

Sheringham Town Council Equality Policy 2016

Sheringham Town Council (STC) is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among its workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for its workplace to be truly representative of all sections of society and those to whom it provides a service and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

STC – in providing services and/or facilities – is also committed against unlawful discrimination of those to whom it provides a service or the public.

The policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in its employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and condition of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

STC commits to:

- Encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimization and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual difference and the contribution of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training manager and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves so as to help STC provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, those to whom a service is provided, suppliers and the public.

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassments, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, those to whom a service is provided, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of STC's activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under STC's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protect from Harassment Act 1997 - which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of STC.
- Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedure when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

The equality policy is fully supported by all Councillors of STC.

Details of STC's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures are available from the Clerk to STC. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance with – usually their line manager.

Use of STC's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.