

Brewood and Coven Parish Council with Bishop's Wood and Coven Heath

EQUALITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 took effect on 1 October 2010 and replaced previous anti-discrimination legislation. It simplified the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It also strengthens the law in order to tackle discrimination and inequality. 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 employees. 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 purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities for everyone who comes into contact with Brewood and Coven Parish Council, irrespective of their characteristics (unless it can be shown that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim).

LEGAL POSITION

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 by the Act):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

This policy is fully supported by all Members of the Council. Brewood and Coven Parish 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. We are committed to the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities in the work place and in the delivery of services.

In all our activities we will have due regard to the three aims of the Equality Duty:

- Eliminate 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

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□ Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

EMPLOYEES

All employees 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 Parish Council.

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. 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 the Council's Equality Policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Employees are entitled to complain about discrimination or harassment or victimisation through the Parish Council's Grievance Procedure. The Parish Council adopts the model employment contract as devised by the employee professional body in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Clerks). The policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly. Other Human Resources policies will be reviewed against the values stated in this main Equality Policy to ensure that the council strives to remain an equal opportunities employer.

SERVICE DELIVERY

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

This policy is cross-referenced to the following Parish Council's adopted policies:

- Discipline & Grievance
- Recruitment & Selection
- Equal Opportunities
- Data Protection
- Grant Awarding
- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Bullying and Harassment

Brewood and Coven Parish Council acknowledges the following sources of information from which this policy has been drawn:

- Society of Local Council Clerks - Model Equal Opportunities Policy (Oct 2010)
- National Association of Local Councils – Legal Topic Note 78: Equality Act 2010 (Jan 2013)
- Government Equalities Office - Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What do I need to know? A Quick Start Guide for Public Sector Organisations (June 2011).

Reviewed April 2021