

Bedale Town Council

Equality and Diversity Policy

Bedale Town Council recognises that it functions at a fundamental level of democracy and that its services affect, both directly and indirectly, the lives of all the Council's workers, volunteers, and residents. The Council seeks to ensure that its services and facilities are equally accessible to all.

Preamble

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 5 April 2011, imposes on public authorities including Bedale Town Council, in the exercise of their functions, a duty to take into account:

- The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- The advancement of equality of opportunity between persons with a relevant protected characteristic and persons without it;
- And fostering good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- *(n.b. Marriage or civil partnership, although a protected characteristic under the 2010 Act, is not included within Section 149)*

Equal Opportunity

Bedale Town Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity both for those who use its services and those who provide them.

Equal opportunities, fairness in the workplace, and providing good quality services to Bedale's community and visitors, are all inter-linked. It is recognised that individuals and groups continue to be unfairly discriminated against, and it is the Town Council's responsibility to promote good community relations and equality of opportunity, and to tackle unlawful discrimination in all of its forms.

This new and comprehensive statement is to demonstrate the Town Council's wholehearted commitment to action in tackling inequality. Such action is the responsibility of members and all employees of Bedale Town Council, and will be promoted via the following steps:

Commitment

- Bedale Town Council will provide services that are equally accessible to all people, free from prejudice and discrimination, and sensitive to the needs of all sections of the community;
- Bedale Town Council will value people and their differences and enable all employees to achieve their full potential, creating vitality within our organisation and the services we deliver;
- Bedale Town Council will seek to influence the work and contribution of partner organisations from all sectors, by ensuring that equality issues and considerations are fully taken into account in their dealings with the Council;
- Bedale Town Council will work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination, both of a direct and indirect nature;
- Bedale Town Council will encourage partnership and participation in the development and application of Council policy and practices.

Staffing

- Bedale Town Council will provide an environment free from discrimination and harassment for all employees;
- Bedale Town Council will take full account of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 when recruiting staff, in particular noting that it is not permitted to ask questions about a job applicant's health before offering an interview or a job;
- Advertisements for recruitment will not request dates of birth or other age-related details, and person specifications will not refer to any particular age – or other protected characteristic – as necessary or desirable;
- In order not to discriminate against younger people, all application material will emphasise the importance of skills and potential, as well as experience;
- A job description and person specification will be written for every vacancy, and provided to all prospective employees. Requirements within these documents will be strictly limited to those necessary for the effective performance of the job;
- Information about job vacancies will be made available to all sections of the community.

Service provision

- Councillors and Council staff will treat fairly and consistently each other, colleagues and contractors, and all members of the public;
- All services shall be provided without discrimination, harassment, or victimization;
- All people will be given every possible help to access Town Council property and facilities, with consideration given to the needs of those who find it difficult to access facilities on the grounds of their age or disability – or other protected characteristic.

Bedale Town Council acknowledges its commitment to opportunity for all and it seeks to work within the context of the Equality Act 2010.

Bedale Town Council acknowledges that certain groups and individuals within society are discriminated against, consciously or unconsciously, and wishes to declare its commitment to working towards equality in employment and in the delivery of its services. In particular, the Council will work to combat discrimination and to ensure that prospective and present employees, and those who may wish to access any of its services, are not treated less favourably on the following grounds:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief, or the absence thereof
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership, or the absence thereof
- Pregnancy and/or parenthood
- Low income

Age

Less favourable treatment of a person because of age, or apparent age, is not lawful, with some exemptions including minimum wage levels, benefits of service provisions (e.g. holiday entitlement), and statutory redundancy pay.

Disability

The Equality Act 2010 protects disabled persons from discrimination; this includes a duty on employers to make reasonable workplace adjustments to prevent disabled employees and job applicants from being placed at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

A person is defined in law as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities). An impairment is long-term if it has lasted for at least twelve months and/or is likely to last for at least twelve months. These impairments include but are not limited to blindness or sight impairment, cancer, HIV infection and multiple sclerosis.

Gender reassignment

Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic that applies to a transsexual person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, a process (or part of a process) to change their sex (by physiological or other attributes of sex).

Race

The Town Council has a general duty to avoid unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and promote good race relations between people of different racial and/or ethnic groups.

Religion or belief, or the absence thereof

People's faith, or its absence, must be taken into account so that they can, for example, wear signs of their faith, or not be expected to act in contradiction to their beliefs.

Sex

The Town Council has a general duty to avoid unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, and promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

Sexual Orientation

It is illegal to discriminate against a person's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex, or of the opposite sex, to them.

Marriage or civil partnership

It is illegal to discriminate against people who are married or within a civil partnership.

Pregnancy and/or parenthood

The Council will not treat less favourably someone due to pregnancy, illness suffered as a result of pregnancy, exercising the right to maternity/parental leave, or issues regarding childcare.

Low income

While low income is not covered as a protected characteristic under the 2010 Act, the Council is resolved to ensure that its services will be accessible to people of any socio-economic status.