

**Equality & Diversity Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees and users of Glapwell Parish Council’s services irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race including colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality, religion or belief, or sexual orientation (the ‘**protected characteristics**’).

Glapwell Parish Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

All employees, whether part time, full time or temporary, and users of the Council’s services, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees and users 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 Glapwell Parish Council.

**The Law**

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

▪ Equality Act, 2010 (and associated Codes of Practice), and

▪ The Protection from Harassment Act, 1997.

This list is not exhaustive.

**Statement on Equal Opportunities**

Glapwell Parish Council states its wholehearted support for the principles and practices of equal opportunity and recognises that it is the duty of all Councillors and employees to accept their personal responsibility for fostering a fully integrated community at work by adhering to the principles of equal opportunity.

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

The Council will actively promote equal opportunities through the application of policies which will ensure that individuals receive treatment that is fair and equitable and consistent with their relevant aptitudes, potential, skills, experiences and abilities. The Parish Clerk will seek to ensure that all employees comply with these principles.

All persons will be treated with dignity and respect in an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Any complaints of this nature will be fully investigated and treated with the strictest confidence.

Any individual found to be responsible for such behaviour, following a thorough investigation, will be subject to disciplinary action.

All employees, job applicants and contractors working for Glapwell Parish Council will be made aware of this policy.

**Glapwell Parish Council as employer**

Glapwell Parish Council is fully committed to providing equality in the workplace and all opportunities for and during employment will be afforded to individuals fairly and irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race including colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation. We aim to create a working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment in any form, in which all staff and contractors are treated with dignity and respect.

Glapwell Parish Council will not unlawfully discriminate in the arrangements we make for recruitment and selection or in the opportunities afforded for employment, training or any other benefit. All decisions will be made fairly and objectively. We aim, as far as reasonably practicable, to ensure that all our working practices are applied fairly and consistently and, where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to avoid or overcome any particular disadvantage these may cause and to promote equality.

Glapwell Parish Council respects an individual’s right to choose whether or not to belong to a trade union and membership status will have no bearing on an applicant’s suitability for employment or result in any detrimental treatment when working for the Council.

**Specific Responsibilities**

Glapwell Parish Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act, 2010 and associated legislation and for observing relevant Codes of Practice.

The Parish Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy and for ensuring that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices adhere to this policy.

All staff have a responsibility not to discriminate or harass other staff or others involved with the Council and to report any such behaviour of which they become aware to the Clerk.

Managers/supervisors are responsible for implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and must apply the policy as part of their day-to-day management of the Council.

**Forms of discrimination**

The following are forms of discrimination that this policy aims to avoid:

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have or are thought to have. Direct discrimination can also occur by way of association, which is when a person is treated less favourably because, for example, their spouse or partner or other relative has the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on people who share a particular protected characteristic. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain. To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated unfavourably because he/she has raised a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, in relation to any alleged act of unlawful discrimination, against the Council or because he/she has supported someone else in doing this.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates an individual’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many different forms and may involve inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments, emails or physical contact that causes offence or are objectionable. Harassment may involve a single incident or persistent behaviour that extends over a period of time, and can occur even if someone did not mean to cause offence. It also means that a person can be subjected to harassment by behaviour that is not aimed at them directly but which they nonetheless find unpleasant. Harassment is always unacceptable and where it relates to a protected characteristic it will amount to an unlawful act of discrimination.

**Discrimination arising from Disability**

In addition to the above, it is unlawful to treat a person unfavourably because of something that is the result, effect or outcome of their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Furthermore, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

**Creating equal opportunities in the workplace**

There are a number of ways in which the Glapwell Parish Council aims to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace.

**Recruitment and selection**

Recruitment and selection procedures will be free from bias or discrimination. Recruitment procedures will be conducted objectively and will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria. Decisions regarding an individual’s suitability for a particular role will be based on aptitude and ability.

We will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure that disabled applicants are not substantially disadvantaged.

Wherever possible, vacancies will be advertised as being suitable for flexible working, to encourage applications from individuals seeking work on a part time or job share basis**.**

The Council will consider taking appropriate positive action to enable or encourage applications from persons with a protected characteristic that is under represented in the organisation.

**Career development and training**

All staff will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

All employees will be encouraged to develop their full potential and the Council will not unreasonably deny an employee access to training or other career development opportunities. These will be identified as part of an ongoing performance management process and will be determined objectively, taking into account the needs of the Council and available resources.

Selection for promotion will be based on objective criteria and decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

**Terms and conditions**

Our terms and conditions of service will be applied fairly and benefits and facilities will be made available to all staff who should have access to them, as appropriate.

The Council operates a pay and benefits system that is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias to ensure that all employees are rewarded fairly for their contribution and loyalty**.**

Terms and conditions of employment for part-time employees will be provided on a pro-rata basis to full-time employees**.** Similarly, the terms and conditions for fixed term employees will be comparable with those given to permanent employees, except when different treatment can be objectively justified.

**Employment policies and practices**

The Council aims to ensure that employment policies and practices, including any rules or requirements, do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In particular, we will ensure that all disciplinary decisions are fair and consistent and that selection for redundancy is based on objective criteria.

The Council will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the working environment or any work arrangements that would alleviate any substantial disadvantage these cause disabled staff.

We will aim, as far as reasonably practicable, to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and will consider requests from employees to vary or change their working hours to enable them to care for a dependant.

This policy is fully supported by all Members of the Council. Glapwell 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.

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. This is further defined in the Dignity at Work policy adopted by the council.\* 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. 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.\*\* The Council adopts the model employment contract \*\*\*as devised by the employee professional body in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Clerks).

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually. Other Personnel policies will be reviewed against the values stated in this main Equal Opportunities policy to ensure that the council strives to remain an Equal Opportunities employer. The policy aims to achieve the five core values, which embrace and provide a framework within which employees can work:

• Recognition that everyone is of equal value and should be respected according to individual needs and abilities.

• To be fair, reasonable and just in all council activities.

• Providing equal access for all in employment and service delivery.

• Helping individuals take on responsibility so that they can influence and participate in the decision-making process.

• Obtaining the highest standards in service delivery. In exercising its functions and delivering services, the Parish Council will have due regard to the 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 and we will consider the needs of all individuals in our day-to-day work.

This policy is cross-referenced to the following Parish Council’s adopted policies:

• Dignity at Work

• Grievance and Disciplinary

**How the procedure works**

If you have a grievance relating to Equal Opportunities your Employment Contract explains how to make a Formal Complaint.

If you are accused of behaviour which is in breach of the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure, a relevant line manager will initially conduct an informal investigation to determine if there is a case worth investigating. Should the initial, informal investigation find that action needs to be taken, the Council will act in accordance with its formal disciplinary procedure, as detailed in your Employment Contract.

Review

This Equal Opportunities Policy will be reviewed by Glapwell Parish Council annually at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council to ensure it conforms to all relevant legislation.

Acknowledgements

Glapwell Parish Council acknowledges the following sources of information from which this policy has been drawn:

• 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)

• Government Equalities Office - Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What do I need to know? A Quick Start Guide for Public Sector Organisations (June 2011)

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