



**Whiston Town
Council**
Equality & Diversity
Policy

Implementation of the policy

The Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy is a key corporate policy of the Council. It is championed and supported by the Town Clerk.

The Council is committed to the management of this policy through a process of self-assessment, scrutiny and audit. In addition this policy will be audited externally through a consultation process which is associated to our commitments to the Local Government Equality Standards. This agenda will be taken forward through:

Corporate Equality and Diversity Plan (CEADP)

We are committed to the development and delivery of a Corporate Equality and Diversity Plan which will translate our intentions into action.

Policy development

The Town Clerk will lead on the development and implementation of our Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy and will ensure that all corporate policies are developed and reviewed within the impact assessment framework.

Departments

Each department will work towards the achievement of our equality and diversity commitments.

Elected Members

Whiston's equality and diversity agenda comes within the portfolio of the Leader of the Council. Our Elected Members are responsible for setting and agreeing policies that are non discriminatory and promote equality for employees and service users.

Town Clerk and all employees

All those who act on behalf of the Council have a responsibility to work within the terms of the Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Policy and strive towards the elimination of discriminatory attitudes and practices in their working environment and in the services they provide.

The community, partnerships and stakeholders

The views, ideas and opinions of our communities, partners and stakeholders and employees will be built into the decision making process via our consultation mechanisms. All of the equality and diversity standards we promote will also be expected to be shared and upheld by those who work with us.

Training

Resources have been identified and made available to provide a range of ongoing equality and diversity training and awareness for staff and Elected Members. This is our process for ensuring that policies and procedures are understood and adhered to and besides facilitating the work of developing a culture which values and respects diversity will also govern the way we will behave towards each other.

Impact assessment

One of the key issues arising from the equality and diversity agenda is the completion of 'Impact' Assessments. An equality and diversity Impact Assessment is a way of finding out whether a policy (or proposed policy), a function or procedure affects different groups of people in different ways. These assessments must be undertaken to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. However, as part of Whiston's commitment to adopt the Equality Standards for Local Government, Impact and Needs Assessments will be undertaken which take into account a further nine equalities areas in addition to race. These are – ethnic origin, marital status, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, faith or belief and gender identity.

The results of the equality Impact Assessments will be used to address any issues of differential impact which may arise from existing or proposed policies, including the identification of potential for discrimination and the consideration of alternative proposals that do not have an adverse impact.

It is important that we have a clear record of the decisions the council have made regarding policy or operating procedures. On assessment of the following questions will be addressed.

- Does the service we provide reach all the communities it is meant for and does it meet their needs?
- Does the service we provide reflect the ability to cater for cultural differences?
- Are all customers getting the same level of benefit from our services, which are delivered on the basis of need?
- Does the workforce delivering that service generally reflect the population it seeks to serve? or if not has it been appropriately trained in order to reflect the ability to cope with potential cultural differences within the varied community of Whiston?

The council has prepared an Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit to be used to establish priorities for assessment and to proceed with full Impact Assessments where considered necessary.

Monitoring, evaluating and review

Whiston Town Council is committed to ensuring that all policies, services and the organisational culture do not discriminate against any groups. It is only through monitoring and review of practice and policies that we can ensure whether discrimination might be taking place and whether the strategies we put in place to prevent or tackle it are working.

To this end, we have produced a Corporate Equality Monitoring Framework which is designed to ensure a consistent approach to equality monitoring and help us to make sure that everyone has fair and equal access to services. The only exceptions within this framework are likely to be monitoring which focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity. These are areas where

individual confidentiality can be maintained on a personal level insofar as self identification is concerned.

Performance indicators/targets

In order to ensure that the council is achieving its equality and diversity agenda, targets will be set and monitored. We are committed to:

- Departmental and service area setting of equality targets.
- Development of and engagement in setting equality objectives and targets
- Assessing levels of success in meeting targets and review/revise service objectives and targets as appropriate.

Audit and scrutiny

We will demonstrate our commitment to self-assessment, audit and scrutiny through:

- Departmental and Service area engagement with equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit.
- Consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on scrutiny procedures, including un-constituted community groups.
- Evaluation and review of scrutiny arrangements.
- Where necessary, capacity building consultation groups in order to enable them to take part in all relevant processes from an informed position.

Consultation

The Council is committed to improving the consultation process with community groups, partners and stakeholders. As a primary example, the trade unions are seen as a vital component of the Council consultation processes and in order to reflect perceptions from either end of the age range spectrum a pupil voice will also be sought.

This is seen as a key element in our equality and diversity agenda as consultation ensures that the Council is better informed to meet the needs of all people and communities of the Whiston area.

We recognise that there are needs within the local community that are shaped and influenced by personalised situations such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age, nationality, political affiliation, or class, and that the 'one size for all' approach must be challenged.

Commitment to systematic consultation

Whiston Town Council values the views of both customers and employees - especially with regard to any proposed changes to plans or methods of service delivery. For example, the Council regularly consults through:

- Community and Youth Services 'sharing and learning' events for community groups
- School's Council
- Stakeholders
- Committee meetings – public sessions open and made accessible to all residents
- Newspapers and other media
- Police forums
- Communication methods which allow for inclusion commentary from people who may face barriers dealing with information in a written form.

Best value and procurement

Whiston Town Council aims to provide services that offer best value in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness; and that have the capacity to improve performance.

The Council's portfolio of contracts for goods, services and works covers a wide range of requirements and local Whiston based suppliers already account for a significant level of expenditure through these contracts.

Our commitment to promoting equality will ensure that we treat all people equally including those contracting to supply goods or services. The Council will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, religion, belief, or on any other unjustifiable grounds. Suppliers or contractors approved for the provision of goods, services or works will have to comply with such criteria. In particular the Council will adhere to, promote and utilise best practice recommendations and guidelines. For example as outlined in the Commission for Race Equality document "Public Procurement and Race Equality" and any good practice processes which have been tried, tested and proven by other local authorities.

Partnerships

As a local authority Whiston recognises that under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 we have a duty to make sure that any of our functions or policies that are relevant and are being carried out by partnerships, meet that duty. Whiston will also comply with the Commission for Racial Equality document – Public Authorities and Partnerships – a guide to the duty to promote race equality, as well as the requirements of the Local Government Equality Standards. The authority has an excellent track record of innovative partnership working and will continue to develop new approaches as may be necessary, in order to ensure that all of our partners are aware of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities with regard to equality and diversity.

Equalities in employment

Whiston Town Council aspires to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, which generally reflects the local population and which has the skills and understanding to improve the lives of the people of Whiston through the provision of quality services responsive to cultural, individual and community needs.

In addition, the authority collects and evaluates workforce monitoring data in compliance with the statutory monitoring duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The specific duty is to monitor by racial group:

- All employees
- All applicants for jobs
- All applicants for promotion
- All applicants for training

The Council is also committed to carrying out an Employment Equality Assessment of the Local Labour Market Area (LLMA).

The Council recognises that the issue of the make-up and skills of our workforce is central to our plans for the future for several important reasons:

- Our ability to deliver diverse services to a diverse local population is dependent upon the skills and experience of our staff. The more closely our workforce reflects the local population and is given the knowledge and ability to cater for the prospect of its culturally diverse potential, the more likely it is that the services we provide will meet the needs of the population.
- Wherever possible the Council will support the introduction of positive action strategies to support local people in accessing Council vacancies.
- Our commitment to valuing diversity is best demonstrated through our own performance in key areas, and the structure of our workforce is one of the most visible aspects of that performance.
- Our ability to provide leadership to our partner organisations and the local population is undermined if we cannot provide evidence of our ability to fulfil our goals and aspirations for our own workforce.
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposes upon us a range of specific duties in respect of employment and race. These include requirements to monitor our workforce and our recruitment and exit processes, our training functions, our grievance and disciplinary procedures and our performance assessment systems. Our policy is to apply the same standards to all equalities groups, so our responses to our obligations under the 2000 Act will include all equalities groups as far as this is practicable and maintains confidentiality.

In addition the Council has an ongoing commitment to achieve equality within the workforce.

The Council's commitment to promoting and ensuring equality and diversity in employment is demonstrated through a range of policies and procedures which cover:

- Recruitment and appointment
- Employment benefits
- Employment practices
- Employment and staff practices
- Flexible working policies
- Health, Safety and Welfare
- Staff development and training