

## Equal Opportunities Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Coughton Parish Council is committed to providing the highest quality of provision and service and recognises that the implementation of an effective Equal Opportunities Policy is an integral part of such an approach.

However, Coughton is a relatively small parish council, which currently has only one part time employee. The scope of this policy is, therefore, designed to reflect this.

The Council, as a corporate body, has responsibilities as an employer, a service provider and a public authority, but both members and employees as individuals also have responsibilities as well as rights.

The Council will treat all its employees, partners and customers with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

### LEGAL POSITION

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds:

- **age**
- **disability**
- **gender reassignment**
- **marriage and civil partnership**
- **pregnancy and maternity**
- **race**
- **religion or belief**
- **sex**
- **sexual orientation**

These are known as "protected characteristics" in section 4 of the 2010 Act. Section 149 of the 2010 Act imposes a Duty on Parish Councils to take into account:

- The need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- To foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

The policy will be implemented within the framework of the relevant legislation, which includes:

- - Equal Pay Act 1970
- - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- - Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- - Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999
- - Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- - The Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Inclusive of any/all updates or replacement Acts to the above.

Coughton Parish Council recognises that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to equal treatment. We aim to ensure that no Coughton Parish Councillor, volunteer, organisation, job applicant or individual to whom we provide services, will be discriminated against by us on any unfair grounds whatsoever.

We aim to foster awareness of prejudices in all who work for and with the Coughton Parish Council, and we aim to encourage the removal of such prejudices.

We also aim to ensure that Coughton Parish Councillors, volunteers and staff working with individuals and with organisations for which the Coughton Parish Council provides services do not suffer discrimination, and where this occurs, the Coughton Parish Council commits itself to taking positive action against such discrimination.

Coughton Parish Council is committed to:

- positively addressing opportunities for full participation within the organisation
- adopting an effective system to monitor its practice with regard to ensuring equality of opportunity
- promoting good practice with regard to equality of opportunity for organisations and individuals involved in the work of the Coughton Parish Council.

In particular Coughton Parish Council will:

- work to ensure that all its services are provided in a way that promotes awareness of the rights and needs of people from minority groups and enables all people to have access to those services
- work to ensure that our terms and conditions of employment and volunteering reflect a range of needs and interests that encompass people who may otherwise be disadvantaged. The policy of Coughton Parish Council is to ensure that no person receives less favourable consideration than others in the selection and appointment of staff or in the recruitment of volunteers.

### **Recruitment and promotion practices**

Coughton Parish Council will ensure equality of opportunity for all job applicants and volunteers; it will ensure that:

- application forms are continually reviewed to ensure structure and content are not open to discrimination
- when recruiting, the Parish Council will develop personnel specifications which recognises the importance only of relevant experience or qualifications
- acceptance of the Parish Councils Equal Opportunities Policy is a condition of employment.

### **Service provision**

Coughton Parish Council will take positive action to ensure its services to, and contacts with, other groups and individuals reflect this Equal Opportunities Policy. This will be effected by:

- consulting with groups and individuals with special requirements to identify how the Parish Council services may be improved to meet their needs
- ensuring that all individuals who represent Coughton Parish Council are aware of understand and operate this Equal Opportunities Policy.

### **Employer's responsibilities**

Coughton Parish Council:

- is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this Equal Opportunities Policy
- will ensure that all individuals within the Parish Council, whether paid or unpaid, clearly understand and practise the principles contained in this Policy
- will not victimise anyone who has provided information about discrimination
- It shall be the responsibility of the full council to keep up to date with developments or difficulties relating to the implementation of this Policy.

### **Employee's / Users responsibilities**

All employees of Coughton Parish Council and users of its services:

- will be required to co-operate with measures introduced by the Council to ensure and promote equal opportunities
- will neither practise any form of discrimination nor use discriminatory language
- will draw to the attention of the Parish Council any suspected acts of discrimination
- will not victimise anyone who has provided information about discrimination.

### **OUR COMMITMENT**

Coughton Parish Council understands its obligations under the Equality Act 2010

Coughton Parish Council is fully committed to its duty, imposed by Section 149 of the 2010 Act

Coughton Parish Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and declares its opposition to any form of less favourable treatment, whether through direct or indirect discrimination, on the grounds of the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010.

The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer, provider of services and contractor. It is committed to the promotion, maintenance and protection of the rights of individuals. The Council is committed to making full use of the talents and resources of its employees.

The Council will ensure that all recipients of the services delivered directly by the Council are guaranteed the same opportunity.

All policies of the Council will be designed to support the principles and practices of equal opportunity, to foster a fully integrated community and maintain racial harmony.

The Equal Opportunities Policy has the commitment of the Council and the Parish Clerk.

### **THE COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER**

The Purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees or prospective employees, irrespective of their characteristics (unless there are genuine qualifications or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken). We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

All employees, whether full-time, part-time, fixed contract, agency workers or temporary, 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. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

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.

The Council will encourage and develop all employees to support and carry out the requirements of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Breaches of our Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

The commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing Society as a whole.

This policy is fully supported by all Members of the council and adopts the model contract as devised by the employee professional body in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Clerks)

### **THE COUNCIL AS A DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERER**

The Council's clients have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment whilst participating in or receiving any of the Council's services or activities.

All aspects of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy impact on the manner in which it directly delivers services to and for its residents. Adherence to the principles and practices contained within this policy will be monitored on a regular basis.

The above requirements apply to all services and activities of the Council.

Renewal Date - July 2023