

Equality Policy

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of Cotherstone Parish Council, its members and any employees, to meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 5 April 2011. The duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies, representation and services, which are efficient and effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

Cotherstone Parish Council recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential.

The organisation will do all it can to ensure it recruits, trains and promotes people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation.

Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all staff, councillors and members of the public in their dealings with Cotherstone Parish Council business.

The policy applies to all stages of employment including recruitment and selection, promotion and training.

Policy statement

Cotherstone Parish Council is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics). All councillors, employees and members of the public will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. All decisions will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

The Parish Council aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity. It aims to remove barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to the community to develop a culture that positively values diversity.

Equality commitments

The Parish Council will:

- Promote equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promote a good and harmonious environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- Prevent occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfil its legal obligations under equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Take lawful affirmative and positive action where appropriate
- Using fair and objective employment practices, the organisation will ensure that:
 - All staff (paid and voluntary) and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
 - All staff, councillors and members of the public have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other staff, councillors or by people (members of the public) who are not employees of the Parish Council
 - All staff (paid and voluntary) have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.
 - All staff (paid and voluntary) have the right to be free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the clerk to the Parish Council to develop and lead the implementation of the equality and diversity policy.

Responsibility for approving the policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with the Parish Council.

Staff and volunteers (including councillors) of the Parish Council have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.

Implementation of the policy

Staff and volunteers (including councillors) of the Parish Council will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity.

Communication of the policy to job applicants and existing staff and volunteers (including councillors) of the Parish Council will be through the council's website and included in job application packs.

In selecting the partners we work with, Cotherstone Parish Council will consider their commitment to Equality and Diversity.

Reporting discrimination or potential discrimination

All staff (paid and volunteers), councillors and members of the public who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the clerk to the Parish Council. Where this is inappropriate / unavailable, they can raise the issue through the chairman of the Parish Council or Chairman of the personnel working group of the Parish Council.

All staff (paid and volunteers), councillors and members of the public should also use this approach if they feel that they been the subject of harassment from someone who is not an employee of the Parish Council, while carrying out their parish council role.

The Parish Council will not tolerate any harassment from third parties towards its staff (paid and volunteers), councillors and members of the public and will take appropriate action to prevent it happening again.

If a member staff (paid or volunteer), councillor or member of the public witnesses behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should also use this procedure.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and identify areas for improvement.

Monitoring will relate to both staff (paid and volunteers), councillors and members of the public. This policy will be reviewed every year by the Parish Council to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation.

The policy will also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.