



Morecambe Town Council

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Equality and Diversity Policy

Adopted on 18 February 2021

Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 took effect on 1 October 2010 and replaces the previous anti-discrimination legislation, simplifying the law and removing inconsistencies. It is understood this simplification makes it easier for people to understand and comply with the law, whilst strengthening the enforceability of law in order to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty is a key measure in the Act which came into force on 5 April 2011. All public bodies and organisations carrying out public functions have a duty to consider the needs of all individuals in their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. There are a wide range of statutory rights and obligations, derived from this Parliamentary Act and despite any express term to the contrary, they cannot be waived. The Public Sector Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. The Home Office Diversity Strategy 2013-16 states:

"There is a clear focus on the actions and improvements required to champion equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), in all we do, whether these concern staff or the wider public."

It goes on to state:

"... removing barriers to social mobility and recognising people for their efforts, skills and achievements rather than social backgrounds or where they are from."

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities for everyone who comes into contact with the Council, irrespective of their characteristics (unless it can be shown that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim). To discriminate against someone means to treat them less favourably, to harass or victimise them or to subject them to a provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a disadvantage. It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of the following 'protected characteristics' as defined Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

- Age
- Caring responsibilities
- Disability

- Gender identity
- Part time working
- Pregnancy, maternity and paternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

The Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination whether it be direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. The Council is committed to the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities in the work place and in the delivery of services. In all activities the Council will have due regard to the aims of the Equality Duty and:

- Work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Ensure that individuals are treated equally with respect to their specific needs and that there is consistency in the Council's approach to working practices and conditions.
- Act as a role model and try to influence others through good practice in service delivery and employment.
- Provide public information, as far as possible, in a way that best meets the needs of the person requesting it.
- Be accountable to all residents and encourage active participation of communities and groups in the development and application of the Council's policies and procedures.
- Encourage all employees and Councillors to attend relevant training programmes.

There is no single way that equality and diversity can be achieved. Progress will be through a number of factors, which are outlined below. These factors are fundamental in the implementation and incorporation of the core values that embrace equal opportunities and its practice:

- Consultation
- Publicity/Communication
- Community Development
- Training
- Contracts
- Employment Monitoring
- Service Delivery and Monitoring
- Policy Review
- Resources

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors and members of the Council.

It is accepted that members of the council are not employees, but they do share a responsibility with employees when representing the Council or carrying out the functions of their office therefore all aspects of this policy apply to members.

All employees and volunteers whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

Every employee and volunteer is 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.

The commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing society as a whole. Breaches of this policy could lead to grievance or disciplinary proceedings.

The Council adopts model employment contracts as devised by professional bodies in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Clerks / National Association of Local Councils).

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure that the council strives to remain an Equal Opportunities employer. The policy aims to achieve the five core values, which embrace and provide a framework within which employees can work:

- Recognition that everyone is of equal value and should be respected according to individual needs and abilities.
- To be fair, reasonable and just in all council activities.
- Providing equal access for all in employment and service delivery.
- Helping individuals take on responsibility so that they can influence and participate in the decision-making process.
- Obtaining the highest standards in service delivery.

In exercising its functions and delivering services, the Council will have due regard to the aims of the Equality Duty and it will take a proportionate approach when complying with it. Equality issues will be an influence on the Council's policies and decisions and the Council will consider the needs of all individuals in its day-to-day work.