

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Overall Policy

Little Braxted Parish Council is an Equal Opportunity employer.

No job applicant or employee should receive less favourable treatment because of his or her sex, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age, or through any requirement which cannot be shown to be justified by the requirements of their job. Measures will be taken to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted, trained and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Applicants for employment are welcomed from disabled persons who have the necessary attributes for a post. If members of staff become disabled, every practical effort will be made to ensure that their employment with the Council continues. The training, career development and promotion of the disabled will, as far as possible, be identical to that of a person who does not suffer from a disability.

Where reasonably practicable, analyses of employees and applicants for employment will be carried out to assess whether the selection and distribution of employees reflects genuine equality of opportunity. These analyses should indicate where further improvements need to be made. Any information collected from employees to enable these analyses to be undertaken will be treated as strictly confidential and used solely for monitoring purposes.

Review of the policy and its effectiveness will be undertaken at regular intervals. Any employee or applicant for employment who feels they have a contribution to make to the continuation of good, sound equal opportunity practices should contact the Parish Clerk.

The policy will be achieved through the following action points:

2. Equality Action Points

Individuals will be recruited, promoted and trained solely on the basis of their abilities and the requirements of the job.

When recruiting, skill and knowledge requirements will be determined, and candidates will be selected accordingly.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to remove obstacles to the recruitment and employment of disabled persons, such as ensuring that interview rooms and work locations are accessible by wheelchair or providing a sign language interpreter or making adaptations to work stations.

Employees will be made aware of their responsibilities for preventing harassment.

Any employee who believes they have suffered discrimination will be encouraged to raise the matter through the grievance procedure.

3. Preventing Harassment

Harassment is where one person behaves towards another in a way that causes them to feel threatened, humiliated or offended. There are many forms of harassment, including the following:

- Physical bullying or threatening, shouting swearing or verbal abuse.
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact
- Mimicking someone else's behaviour
- Talking about a subject in a way that causes offence. The subject could be sexual, racial, medical or anything which the other person may be genuinely sensitive about.
- Showing inappropriate pictures.
- Asking personal questions.
- Sending harassing messages or e-mail.

The Council intends to provide an environment where employees can carry out their work without fear of harassment.

Harassment on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief is illegal and can result in criminal proceedings being taken against both the Council and employees.

4. What to do if someone harasses you

Wherever possible, you should tell the harasser that their behaviour is unwanted and ask them to stop, or you will report it. Sometimes harassment can be unintended and what is seen as harmless by one person may be deeply offensive to another.

But once it has been made clear that someone feels harassed, the other person has a duty to respect their wishes.

Informal Procedure

Under this procedure, the complainant should make an initial approach to the Parish Clerk who will, insofar as possible, agree with the complainant a course of action in order to attempt to resolve the issue. Such action may include:

- the Parish Clerk will meet with the person(s) against whom the complaint has been made, in order to discuss the complaint and settle the issue;
- the employee be given the opportunity to raise the problem, in the presence of the Parish Clerk, with the person(s) who is alleged to be

- creating the problem, pointing out that their conduct is unwelcome, is offensive or interfering with work;
- the complainant raising the matter with the Parish Clerk who will attempt to reach an informal solution with both parties.

Formal Complaint

Complaints of harassment should be made to the relevant line manager. Alternatively, the complainant may ask their recognised trade union representative or a member of the personnel staff to make the approach to their Line Manager on their behalf. The Line Manager will instigate an investigation following which it will be decided whether the matter should be dealt with through the grievance procedure or, if more appropriate, the disciplinary procedure.

Complaints will be investigated thoroughly and as quickly as possible by the Parish Clerk, taking due regard of both the complainant and the alleged harasser.

Dealing with Complaints

Any necessary action will be taken to protect the person who has made the complaint from further harassment.

For the purposes of both the informal and formal procedures, if the complaint is against the Parish Clerk, the complaint can be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee.

If the complaint is shown to be true, disciplinary action will be taken against the harasser.

Both parties will have the right at any stage of the formal or informal procedure to be represented/accompanied by their trade union representative or a work colleague. All information gathered will be treated with as strictly confidential.

After the Procedure

Where a complaint is upheld it may be necessary to consider relocating or transferring one party. If practicable the complainant should be given first choice whether she or he wishes to be transferred and should not be disadvantaged.

Where a perpetrator is transferred, consideration should be given to the effect on their contract of employment. Where dismissal is considered the appropriate sanction, alternative employment on lesser terms may be offered.

If a complaint is not upheld, consideration may still need to be given to the voluntary transfer of one of the employees concerned.

The situation should be monitored to ensure that the harassment has stopped and that there has been no victimisation.