

Equality and Diversity 2009

Policy Statement

Dover Town Council (The Council) is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, and actively promotes equality of opportunity for everyone.

The Council recognises its duty to give dedicated services to people on equitable terms. This policy sets out how the Council intends to meet its commitments by working alongside everyone, irrespective of disability, race, gender, proposed commenced or completed reassignment of gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.

Background

The 2005 amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) places a duty on all public authorities to actively promote disability equality, and to produce a scheme with an action plan showing how this will be achieved. The DDA defines a disabled person as 'someone with a physical or mental impairment, which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

The Race Relations Act 1976 (Section 71) places a general obligation on local authorities to promote good race relations, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 amended and strengthened this by making it unlawful for public authorities to discriminate on racial grounds in carrying out any of their functions. The act also places a general statutory duty on public authorities to promote racial equality, prevent racial discrimination and to produce a scheme with an action plan showing how this will be achieved.

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and to produce a scheme and action plan showing how Gender Equality will be achieved. It also incorporates the duty to prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion, belief or lack of belief.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, placements, contractors and elected members of Dover Town Council. In this document they will all be referred to "employees".

It is accepted that elected members of the Council are not employees, but they do share a responsibility with employees when representing the Council or carrying out the functions of their elected office. Therefore, all aspects of this policy apply equally to elected members.

Purpose

Disability

The duty of the Council under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 means that the Council, in carrying out its duties, must have due regard to:

- The need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the act
- The need to eliminate harassment that is unlawful under the act
- The need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons.
- The need to take steps to take into account a person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The key themes of the act are to:

- Build on existing equality strategies, frameworks and schemes.

- Set realistic action points and timescales
- Have clear measurable milestones
- Involve disabled people in setting priorities
- Implement a process to assess the impact of the Council's policies and practices on equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Gender Equality

The duty of the Council under the Equality Act 2006 means that the Council, in carrying out its duties, must have due regard to:

- The need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the act
- The need to eliminate harassment that is unlawful under the act

This act builds on the previous equality act in the respect that it also places additional requirements to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women, not just to avoid discrimination
- Prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.
- Prohibit religious discrimination in the exercise of public functions.
- To take positive action, rather than waiting for individuals to take cases against the Council.

The key themes of the act are:

- Better-informed decision-making and policy development
- A clearer understanding of the needs of service users
- Better-quality services which meet varied needs
- More effective targeting of policy and resources
- Better results and greater confidence in public services
- A more effective use of talent in the workforce

Race Equality

The Race Relations Act 1976 (Section 71) places a general obligation on local authorities to promote good race relations. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 amends the Race Relations Act 1976 and strengthens its application to public authorities by covering areas that were previously excluded.

Authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination.
- Promote equality of opportunity.
- Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

Authorities must consider the following steps in meeting the general duty:

- Prepare and publicise a scheme and action plan.
- Identify which of their functions and policies are relevant to the duty.
- Assess whether their relevant functions meet the three parts of the duty.
- Consider whether any changes need to be made to meet the duty, and make changes.

Responsibilities

Chairman:

The Chairman is responsible for developing a leadership role in the Town, promoting improved understanding of diversity and race relations, and ensuring that the Equality and Diversity Policy and the supporting schemes are implemented throughout Dover Town Council and are reviewed regularly.

Town Clerk:

Town Clerk is responsible for:

- The implementation and monitoring of the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Bringing the Policy and schemes to the attention of employees and ensuring that these employees meet their responsibilities.
- Inducting new staff with regard to individual Equality Schemes and this Equality and Diversity Policy
- Planning and supporting the workload with employees with due regard to this Policy and all of the Equalities Schemes.

Employees:

All employees of the Council have a responsibility to consider the Equality and Diversity Policy and individual Equality Schemes in the course of their work.

Councillors:

To engage with our community and provide leadership and support for the policy.

Policy Committee

This committee will regularly address equality and diversity issues to ensure compliance with legislation, reviewing schemes, reviewing targets and updating where necessary.

Review and Monitoring

The Committee will conduct a preliminary review of The Town Council's functions, strategies and formal policies, highlighting any that may have an adverse effect.

Local performance indicators that measure progress in implementing this policy will be developed, and reviewed regularly. These will help to assess progress in promoting disability, gender and race tolerance and the elimination of discrimination.

Procedures

Town Council will actively work to fulfil its obligations under the law and identify measures to promote disability, gender and race tolerance and the elimination of discrimination.

