

1 Policy Statement

1.1 Mendip District Council is committed to equality of opportunity and access (physical access and communication of information) for all people particularly those who are:

- employees of the council
- seeking and using council services
- external or internal candidates for a job, whether full or part time or job share, permanent or temporary
- in receipt of goods or services from the council, its contractors or organisations, voluntary or otherwise, with whom the council is working in partnership

These objectives are complementary in that the Council believes that quality and sensitivity of service is enhanced when the make up of the workforce reflects the community it serves.

1.2 It is recognised that some people still experience inequality in society because of their background. The Council will therefore not tolerate discrimination, directly or indirectly, on the grounds of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as 'protected characteristics'.

1.3 The Council will lead by example and take active steps to challenge prejudice, discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity.

1.4 This policy will underpin all decisions taken by the Council and all actions by its employees.

1.5 Employees who feel they have been unlawfully discriminated against may use the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure or the Respect, Fairness and Dignity at Work Policy as appropriate.

1.6 Service users who wish to raise any concerns can do so through the Council's Complaints Procedure

1.7 Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure. Such acts may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

2 Employment

2.1 The Council will:

- Promote a working environment that upholds dignity and respect for all; no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

- Create an environment where individual differences and the contributions of employees are recognised and valued.
- Demonstrate its commitment to equality in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, career development, pay and benefits, opportunities for training, promotion, discipline, selection for redundancy and welfare. All employees will be treated fairly and with respect.
- Monitor and report on the composition of its workforce and take positive action with a view to ensuring that it reflects the community that it serves. Data relating to the diversity of employees will be published annually on our internet site.
- Issue a copy of this policy to all new and existing employees and inform them of their rights and responsibilities under this policy and the Dignity at Work policy.
- Provide training for all employees to increase their awareness of equality and diversity issues, highlighting their importance both in the workplace and in service delivery.
- Promote flexible working policies and practices to increase opportunities, in particular for those people with caring responsibilities or health issues.
- Ensure that all managers and others involved in the recruitment and development of staff receive relevant training and understand their responsibilities in relation to equality.
- Ensure that job specifications are limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job role. Candidates applying for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking into account any reasonable adjustments that may be required for those with a disability.
- Ensure that policies and practices enable all employees to have the opportunity to access training and development so they can realise their full potential.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of our policies and practices in relation to equality issues.

3 Service Delivery

3.1 The Council provides services both directly and in partnership with other organisations. It will promote equality of opportunity for local people through:

- Providing accessible information about the services that are available to them.
- Ensuring that Due Regard is considered when introducing or amending its policies and activities to determine whether they impact adversely in relation to equalities and taking relevant action when they do.

- Delivering services in ways which are appropriate, relevant and sensitive to service user needs and, whenever possible, removing barriers which may deny access.
- Using its authority to ensure that organisations providing services on its behalf operate in accordance with the aims of this policy and have a good record in their handling and monitoring of equality issues in both employment and service delivery.
- Endeavouring, whenever possible, to use local organisations or those with close connections to the district when out-sourcing services.
- Promoting widely the availability of the Council's Complaints system to ensure that people know how to raise issues about services.
- Ensuring staff do not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods.
- Ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to remove barriers and enable those with a disability to access services.

4 Information, Consultation and Involvement

4.1 Effective information, consultation and involvement are essential to the success of this policy. The Council with therefore:

- Inform, consult and involve a wide range of people, including employees and stakeholders, about decisions which affect them so that they can influence policies and practices.
- Ensure that a diverse range of people are able to fully participate in consultation and involvement activities.
- Give people a voice by promoting involvement in decision making so that any proposed changes are considered and adapted where appropriate.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 The Council recognises its legal responsibility to comply with the laws designed to protect peoples' rights.

5.2 The Cabinet Portfolio Member who covers equalities issues will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and for recommending changes and improvements necessary to the Cabinet.

5.3 The Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team are responsible for taking steps to ensure that this policy is promoted, understood and implemented by Council employees.

5.4 All managers have responsibility for ensuring that their employees understand the policy and put it into practice. Managers will need to ensure their own behaviour and conduct models best practice and take steps to correct behaviour

or actions which do not comply with the expected standards.

- 5.5 All employees are expected to be familiar with the policy. Everyone has a role to play in promoting equality and taking responsibility for ensuring their own behaviour and actions comply with and support the policy.

Policy Updated: July 2013

Review Due: July 2015