

Equality Policy



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Department - Section	Community Services
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Equality Policy

Purpose

1. This Equality Policy sets out St Albans City and District Council's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and diversity in customer service delivery and employment.
2. It demonstrates that equal opportunities are central to the Council's values and the delivery of services; it is part of mainstreaming equality within the Council.
3. It demonstrates that the Council values diversity and that no customer, job applicant, stakeholder or employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion; belief or non-belief; sex or sexual orientation.¹
4. It sets out a clear commitment to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to promote equality of opportunity and to develop good relations between people from different groups.
5. This Policy supports St Albans City and District Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (previously Inclusion Strategy) which outlines how we will comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Scope

6. This Policy applies to all employees of the Council, Elected Members and contractors and suppliers who provide services on behalf of the Council.

Principles

7. This Policy Statement aims to ensure that St Albans City and District Council is an organisation that values diversity and takes proactive steps to remove discrimination and foster good relations. This will be achieved by ensuring equality at the forefront of all the Council's activities.
8. This Policy provides the foundation for all policies, strategies and schemes and links directly to the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy² (previously Inclusion Strategy).

¹ The nine protected characteristics as set out in Equality Act 2010

² Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy due for publication March 2021

Legal Framework

9. This Policy is the Council's response to legal requirement for compliance with Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Duty.

Approach

10. St Albans City and District Council believes in creating a fair, just and inclusive society. As an employer and provider of services, we will not discriminate against people on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion; belief or non-belief; sex or sexual orientation.
11. We are committed to ensuring that services are relevant and responsive to the needs of all communities. We recognise that all members of the community have specific needs and will strive to meet those needs and ensure that everybody has the same ability to access services.
12. We value all members of the community and will treat all people with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation of our customers, communities, visitors or staff.
13. We will review the equality policies of our contractors and others who deliver our services to ensure they uphold our values and challenge those policies that do not.
14. We will work closely with local people, voluntary and community groups and other partners to build a respectful place in which we can all live and work.
15. We recognise that we work in a diverse community and understand the importance of achieving a diverse workforce. We will ensure that our recruitment practices are fair and consistent.
16. We will develop our employees by valuing their varied skills and experiences; by investing in learning and development; by treating employees fairly; by combating harassment, discrimination and victimisation at work; and by encouraging a culture which values the difference between us.
17. In summary, St Albans City and District Council is committed to ensuring that:
 - the services we provide meet the needs of all our communities;
 - customers and employees and visitors are treated with dignity and respect;
 - discrimination, harassment and victimisation are not tolerated;
 - equality becomes a part of all we do.

Responsibilities

18. The Chief Executive and the Board are responsible for ensuring this this Policy is implemented and that equality is embedded throughout St Albans City and District Council.
19. All managers, at all levels of the organisation, are responsible for actively promoting equality, removing discrimination and fostering good relations between different groups both internally and in customer service delivery.
20. All employees, at all levels of the organisation, are responsible for following the principles in this policy; everyone has a vital role to play in ensuring St Albans City and District Council carries out its commitment to equality and diversity.
21. All employees are responsible for ensuring that equality impact assessments are carried out on all new or changed projects, service or policies so they fulfil the principles of this policy.
22. All employees have access to training, advice and resources which supports them to carry out their responsibility for removing discrimination and promoting equality.
23. Where public services are provided by other organisations or suppliers on behalf of St Albans City & District Council, they are responsible for having robust and up to date equality policies and practices. They must also adhere to the principles within this Policy. Failure to do so could result in termination of contract.

Monitoring

24. The Chief Executive Board will monitor the implementation of this policy by making it a quarterly standing item on the agenda and Cabinet will receive an annual update in the Equality Monitoring Report.
25. This policy will be reviewed yearly by a panel of officers or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or practices.
26. St Albans City and District Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy³ outlines the steps that will be taken to implement this policy. The plan will be reviewed annually, and progress report will be produced and published.
27. If a member of the public feels that this policy is not being followed, they can make a complaint through the Council's Complaints Policy & Procedure. This is available the website at www.stalbans.gov.uk/complaints-and-compliments or by calling 01727 866100.

³ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy due for publication March 2021

28. If an employee feels that this policy is not being followed, they should raise this with their line manager. If matters cannot be resolved by the line manager, or where the complaint relates to the line manager, they should raise this with their head of service or they can use the Grievance Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy or any other relevant policy.
29. If an employee has any questions about this policy, they should discuss them with their line manager, or they can be raised with the Council's Equality Advisor in Community Engagement or with Human Resources, Corporate Services.
30. Disciplinary matters that arise from this policy will be dealt with using the Council's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

Review

31. The Council will continually seek to develop its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion by identifying good practice in customer service delivery and employment.
32. The Council will review this Policy on a regular basis, usually annually to ensure that it reflects the latest legislation, best practice and other Council policies.

Associated documents and further information

33. Further guidance is available in the following internal documents on the intranet and through the links to external sources:
 - Complaints Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy & Procedure
 - Bullying & Harassment Policy (formerly Dignity at Work Policy)
 - Equal Opportunity in Employment Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (formerly Inclusion Strategy)