

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITIES POLICY

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1. Introduction

This Equalities Policy sets out Honiton Town Council's vision and commitment to ensure equality of access and opportunities for everyone in Honiton. In serving our community, we aim to improve the quality of life of all residents and service users.

In our community we value and celebrate the richness of culture, backgrounds and traditions we share.

Honiton Town Council accepts that discrimination is a major barrier to a fair and just society. We are guided by the reality that there are people who are prevented from taking part fully in the life of our community, for example in the areas of employment, housing and education. The reasons for their unfair treatment and exclusion may be related to any of the criteria listed in the Equality Act 2010¹. Honiton Town Council recognises that discrimination affects people in complex ways. We are committed to challenging all forms of inequality.

2. Our Vision

Honiton Town Council is committed to improving the quality of life and wider participation for all in the economic, educational, cultural, social and community life of the town. We also aim to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of talent, experiences and skills of our community.

Our equalities policy is guided by the following principles:

- All residents, service users, service providers, employees and partners in the community have a responsibility to promote equalities and challenge discrimination and stereotyping.
- All residents and service users are able to participate fully in the life of the community.
- Every resident and service user has equal access to high quality services that meet their needs. We recognise that there are some people who may need support in receiving this entitlement.
- Every resident, service user and employee is entitled to a safe environment free from discrimination and harassment.
- Every employee councillor and volunteer working on behalf of the Town Council is entitled to training and development and fair promotion opportunities.
- All residents, service users, employees and our partners in the community are encouraged to make their contribution to improving our services.

3. Our Equalities Commitments

Promoting equalities is about putting principles into practice.

These are our commitments to all service users and staff.

Honiton Town Council Serving Its Community

The Council is a major provider of services to residents and businesses. We have a key role to provide relevant and accessible services that meet the needs of our community. We aim to ensure that high standards of quality and equality are always maintained. We aim to improve access for all.

Every service user:-

- has the right to receive appropriate, accessible services that are free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation

¹ Equality Act 2010 Part 2 Chapter 1

- has the right to be treated with respect and provided with accurate and up to date information about the Council's services
- should feel enabled to access Council services and not feel excluded because of any of the criteria listed in the Equality Act 2010²
- has the right to be consulted on the way the Council plans and delivers its services
- has our assurance that service contracts will incorporate equalities principles and that performance against these will be monitored
- has the right to give and receive feedback or raise complaints about services through clear and easy to use complaints procedures
- should feel able to contribute to the Council's decision making process. This includes all user representative groups and community groups, and those who historically have been under-represented

Honiton as an Equal Opportunities Employer

Honiton Town Council as an employer in the Town has a key role to play in tackling inequalities and discrimination. We aim to ensure equalities underpin all aspects of employment policy and practice. We recognise that promoting equalities also makes good business sense.

We aim to:

- be an equal opportunities employer committed to a policy of equal access to employment opportunities, training and development, at all levels of the organisation
- recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the expertise and diversity of our community and ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are in place to attract the best applicants to Honiton
- support staff in increasing their understanding of equalities issues through regular staff development programmes
- create a safe working environment where any form of discrimination and harassment is dealt with quickly, appropriately and effectively, and where staff feel supported in challenging discrimination and harassment
- promote and further develop work-life balance policies to ensure that we maximise employment opportunities for all

4. Our Cycle Of Improvement

We are proud of our success but will also ensure that we review what we do and make improvements. We believe that promoting equalities is a continuous process. To put our vision and commitments into practice we will:

- develop action plans and set targets
- establish and implement monitoring systems
- evaluate and measure our progress
- share our improvements and achievements with all staff and our partners in the community
- identify areas for improvement

5. Our Responsibilities

² Equality Act 2010 Part 2 Chapter 1

Within the Council, all elected representatives and staff have a part to play in challenging discrimination and in implementing this policy:

Councillors are responsible for promoting the equalities agenda and ensuring that adequate resources are made available.

The Clerk is responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the equalities agenda.

All staff have a responsibility for promoting and delivering equalities in the workplace and in serving the community.

6. Relevant Legislation

Honiton Town Council will implement its equalities policy in accordance with the current legislation governing local authorities and the associated codes of practice.

The Equality Act 2010 contains reference to Public Sector Equality Duty. This Act relates to Honiton Town Council with regard to its participation in the preparation or modification of a Sustainable Community Strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) creates a long-term vision for the area to tackle local needs and this vision is set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The local area agreement is the mechanism for making the vision a reality and all its outcomes and targets are designed to deliver the vision set out in the sustainable community strategy. The sustainable community strategy is the “plan of plans” in the area. It sits above all the other plans and is based on evidence and consultation. It sets out the key tasks that the partners in the area need to achieve to improve its wellbeing. It is not subject to any external validation but is subject to a sustainability appraisal.