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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Henley on Thames Town Council is committed to policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against anyone and which promote equality of opportunity for all.

It has produced a policy statement and objectives which, together with other information contained in this document are intended to provide advice and guidance to enable staff to implement the equal opportunities policy.

The purpose of this document is to set out the policy, which must be adhered to by all staff, to ensure that all employees and all prospective employees are subject to fair and lawful practices and procedures at all stages of recruitment and employment. Full account is made of the laws on discrimination and the provisions within those laws that allow positive action.

Why do we have an equal opportunities policy?

The main reasons for adopting an equal opportunities policy are as follows:

- It enables employers to ensure as far as possible that there is no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination in their establishment;
- An Equal Opportunities Policy and Programme enables employers to develop good employment practices, policies and procedures in respect of all employees;
- If effectively monitored, it enables employers to identify groups who are under represented in certain jobs or sections, to assess reasons for this, and where appropriate make use of statutory provisions for positive action;
- It enables an employer to make effective use of resources and staffing potential.

Who is included in this Policy?

All employees are included in this policy whether full-time or part-time and whether in permanent or temporary employment with the Council.

In particular, all staff involved with the recruitment, selection, development and training of staff (including selection for training) have responsibility to ensure they act in a fair and lawful manner and that no unlawful act or unfair discrimination occurs.

The policy also includes contractor and suppliers who sign an undertaking that they operate an equal opportunities policy, which includes a monitoring system.

Who should you contact if you feel you have been unfairly discriminated against?

Employees who feel they have been subject to unfair treatment, harassment or discrimination contrary to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policies may raise the matter with their Supervisor in the first instance, or if this is inappropriate, with another senior member of management or the Town Clerk or his/her representatives. Official complaints will be dealt with through the Council's Bullying and Harassment Policy.

If you feel you have been harassed you can seek confidential advice from your trade union representative, manager/supervisor or a trained contact officer.

External applicants for jobs who feel they have not been treated fairly are entitled to complain to the Town Clerk, Town Hall, Market Place, Henley on Thames, RG9 2AQ within 14 days of being advised of the outcome of their job applications.

POLICY STATEMENT

“Henley on Thames Town Council firmly believes in equality of opportunity in employment. The aim of our policy is to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, disability, age, race, marital status, religion, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, or because of their sexuality or sexual orientation nor is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

This principle will apply to recruitment, appraisal and development, training, transfer, benefits, facilities, procedures, and all terms and conditions of employment. Selection criteria and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

All employees will be given equality of opportunity. The Council is committed to review its personnel policies and practices generally and take appropriate action to make the policy fully effective”.

Policy Objectives

1. The Council will make available to employees its written policies, practices and procedures on equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice at all Council workplaces.
2. The Council will send the Equal Opportunities Guidelines and Policies, procedures and practices to new employees.
3. The Council will inform new employees of its policies, practices and procedures during induction training.
4. The Council will inform all employees of changes to, and developments of its policies, practices and procedures.
5. The Council will review the training needs of employees to ensure that training promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices at their work.
6. The Council expects its employees to follow its policies, procedures and practices and will institute disciplinary proceedings against any employee who wilfully disregards them.
7. The Council will provide support to any employee who is the subject of unlawful or unacceptable discrimination in the course of his/her employment.

8. The Council will ensure that all managers and employees who are engaged in recruitment and selection are trained and have sufficient knowledge and understanding of statutory unacceptable discrimination,
9. The Council will carry out comprehensive recruitment monitoring procedures in order that there can be complete and reliable information on which to assess the effectiveness of its policies, practices and procedures.
10. The Council will develop links with community groups, organisations and schools as a means of widening employment opportunities.
11. The Council will promote positive images of people which challenge traditional perceptions of gender, race and disability.
12. The Council will consider the special training needs of relevance to the training and development of men and women where sexual distinction may give rise to discrimination.
13. The Council will seek to provide training by means, at times and in places which meet the differing needs of employees.
14. The Council will promote facilities and flexible working to enable employees to combine work and other responsibilities.
15. The Council will agree requests to participate in such forms and flexible working unless they can be shown to be operationally and/or financially detrimental.
16. The Council will develop and publicise corporate and departmental indicators of the effectiveness of its policies, procedures and practices.

Who is responsible for determining and implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy?

Overall responsibility for the Policy will be in the hands of the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will be responsible for specialist advice, training, setting guidelines for policy implementation and operation and for reporting on the policy to the Finance and Administration Committee on an annual basis.

All staff throughout the Council are responsible, without exception, for the observance of the requirements of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Communication of the Policy and Induction

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is communicated to all job applicants through the policy statement which is sent to all applicants. It is important that all concerned know about the Council's Policy and are made aware of the Council's desire to help eliminate both direct and indirect discrimination in the work situation. All employees will participate in Equal Opportunities workshops which includes an explanation of the Council's policy and the duties of employees under anti-discrimination legislation. Equal opportunities is an important part of the induction programme for new employees.

Prepared: March 2009

Approved: