

Old Catton Parish Council

Equal Opportunities Policy Statement & Procedure

1. Policy Statement

Old Catton Parish Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to ensuring that unlawful discrimination does not occur in any area of its activities.

Everyone who works for or engages with the Council has a right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Work and participate in an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Have equal access to employment, development and advancement opportunities.

No employee, Councillor, worker, volunteer, contractor, job applicant or member of the public will be treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

This Policy applies to:

- Employees
- Councillors
- Volunteers
- Contractors and agency staff
- Job applicants
- Service users and members of the public

2. Legal Framework

This Policy supports the Council's duties under:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Council recognises its obligations as a public authority under the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
- Foster good relations between different groups

3. Protect Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010 the following are protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Discrimination because of association or perception (eg being perceived to have a protected characteristic) is also unlawful.

4. Commitment to Equality and Diversity

The Council will:

- Promote equality of opportunity in recruitment, promotion and training
- Prevent direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Value and respect diversity
- Make decisions based only on merit, skills and job-related criteria
- Provide services fairly to the community
- Ensure reasonable access to Council services and premises

5. Reasonable Adjustments

The Council will make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for:

- Disabled employees
- Job applicants
- Members of the public accessing services

Adjustments may include changes to:

- Working arrangements
- Duties or hours (where feasible)
- Provision of equipment
- Access to buildings and meetings

6. Recruitment and Selection

The Council will:

- Base all selection on objective, job-related criteria
- Ensure advertisements are accessible and inclusive
- Avoid unnecessary requirements that disadvantage protected groups
- Provide equality-aware interview and selection practices

7. Training and Development

The Council will:

- Provide training and development opportunities fairly
- Ensure equality and diversity awareness is promoted
- Support Councillors and staff to understand legal duties

8. Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation

The Council will not tolerate:

- Discrimination
- Bullying or harassment
- Victimisation of anyone who raises a concern or participates in a complaint

Complaints will be addressed under:

- Grievance Policy (employees)
- Councillor Code of Conduct (Members)
- Complaints Procedure (public/other)

False or malicious complaints will be dealt with under disciplinary procedures; no action will be taken against anyone who raises a concern in good faith.

9. Reporting Concerns

Concerns may be raised with:

- The Clerk
- The Chairman (where the Clerk is involved)
- The Monitoring Officer (for Councillor conduct issues)

All reports will be:

- Taken seriously
- Treated confidentially where possible
- Investigated promptly and fairly

10. Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Monitor equality in recruitment and employment
- Review policies and procedures to ensure continued compliance
- Consider equality impacts when making key decisions

This Policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where legislation or best practice requires.

11. Communication

This Policy will be:

- Issued to all Councillors and employees
- Available to contractors and the public
- Included in induction materials

Adopted: 15th January 2024

Revised and Adopted: 12th January 2026