider community.
- b) not to discriminate unlawfully 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, gender and sexual orientation
- c) 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 and carers, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

## **4.0 Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion**

4.1 The Council commits to:

- a) encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and in all our endeavours in respect of good practice; and in order to meet legislative requirements
- b) create a working environment which promotes dignity and respect for all, where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued, and which is free of bullying, harassment, victimisation or unlawful discrimination.
- c) take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the Council's activities.
- d) make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all employees, 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 Council.
- e) ensure that decisions concerning employees are based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- f) 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.
- g) 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.

4.2 This commitment includes training all employees about their rights and responsibilities under the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Responsibilities include employees conducting themselves in ways to help the Council provide equal opportunities in employment, and to prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

4.3 All employees should understand that 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 and the public.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Council'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.

4.4 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.

See also the Dignity at Work (Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy)

## **5.0 Equality monitoring**

5.1 Whenever the Council asks employees or members of the public for personal information in order to undertake equality monitoring, we will take care that the monitoring is appropriate

by complying with the law in relation to confidentiality, data protection (GDPR) and freedom of information, including:

- only asking for the information we need  
providing an explanation of why we need the information and how it will be used
- taking care to ensure that individuals cannot be identified from the information collected, especially where the results of monitoring are made public or shared

## **6.0 Compliance**

The Town Council will aim to ensure that due regard is given to the aims of this policy by considering all of its functions in order to determine compliance:

6.1 Councillors – All Councillors are bound to adhere to equal opportunities principles. The Town Council's employees will make every effort to accommodate Councillors with particular' needs.

6.2 Employees –The Town Council is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage. It endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity to all sectors of the community and its workforce as an integral part of this commitment. All employees will respect and be sympathetic to the needs of minority groups and ensure that they receive the same level of service as other members of the community.

The content of this policy in relation to employees is made available to them on appointment and during induction. All employees will be equally encouraged to apply for suitable training and employment opportunities appropriate to their respective role. Whenever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, for example, considering job sharing and part-time working.

6.3 Vacancies and recruitment – Vacancies will be advertised internally and externally, and widely across all sections of the community to ensure knowledge of available positions reaches under-represented groups. Selection criteria will be kept under constant review to ensure they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the role.

Positive Action: If candidates for a role were as qualified to be recruited or promoted, the Town Council would be allowed to take into consideration perceived disadvantages or under-representation in the workforce, when deciding who to recruit – this means the Council would be able to favour the candidate from the underrepresented or disadvantaged group.

6.4 Premises – Town Council premises are compliant with or will be adapted to comply with the Equality Act 2010 whenever possible. Where buildings are not in compliance, the Council will do all that is reasonably possible to ensure that all service users are able to access facilities.

6.5 Complaints - The Town Council has a formal Complaints Procedure Policy, including for any anonymous complaints. Members of the public should refer complaints to the Town Clerk in writing in the first instance. Town Council officers and staff should refer to the Grievance Policy.

Matters raised will be shared with Councillors, addressed through an action plan and impact will be monitored. See the Action Plan format in Appendix A.

Details of the Council's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found on the Axminster Town Council website at

<http://www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk/PoliciesandProcedures5649.aspx>

This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance – usually their line manager. In the case of the Clerk, grievances should be reported to the Chair of the Employment Committee.

Use of the Council's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

## **7.0 Policy monitoring and review**

7.1 Monitoring will include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan(s), are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues. Content will be updated in line with new or changing legislative requirements as and when required.

Policy to be Approved by full Town Council on .....

Next Review – November 2021



# Axminster Town Council



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Issue raised by / when	Actions required	Person(s) responsible	Timescale	Impact	Implications for policy and procedure updates	Notes
<b>Issue 1:</b>						
<b>Issue 2:</b>						
<b>Issue 3:</b>						
<b>Issue 4:</b>						
<b>Issue 5:</b>						

