

	<b>Equalities and Diversity Policy</b>
	<b>WESTGATE ON SEA TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTED 01.02.2022 REVIEW DUE 02.2023</b>

**Policy Summary**

This policy outlines the Council’s approach to equality and diversity both in terms of employment practices and the services the Council provides. The Town Council has a role in the pursuit of opportunity for all and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements, particularly within context of the Equality Act 2010 but also the duties placed upon it by The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006.

The Town Council will work to combat discrimination and to ensure that prospective and present employees and those who may use or wish to use any of its services are not treated less favourably on the following grounds which are the Protected Characteristics as identified in the Equality Act which are:- Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Marriage & Civil Partnership and Pregnancy & Maternity.

**What is Meant by Equality?**

Equality means:

- Treating people fairly, with dignity and respect
- Making decisions or judgements about people based on individual merit, not as a result of bias, prejudice, assumptions or stereotyping
- Creating a climate where everyone has fair access to employment opportunities and to services
- Recognising the benefits of a more diverse workforce, that everyone is different and that those differences can add value
- Developing a work environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying.

**Our Commitment**

- To provide services that are equally accessible to all people, free from prejudice and discrimination and sensitive to the needs of all member Councils.
- To promote equality in the workplace, 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 considered when developing strategies.

- Work actively towards eliminating all forms of discrimination, both of a direct and indirect nature; any breaches of this policy will be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with accordingly.
- Every employee and Town Councillor are entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all; no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- This policy is fully supported by all staff and Town Councillors.

### **Definitions**

In order to assist you to comply with equality legislation, it is important that you understand the terminology that is used:

Direct Discrimination – treating a person or people less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic they have or their association with someone with one of these characteristics or because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination – Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment – Harassment is “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”.

Employees are able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association and might include:

- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word of mouth or behaviour
- Sending critical emails to others who don’t need to know about a particular person
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone, generally picking on an individual or group
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Misuse of power
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Making threats
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker, maybe by overloading them with work
- Preventing individuals progressing
- Making negative remarks about a person’s gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, ethnic or national origin, disability or age.

Victimisation – treating a person or people less favourably because of action they have taken under, or in connection with equalities legislation. For example, if someone has made a formal complaint of harassment or given evidence in a tribunal case.

Religious Belief – This can be regarded as any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.

Sexual Orientation – Orientation towards persons of the same sex ; orientation towards the person of the opposite sex; orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex.

Disability – a disabled person is defined as someone with a ‘physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities’.

### **Policy into Practice**

Staff and Members of the Town Council are all responsible for making sure that the Policy is fully implemented, and that equality underpins every aspect of the Council’s work and future development. Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Town Clerk.

- 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 Westgate on Sea Town Council activity.
- Recruit and value a diverse workforce.
- Ensure all employees and Councillors are aware of the policy and understand the values and expectations of Westgate on Sea Town Council and the standards of behaviour that is expected from each of them.
- If you think you are being harassed or discriminated against it is important to make it clear to the person who is harassing you that their behaviour is unwelcome and that you want it to stop. If speaking to the person in question has failed to stop the problem, you should talk to the Town Clerk or if necessary Chairperson.
- Make clear the action an employee who feels unfairly treated may take and inform the Town Clerk if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.
- Provide training to relevant employees 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 Westgate on Sea Town 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.

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policy and practice on a regular basis as determined by law. Ensuring proper records are maintained.
- Develop a well-defined complaints procedure in dealing with alleged contraventions and ensure grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- 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 a service from Westgate on Sea Town Council or wish to use a Town Council service can do so without fear of discrimination or disadvantage.