



## Equality Policy

### **Background**

The Equality Act 2010 replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies the law removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It also strengthens the law in important ways to help tackle discrimination and inequality. The Act applies to all organisations that provide a service to the public or section of the public.

### **Council's commitment**

Burghfield Parish Council is committed to meeting the varied needs and circumstances of employees and in ensuring that services are equally appropriate to all without discrimination. The Council's goal is to support the development of strong, secure, self-reliant, self-confident communities, free from unlawful discrimination.

In support of this commitment, the Council has adopted a policy statement for employment and service delivery.

### **Employment:**

No Council employee or job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, trade union activity, age, religious or political beliefs, disability or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

### **Service delivery:**

The Parish Council will ensure that its services, including the ones carried out in partnership with any other agency are available equally to all, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, religious or political beliefs, making sure that no one is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

### **Legislation:**

In developing this Policy, Burghfield Parish Council has taken into account all current appropriate legislation; the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) guidelines, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) guidelines.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Section 149 of the 2010 Act, which came into force on 5 April 2011, imposes on public authorities ( which as specified in Schedule 19 includes principal authorities, parish councils and parish meetings without a separate parish council and, in Wales, community councils) in the exercise of their functions, a duty to take into account:

- The need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- To foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

The protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership are not covered by the provisions of Section 149.

### **Discrimination and harassment:**

Burghfield Parish Council will take action to ensure that all forms of discrimination are eradicated from its policies and practices.

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of his or her colour, disability, gender, race, nationality, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, HIV status or age.

Legally, it is not necessary to prove that someone intended to discriminate: it is sufficient only to show that the outcome of an action was less favourable treatment. Less favourable treatment can take many forms - words, actions or failure to provide opportunities or services and can be perpetuated by individuals, groups or institutions.

### **Equality in employment:**

Burghfield Parish Council recognises the value of a workforce in which people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to introduce fresh ideas and perceptions, enabling it to deliver high quality services to all members of the community.

To underpin its commitment to equality in employment, the Council:

- Will ensure that all recruitment, selection and training procedures operate in a fair and non-discriminatory way, so that the best person to do the job is appointed
- Will consult regularly with the Berkshire Association of Local Councils and other agencies to identify gaps in its employment policies and take action to remedy them
- Will consider sympathetically any request for flexible working, job-share, travel arrangements, child and dependent care leave and will guarantee interviews for disabled people who meet the essential criteria for a job

### **Equality in service delivery:**

Burghfield Parish Council will ensure that all services are accessible to all people without discrimination.

The Council aims to ensure that all employees and contractors have the information they need to provide equality of opportunity and that this is reflected in their conduct. The Council will require, where legally possible contractors to have equal opportunities policies, and will seek sufficient information and evidence that compliance with equalities legislation is genuine.

### **Responsibilities:**

The accountabilities and responsibilities in relation to this policy can be summarised as follows:

***Parish Councillors take the lead in promoting equality, ensuring equality issues are given due consideration within their area of responsibility, in decision-making and in monitoring service***