



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY



Adopted: June 2024
Next Review: June 2025

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1. Introduction

Faversham Town Council values all people, recognises their different needs, situations and goals and aspires to remove the barriers that limit what people can do and be.

The council is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging inclusion and diversity in all areas of its work. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy covers all Town Councillors, employees (whether part-time, full-time or temporary), contractors and service users.

2. Definitions Equal Opportunities:

The council seeks to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices do not discriminate unfairly against anyone. The council aims to treat people fairly and equitably regardless of who they are, their background and/or their lifestyle.

Diversity:

The council aims to ensure that all people are valued as individuals. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach that can make the way we work and learn more creative, more efficient and more innovative.

Inclusion:

The council aims to ensure that everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution.

Direct Discrimination:

This is defined in law and occurs when a person is dealt with less favourably than other people because of a 'protected characteristic'. These characteristics are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as being:

- Age – a person of a particular age group
- Disability – a person who has a physical or mental impairment, where the impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on the person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- Gender Reassignment – a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process, or part of a process, for the purpose of reassigning the person's gender by changing physiological or other attributes of gender.
- Marriage or Civil Partnership – a legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws

- Pregnancy and Maternity – a person who is pregnant has a protected characteristic for the whole pregnancy and for a period of 26 weeks from the day they give birth (in the case of a still born child the 26 week period exists if the birth takes place after the 24th week of pregnancy). A person who has given birth and is breast-feeding has a protective characteristic when accessing premises, services and public functions.
- Race – a person or group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality, including citizenship, and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can include more than two distinct racial groups; e.g. Black Britons would comprise of those people who are both black and who are British citizens.
- Religion or Belief - a person's religion, religious or philosophical belief, lack of religion or lack of religious or philosophical belief. A belief will affect a person's choices or the way they live for it to be considered a protected characteristic.
- Sex – a person who is legally defined as a man or a woman.
- Sexual Orientation – a person's attraction towards a person of the same gender, another gender, or people of both genders.

This Policy uses a wider definition of characteristics and recognises all the elements which comprise the LGBTQ+ acronym. LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual people. However, it is recognised that those four letters do not necessarily include all those whose sexuality is not heterosexual, or whose gender identity is not based on a traditional gender binary. The '+' symbol is therefore used to include people whose identities do not fit typical binary notions of male and female, or who decide to identify themselves using other categories to describe their gender identity or their own understanding of their sexuality. This will include, for example, people who identify themselves as queer (a general term describing people not fitting into existing norms), questioning (people who explore their sexual orientation or/and gender identity), or pansexual (people who are attracted to all sexes and genders). It is recognised however, that some people may not want to identify themselves with any existing category.

3. Policy Statements

We will not use any of the characteristics listed above as a reason to treat people unfairly. The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment, demonstrate equal opportunities exist throughout the Council, encourage and manage diversity within the organisation and ensure nobody is discriminated against on grounds of any of the characteristics Faversham Town Council is committed to:

- providing equality for all;
- using gender neutral language in its published materials;
- treating every person fairly, ensuring equal access to services and opportunities;
- making our services accessible for all those who live, work and visit the town;

- seeking to ensure the workforce represents the community fairly and is representative of the population, to secure the widest pool of talent possible;
- ensuring that every person is paid equally where they are carrying out the same job or work of equal value;
- offering access to training for employees or non-employees to help fit them to particular work in the organisation;
- ensuring our employment practices and service provision take full account of individual differences and needs;
- providing a working environment that promotes dignity, fairness, respect and tolerance to all for every employee irrespective of their personal circumstances, background or lifestyle;
- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued;
- ensuring that no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
- adopting a zero-tolerance approach to transphobic abuse, harassment and bullying, ensuring that any complaints of harassment or victimisation and breaches of this policy are regarded as misconduct and dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially; such acts could lead to disciplinary proceedings and may lead to dismissal.

Faversham Town Council believes that ensuring equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense. We aim to be an equal opportunity employer. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All people will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training 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 organisation.

The council will consider how it can use the finite resources at its disposal effectively to meet the aims of this policy, in seeking:

- a) to contribute positively to a caring society which treats people fairly, with dignity and respect; and
- b) to make reasonable adjustments to meet the requirements of individuals with protected characteristics who use the Council's services.

4. Discrimination, Victimisation and Harassment

- The Equality Act 2010 sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone. The types of discrimination are:
- Direct - when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic;
- By Association - direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic;

- Perceptive - direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic;
- Indirect - can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic;
- Harassment - unwanted conduct related to a relevant characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual;
- Third Party Harassment - the harassment of employees by people who are not employees; or
- Victimisation - when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act or are suspected of doing so.

5. Public Sector Equality Duty

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.

- A duty is placed on all public bodies to ensure that the needs of all individuals are considered in day to day work – in policy shaping, delivering services, and in relation to employees.
- Faversham Town Council will consider the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of its decision-making processes:
- Have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Have due regard to the need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

6. Monitoring

To monitor its Equality and Diversity Policy, Faversham Town Council may gather individual personal information, as described below, on the diversity of potential recruits and of existing employees and annually compare and analyse this against:

- jobseekers in Faversham;
- employees at similar sized local authorities nationwide; and
- employees at other local authorities in Kent.

To gather monitoring data, we will ask job applicants for information on their racial origins, gender and disabilities on a sheet that can be detached from the application form.

This information will only be used for equality monitoring and not in the short-listing process. The council does not expect to find exactly the same proportions of people but will look for significant differences between groups and question why there is a difference. The council will only ask health related questions before offering an individual a job if the questions help us to decide if an applicant can carry out a function that is essential to the job, to decide whether reasonable adjustments need to be made for the selection process or to monitor the diversity of applicants.

7. Review

The council will aim to ensure compliance with the policy as follows:

- Councillors – All Councillors are bound to adhere to equal opportunities principles by the Code of Conduct. Council staff will make every effort to accommodate Councillors with particular needs.
- Employees - The content of this policy in relation to employees is available in the Employee Handbook. All employees will be equally encouraged to participate in suitable training and employment opportunities appropriate to their role. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups, for example, considering job sharing and part time working.
- Vacancies - Vacancies will, where appropriate, be advertised internally and externally. Selection criteria will be kept under constant review to ensure they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.
- Positive Action - If candidates for a role were both as qualified to be recruited or promoted, the Council would be allowed to take into consideration perceived disadvantages or under-representation in the workforce when deciding who to recruit – this means we would be able to favour the candidate from the underrepresented or disadvantaged group.
- Premises - All Town Council premises are compliant with, or will be adapted to comply with, the Equality Act 2010. Where buildings are not in compliance, staff will do all that is reasonably possible to ensure that service users are able to access facilities. All staff will respect and be sympathetic to the needs of minority groups and ensure that they receive the same level of service as other members of the community. The Council is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage. Endeavouring to ensure equality of opportunity for all sections of the community and workforce is an integral part of this commitment.

8. Commitments

Faversham Town Council is a Disability Confident Committed Employer valid for 3 years until 13/07/2026



Faversham Town Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant

