



West Swindon Parish Council

EQUALITY POLICY 2023

1. Introduction

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010) and public authorities including Parish Councils are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;¹**
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.²**

To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, to publish:

- equality objectives, at least every four years (from 6th April 2012)
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty (from 31st January 2012)

West Swindon Parish Council like all public bodies and organisations carrying out public functions has a duty to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to its own employees. The Public Sector Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities for everyone who comes into contact with West Swindon Parish Council, irrespective of their characteristics (unless it can be shown that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim).

¹ It is important for the Council to consider this objective from a number of perspectives e.g. as an employer, in the way it conducts Council meetings and how it delivers local services.

² For this objective, the Council needs to consider local relationships between individuals and different communities and how it can promote community cohesion and importantly, not act in any way that damages good relations.

2. Discrimination:

To discriminate against someone means to treat them less favourably, to harass or victimise them or to subject them to a provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a disadvantage. It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of the following 'protected characteristics' (as defined in the Act):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

West Swindon Parish Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination whether it be direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities in the work place and in the delivery of services. This policy is fully supported by all Members of the Council.

3. Our Commitment to Employees³

All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.⁴

Breaches of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Employees are entitled to complain about discrimination or harassment or victimisation through the council's Grievance Procedure.

If any member of the public has particular needs in relation to access to the West Swindon Parish meetings, documents or general information, please contact the West Swindon Parish Clerk in the first instance for assistance.

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

³ It is important for the Council to be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in terms of recruitment and retention of employees. The principles of a supportive and accessible workplace should be embedded in other employment practices such as access to information, observance of religious practices, maternity leave, access to office facilities etc.

⁴ As Councillors can be interacting with staff and members of the public in their role as a Councillor, they need to be mindful to their obligations within the Equalities Policy to the same degree as paid staff or contractual arrangements.

4. Delivery of functions and services:

In exercising its functions and delivering services, the West Swindon Parish Council will have due regard to the three aims of the Equality Duty and it will take a proportionate approach when complying with it. Equality issues will be an influence on our policies and decisions.

The West Swindon Parish Council will consider equality issues in its contractual terms and conditions as agreed with external contractors as appropriate.

Other policies will be reviewed against the values stated in this main Equal Opportunities policy to ensure that this council strives to remain an Equal Opportunities employer.

West Swindon Parish Council acknowledges the following sources of information from which this policy has been created:

- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, 2011 No. 2260
- Society of Local Council Clerks - Model Equal Opportunities Policy (Oct 2010)
- National Association of Local Councils – Legal Topic Note 78: Equality Act 2010 (Jan 2013)