

Staplehurst Parish Council

Equality, Diversity & Disability Discrimination Policy

November 2022

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION POLICY

1. POLICY

This Policy is in line with the Equalities Act 2010 and is committed to promoting equality, diversity and providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. It is based on the principle that,

“as far as possible, all people will be accorded the same equality of treatment, dignity and respect as all other people”.

In the implementation of this policy Staplehurst Parish Council will:

(a) ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, trade union membership, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio- economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction;

(b) promote diversity and equality for all staff and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds;

(c) 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;

(d) treat part time staff fairly and equally;

(e) challenge inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable;

(f) promote greater participation of under-represented groups of staff by encouraging positive action to address inequality;

(g) promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all staff;

(h) an inclusive approach to be taken to provide access to our services and facilities for as wide a range of people with disabilities as possible, acknowledging that there may be some circumstances where particular provision may be necessary for people with certain disabilities;

(i) will listen to, and consider any, solutions that could resolve issues of constraints to the service that Staplehurst Parish Council provides.

2. PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

To achieve these aims we need to ensure Staplehurst Parish Council has an open culture built on trust and mutual respect. We must value each other and treat each other with dignity, irrespective of their protected characteristics, which are;

- age,

- disability,
- gender, marriage & civil partnership,
- pregnancy & maternity/paternity,
- race,
- religion & belief,
- Sex and sexual orientation.

Different views and ideas will be encouraged.

We must ensure that all decisions regarding the employment and training of people are based on merit and support our goals. By focusing on merit alone we aim to eliminate unjustifiable discrimination. This will be achieved in part by the regular reviewing of our policies, procedures and practices to ensure these are assisting our employees, councillors and volunteers to give their best.

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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

The Employment Group 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 Parish Clerk has overall delegated responsibility for co-ordinating the day-to-day operation of the policies and procedures.

4. RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

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

5. RELATED POLICIES

All Parish Council policies and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they comply with this policy.

Annual monitoring and action plans will be developed and maintained as appropriate in relation to areas such as race, disability, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation 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.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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

7. STAFF ISSUES

a) Recruitment and selection procedures

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

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.

b) Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Staplehurst Parish Council undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed. Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, Staplehurst Parish Council encourages all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process.

Staplehurst Parish Council requests that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within the Council, usually the Clerk, and it guarantees that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process. Unless the nature of the position allows Staplehurst Parish Council to ask questions about the applicant's entire criminal record, only questions about unspent convictions, as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, will be asked.

Staplehurst Parish Council ensures that all those involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. It also ensures that appropriate guidance and training as been received in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders e.g. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

At interview, or in a separate discussion, Staplehurst Parish Council ensures that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment. Staplehurst Parish Council undertakes to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from working with Staplehurst Parish Council– this will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

c) Training

All employees 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 and Councillors. 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 two years of appointment.

8. COMPLAINTS

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 their contract.

9. EQUALITY AIMS

Gender

Staplehurst Parish Council will promote a positive work life balance environment and develop family friendly policies.

Age

Staplehurst Parish 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.

Sexual Orientation

Staplehurst Parish Council will eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Policies will be reviewed to ensure that they comply fully with legislation on sexual orientation.

Disability

Staplehurst Parish Council is an equal opportunities employer and will work to make all reasonable adjustments to the workplace to enable any member of staff with a disability to enjoy a satisfactory and fulfilling working life.

Staplehurst Parish 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

Staplehurst Parish 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 Equality Act 2010. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Religion

Staplehurst Parish 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.

10. COMMUNICATION

Staplehurst Parish Council will take action to communicate this policy internally to all its employees, councillors and volunteers.

Staplehurst Parish Council will take action to communicate this policy externally to residents and partner organisations.

This policy will be available on the parish council's website – www.staplehurst-pc.uk

11. TRAINING

Staplehurst Parish Council will continue to develop and implement programmes to ensure that all staff have received appropriate training or briefing to enable them to fulfil their requirements under this policy. This will include training programmes to support, where appropriate, the range of policies that link with this overarching policy.

12. Adoption

This policy supersedes any former policy and was adopted by Staplehurst Parish Council on**28th November 2022**.....Minute...**2048 item 6.1**.....