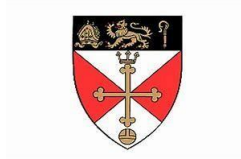


Malmesbury Town Council



Equalities Policy

Draft

Date Adopted: Ratified by Policy and Resources: tbc

Review Date: tbc

Author: Richard Spencer-Williams (Town Clerk)

1. Introduction

This Equality Policy outlines Malmesbury Town Council's commitment, responsibilities and scope for ensuring equality is an integral part of the way we reach decisions, provide services, recruit and support employees and work with other organisations.

2. Statement of Intent

Malmesbury Town Council are committed to ensuring equality, fairness, inclusion and good relations are at the heart of everything we do - be it employment, policymaking or service delivery. It recognises its moral and legal responsibilities for promoting and safeguarding the principle of equality and anti-discriminatory practice. Furthermore it is recognising the benefit of this in ensuring a safe and respectful Council environment for service users, staff, councillors and partners alike. The Council recognises the potential for social and business benefits of treating people with respect, recognising and valuing difference. The Council also recognises and is committed where reasonably practical to removing barriers that prevent people from participating fully in Council processes or services.

Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of Malmesbury Town Council including councillors, employees, and others acting on its behalf.

3. Legal Requirements

Equality Act

Section 19 combined with Equality Duty, as laid out in Equality Act 2011, places a responsibility for local Councils to consider the following protected characteristics; race, religion, age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex, marriage and civil partnership, and sexual orientation when carrying out its functions and services. All these characteristics can have a bearing on how inclusive a council or a community can be.

Under the Act everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using services. **It protects people from discrimination on the basis of these protected characteristics.**

Equality Duty

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5th April 2011 and is a key measure under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

Public authorities are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Commitment to Diversity

Malmesbury Town Council values diversity and the opportunities it brings to both our workforce and local communities. Diversity of thought is particularly important in a workplace that is designed to offer support and services to meet the demands of the broader public groups. As such the diversity within our workforce along with the data we collect around our communities enables us to continually improve our services.

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to consolidate previous equality laws into one place, removing some of the complexity around having multiple pieces of legislation. As a service we utilise the legislation to ensure all our staff, volunteers and members of our communities are protected. The legislation sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and the behaviour that is unlawful. The legislation is in place to help Britain become a fairer society, improve public services, and help business performance. Malmesbury Town Council is committed to making a real difference to the lives of people in Malmesbury. The Council want to reduce the level of risk and harm to our communities targeting those most at risk, we will use the protected characteristics outlined by the Equality Act 2010 to identify opportunities to enhance our services to better support our communities and our workforce.

Recruitment, Selection and Employment

Malmesbury Town Council will;

- a. Ensure that the recruitment, selection and employment policies and practices are fair and equitable.
- b. Advertise vacancies. In the interests of ensuring best use of public funds, this may be in the first instance an internal advertisement, where it is considered there may be suitable internal candidates; or an external advertisement where it is considered wider scope for recruitment is needed to support the business needs of the Council.
- c. Continue to evaluate its procedures to identify and remove barriers, eliminating discrimination.
- d. Will actively identify the individual needs of employees and make reasonable adjustments to the working environment where necessary, where practical, whilst ensuring the business needs are maintained in this deliberation.
- e. We will ensure that all employees have equal access to needs led training and development opportunities in line with their needs, and abilities.
- f. We will provide employees with opportunities to influence the development of our policies and practices.

- g. We will consider requests for flexible working arrangements, whilst ensuring the business needs are maintained in this deliberation.
- h. We will provide training and guidance to employees so that they are aware of the Council's Equality Policy and their legal responsibilities and rights.
- i. Will treat employees fairly with dignity and respect, maintaining a working environment that is inclusive, free of discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- j. Will encourage employees to report discrimination, unacceptable language and behaviour to their line manager, the Town Clerk, or Chair of the Council.

Elected Members

Malmesbury Town Council will:

- a. provide training and guidance to Elected Members so that they are aware of the Council's Equality Policy and their legal responsibilities and rights when exercising Council duties and functions.
- b. maintain a working/meeting environment that is inclusive, free of discrimination, harassment and bullying, where individuals are treated with dignity and respect.
- c. encourage elected members to highlight discrimination and challenge unacceptable language and behaviour.
- d. make reasonable adjustments where necessary, so that any obstacles a person faces as an elected member relating to a protected characteristic, are removed, reduced or prevented.
- e. will publicise Council vacancies widely and in a variety of ways within the community.

Council Decision Making and Services

Malmesbury Town Council will;

- a. ensure that we treat people with dignity and respect.
- b. consider the needs of all individuals in our day to day work.
- c. aim to understand how different people will be affected by our activities so that our policies and services are accessible to all and meet different people's needs.
- d. recognise that people's needs may be different.
- e. take account of this when making decisions about policies or services and make reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- f. consider the three aims of the Equality Duty at the start of the policy/service development/review process and in making final decisions.
- g. consider what information we have and what further information may be needed in order to consider the Equality Duty.
- h. will aim to provide all information in Plain English and alternative formats on request.

Working with Partners and Contractors

Malmesbury Town Council recognises that it is responsible for ensuring that any third parties who exercise functions on our behalf are capable of complying with the Equality Duty, are required to comply with it, and that they do so in practice.

Malmesbury Town Council will;

- a. communicate our Equality Policy to partners and contractors where relevant and appropriate.
- b. obtain commitment from contractors/partners that they will comply with the Equality Duty and our Equality Policy when carrying out work on our behalf where relevant and appropriate.
- c. take equalities considerations into account when developing contract specifications and conditions.
- d. consider collecting equality monitoring information if it is useful and relevant to do so.

Dealing with Complaints and Grievances Relating to Equality

Complaints and grievances should in the first instance be made to the Town Clerk. In the event of a complaint or grievance concerning the Town Clerk, this should be made to the Chairman of the Council.

Complaints and grievances about discrimination will be properly handled through the council's respective policies and most appropriate Committees.

Breaches of our Equality Policy by employees or councillors will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action.