



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

Mrs Sarah Haydon, Chief Officer

REVIEWED:

June 2023

APPROVAL DATE:

Finance Strategy and Management Committee – 25 July 2023

Town Council – 12 September 2023

REVIEW DATE:

June 2025

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in all that we do. This policy is a statement of how we intend to tackle discrimination and harassment and promote equality. We consider it important for the Town Council to have an Equal Opportunities Policy because we recognise that, oppression, disadvantage and discrimination still exists in society and we are keen to eliminate such practices. A 'Dignity at Work Statement' is included within this policy.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions 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.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 This policy applies to employment and service provision. We will also work with our stakeholders, contractors and partners to ensure practices are inclusive and steps are taken to eliminate discrimination.

Our aim is to tackle discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Race
- Religion/Belief
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Town Council recognises its statutory equality duty under legislation in terms of service provision and employment and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy.

PROVISIONS

3.1 Service Delivery

We are committed to ensuring our services are open, fair and accessible by taking into consideration the needs and requirements of all customers, potential and existing. We will ensure that:

- Customers and staff have the opportunity to engage with and participate in the planning of services.
- We provide clear information about our services and where necessary in accessible formats and appropriate languages.
- We provide training for our employees and elected members to ensure they have a good understanding of equalities and its impact on services.
- We assess the impact and monitoring of our services to ensure they do not discriminate.
- We monitor take up of services across the protected characteristics.

We will carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) when developing new services and or policies, or when making any changes (see Appendix A).

3.2 Commissioning and Procurement

The Town Council will ensure that contractors, suppliers and funded service providers abide by the requirements to promote equality of opportunity and take steps to tackle discrimination and barriers to access. We will ensure that our contractors and those providing a service on our behalf:

- Are aware of this policy and that it is communicated to all potential contractors and service providers through the Town Council's **Procurement Policy**.
- Check that contractors and service providers have equality and diversity procedures and practices in place
- Deliver goods, facilities and services that are appropriate and accessible.
- Provide opportunities to ensure that small to medium enterprises can bid for contracts.

3.3 Employment Delivery

As an employer, we are committed to ensuring that we provide equality of opportunity to all in employment. Through our recruitment policies and practices we will aim to eliminate barriers and encourage applicants from all sections of the community. We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that our recruitment and selection policies and procedures are fair and equitable so that the best people are appointed to deliver our services.
- Only considering applicants for jobs on the basis of their relevant experience, skills and abilities unless a Genuine Occupational Qualification (GOQ) exists for specific posts.
- Using appropriate lawful methods, including positive action, to address the under-representation of any group which the Town Council identifies as being under-represented in particular types of jobs.
- Ensuring that all employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment regardless of whether they are part-time, full-time or employed on a temporary basis.
- Taking appropriate action against incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination, and offer support and advice to victims or witnesses to incidents.
- Taking disciplinary action against employees who discriminate against people who work or seek employment with the Town Council.
- Taking disciplinary action against employees who discriminate against customers, service users or service providers.

3.4 Workforce Data

In order to assess the impact of our policies and practices and to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we will monitor the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 for the following:

- the number of part-time/full-time staff by protected group
- recruitment, training, redundancy, and leavers
- the rates of return to work for women on maternity leave
- the results of staff satisfaction surveys by protected group

This information will be considered by the Town Council, as appropriate.

3.5 Accountability

The Chief Officer with the Finance Strategy and Management Committee are responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that service planning and performance management systems take account of the need to eliminate discrimination.

However, all staff have responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

3.6 Communication

The Chief Officer will be responsible for ensuring that staff are made aware of this policy and that it is brought to the attention of all those who join the Town Council as part of the employee induction processes.

The policy will also be made available to members of the community on request and all those who provide services on behalf of the Town Council will be made aware of the need for them to comply with its provisions.

3.7 Dignity at Work Statement

All employees are entitled to:

- a workplace free from bullying, intimidation, harassment or victimisation
- be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy
- experience no form of unlawful discrimination
- be valued for their skills and abilities

All staff are responsible for ensuring that they behave in an appropriate manner, showing respect for individuals and groups that are encountered on a daily basis.

Inappropriate behaviour may be verbal or written, intentional or unintentional. Comments or actions made outside the standard workplace, such as on work related social events or via social media, that impact on work can be subject to Biddulph Town Council disciplinary procedures.

The Chief Officer has particular responsibility for setting standards and ensuring appropriate workplace behaviours are maintained. They should set a good example and ensure concerns raised are acted upon.

All staff are responsible for appropriately challenging inappropriate behaviours and raising concerns with the Chief Officer so these can be dealt with.

Support and advice is available for staff experiencing or witnessing bullying, harassment or discrimination.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 The Town Council recognises its statutory equality duty under legislation in terms of service provision and employment, and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have “due regard” to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different communities;
- Foster good relations between people from different communities;
- Ensure that we assess how our policies, procedures and services impact on disadvantaged groups and take steps to remedy any adverse implications.

We will meet our obligation of the Equality Act 2010 by training staff and setting out our obligations in policies and procedures.

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form (Initial Screening & Full Impact Assessment)



Name of policy ¹ or function ² being assessed	Policy / Function Status		
	New	Revised	Existing
Responsible to Committee (e.g. Town and Community, Recreation and Amenities)	Date EIA Completed		
Completed by			

Initial screening process - identifying the aims of the policy

What is the main purpose and scope of the policy/function?

¹ Definition of policy = This can include policies, procedures, guidance, strategies and/or plans

² Definition of function = Broad areas of activity, duties or powers – usually a service or set of services, including services which are provided internally

What are the intended outcomes of the policy/function, and what could contribute to/detract from the delivery of these outcomes?

Who is intended to benefit from this policy/function and how?

Assessment of Impact

List readily available and/or naturally occurring evidence, including consultations, to support decisions regarding the impact that the policy/function may have on the equality target groups

If monitoring data is not available for the people who are affected, or are potentially impacted by, the policy/function – please specify the arrangements that will be made to collect this or provide reasons for not doing so

Taking into account all the evidence available to you so far indicate where you think that the policy/function could have an intended or unintended **negative impact** on a particular group: i.e. it could cause some disadvantage or potentially be discriminatory. Indicate where you think the policy/function could have an intended or unintended **positive impact** on any of the groups to promoting diversity and equality. Where the policy/function is not relevant to a particular group or has no potential impact indicate as neutral. Please give reasons for each outcome:

	Negative Impact	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason(s)
Age				
Disability				
Gender - including transgender and issues relating to pregnancy and maternity				
Race/Ethnicity				

Religion or Belief				
Sexual Orientation – including issues relating to marriage and civil partnerships				

Are there any concerns about other minority populations (e.g. travellers, single parents, those on low income etc.) who may be disadvantaged by the function or policy’s operation, or who may receive unequal treatment?

If an adverse negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or any other reason?

Does the policy or function directly discriminate against any section of the community?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Comment

Does the function or policy indirectly discriminate against any section of the community?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Comment
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Should this function or policy proceed to a full Equality Impact Assessment?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If a full EIA is not required:

Could you minimise or remove any potential negative impact identified? (Explain how)

Signed (Chief Officer): _____

Date: _____

Full Equality Impact Assessment

Planning a full equality impact assessment

Begin by recalling:

- your function or policy purpose and scope
- who will benefit or be affected by the policy or function (the target population)?
- who might be the excluded or marginalised groups within the target population?

Could you minimise or remove any potential negative impact identified? (Explain how)

Consultation

Carry out a consultation, that reaches the identified excluded or marginalised groups.

Ensure all relevant employees and staff support groups are consulted. Attach a list of those consulted, together with the responses and any additional evidence.

Review the consultation in terms of inclusivity and equality by asking:

- What are the views of those consulted on the contribution that the function or policy makes to equal opportunities and inclusion?
- Are there any differences in responses between different groups?

Summarise the outcomes here:

What is your assessment, based on all the evidence from the whole process?

Conclusions: Choose between: (*Tick box as appropriate*)

The function or policy has a positive impact on a particular group, groups or individuals	
The function or policy has a negative impact on a particular group, groups or individuals	

Based on the comments given in the EIA, you should draw up an action plan that highlights all the issues and states how they will be addressed.

The action plan must form a part of your business planning process to ensure an effective outcome.

The completed Equality Impact Assessment must be published on the Council's website.

Ensure feedback is given to those who participated in the consultation.

Signed (Chief Officer): _____

Date: _____

I am satisfied that positive/negative impact has been supported with clear evidence and any negative findings have been justified.

I am satisfied that feedback has been given to those who were consulted.

I confirm that the comments will be included in the business planning process.

Comments:

Signed (Town Mayor): _____

Date: _____