

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction and Policy Statement

- 1.1 Honeybourne Parish Council (the Council) is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone in its employment, service delivery and any volunteering activity connected with the Council.
- 1.2 The Council fully supports the principles of equal opportunity and opposes any form of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment. It is the duty of all employees and councillors to uphold these commitments, working alongside everybody regardless of their protected characteristics. All aspects of this policy apply equally to elected members.
- 1.3 The Council recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds, known as “protected characteristics”, under the Equality Act 2010:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

2. Policy Aims

- 2.1 The Council’s intention is to be an effective equality and diversity organisation. This means it will do everything in its power to ensure that everyone has equal access, and is treated with respect, in relation to employment opportunities, to its services and to all of its activities.
- 2.2 The Council will adhere to the following five core values:
1. **Fairness:** to be fair, reasonable and just in all council activities.
 2. **Equality:** everybody is of equal value and will be respected according to individual needs and abilities.
 3. **Dignity:** recognising that, regardless of their circumstances or characteristics, every person deserves respect, ethical treatment and the ability to live a life of value and meaning.
 4. **Respect:** consideration for someone’s feelings, rights and wishes, including treating individuals and their perspectives with dignity, valuing diversity, and showing courtesy and politeness in interactions.
 5. **Inclusion:** embracing people’s differences, including their beliefs, abilities, preferences, backgrounds, values and identities, so that all people, without exception, have the right to be included, respected and appreciated as valuable members of the community.

3. The Council as an Employer

- 3.1 The Council provides equal opportunities to all employees, irrespective of their characteristics, unless there are genuine occupational requirements or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken. The Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, victimisation or harassment, on the grounds of any protected characteristic.
- 3.2 All employees are required to treat one another with mutual respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual, irrespective of the position they hold within the organisation.
- 3.3 The Council makes every effort to create a workplace where individuals are valued, listened to and treated with respect, and which seeks out and values the insight, experience, contribution and full participation of all staff.
- 3.4 Harassment and discrimination in any form is unacceptable behaviour and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action. Breaches of this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- 3.5 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 based on aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential.
- 3.6 Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all, and the Council will promote an environment free from harassment and bullying on any grounds. This is further defined in the Council's Dignity at Work Policy, which also sets out the Council's approach to preventing harassment, including by third parties.
- 3.7 The Council aims to achieve fulfilment as an equal opportunities employer by:
- ensuring employees are made aware of their rights and responsibilities to each other, to service users and to the organisation regarding equality issues;
 - providing a way in which individuals can communicate any concerns via named, competent personnel;
 - treating any unacceptable behaviour seriously;
 - ensuring all managers and members realise they have a key role in implementing this policy and are expected to take personal responsibility for its success;
 - providing awareness training for employees and councillors, with opportunities to develop relevant competencies to implement the policy; and
 - meeting the commitments of being a "Positive about Discrimination" employer.

4. The Council as a Service Provider

- 4.1 The Council will strive to ensure that all services it provides, or that are provided on its behalf, are accessible to all individuals and groups equally and without discrimination.
- 4.2 All service users will be treated with respect. Actions, behaviour and attitudes should consistently demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of an individual.
- 4.3 The Council will, wherever appropriate, work in partnership with other agencies, including the county and district councils, voluntary groups and community organisations, to promote equality.

4.4 The Council will ensure that all contractors directly supplying goods and services, or executing works, for or on behalf of the Council comply with this policy.

4.5 The Council aims to achieve fulfilment as an equal opportunities service provider by:

- providing training for staff in equality awareness and customer care, emphasising equality of treatment in service delivery;
- ensuring that no member of the public is disadvantaged, or treated less favourably than others, in terms of access to Council services, and taking reasonable steps to change any practice, policy or procedure found to make access impossible or unreasonably difficult;
- ensuring that, wherever practical, all public buildings and premises owned or managed by the Council are accessible to all;
- recognising the importance of communication in achieving quality services responsive to the needs of all local people, for example through the provision of information in large print on request; and
- complying with all relevant legislation relating to discrimination and equality.

5. Role of Councillors and Employees

5.1 All councillors and employees are responsible for implementing this policy. It is important that everyone employed by or representing the Council appreciates that they have a responsibility and a role to play in the provision of equality of opportunity.

6. Equality and Diversity Statement

6.1 Honeybourne Parish Council believes in fairness and equality, and values diversity. The Council will create a culture that celebrates diversity and welcomes difference; a place where everyone's rights and dignity are respected.

6.2 The Council will provide a work and social environment free from discrimination, prejudice, intimidation and all forms of harassment and bullying, for the benefit of all its staff and councillors.

6.3 It is the Council's policy to treat everyone as an individual, irrespective of ethnicity, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, family circumstances, political belief, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity status, trade union membership, age, or any other unfair distinction, in every interaction with staff, councillors and residents.

6.4 Through its day-to-day actions, the Council seeks to demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity, and to make Honeybourne a welcoming community where individual difference is celebrated.

7. Complaints

7.1 Complaints from staff about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

7.2 Complaints from members of the public about discrimination or unfair treatment will be dealt with under the Council's Customer Service Standards and complaints arrangements.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 This policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly. Other personnel policies will be reviewed against the values stated in this policy to ensure that the Council continues to operate as an effective equality and diversity organisation.

9. Related Policies and Legislation

9.1 This policy will be implemented within the framework of relevant legislation and the following related Council policies and codes:

- Equality Act 2010
- The Council's Code of Conduct
- Civility and Respect Pledge
- Member/Officer Protocol
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure