# ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. **Policy Statement**

1.1 St Austell Town Council is committed to pursuing an equal opportunities approach in the employment of its staff and the way in which services are provided for the public.

1.2 St Austell Town Council recognises its statutory duties under legislation in terms of service provision and employment and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy.

1.3 The Council is committed to promoting equal access to services and facilities and equal treatment for all employees or job applicants irrespective of:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- race;
- religion/belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- marriage/civil partnership;
- pregnancy/maternity; and
- caste;

which are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and that this is managed in such a way that St Austell Town Council complies with Equal Opportunities legislation and Codes of Practice.

2 **Links with other Council Policies and Strategies**

2.1 The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is one of its most important policies and underpins all other corporate policies, procedures and strategies, therefore providing a strong foundation for Equality of Opportunity in the Council and the services it provides.

2.2 This policy links to the Council's other Human Resources / Employment Policies and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy.

3 **Equality of Opportunity in Service Delivery**

3.1 St Austell Town Council is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and access to its facilities.

3.2 The Council will achieve this by:

- recognising and accepting that particular individuals or groups are denied equality through direct or indirect discrimination either intentional or unintentional;
- providing regular training for all Councillors and employees, so that they have a good understanding of the diverse needs of different people;
- delivering services which are relevant, of the highest possible quality and accessible;
- providing clear information about our services and facilities and where necessary making them available in a variety of formats;
- ensuring that our complaints and feedback procedures are accessible and effective;
- assessing the impact of and monitoring its services to ensure that they do not discriminate and identify where improvements can be made; and
- ensuring that all employees understand what their roles and responsibilities are in relation to equality in service provision.

## 4 Equality of Opportunity in Employment, Training and Organisational Development

4.1 St Austell Town Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity. All employees will have a part to play in achieving this and the Council will ensure that individuals are aware of their personal responsibility to follow and support the Equal Opportunities Policy.

4.2 Scope - All employees, whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff, and all job applicants. This policy has particular relevance to those concerned with recruitment, training and promotion.

4.3 No employee or prospective employee should receive unfair or unlawful treatment due to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion / belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage / civil partnership, caste and pregnancy / maternity. St Austell Town Council will seek to identify and act upon all unlawful discrimination which denies individual opportunity on any of the criteria mentioned above. Employees and applicants have the right to complain about unfair discrimination through the appropriate procedures.

4.4 The Council will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that its recruitment and selection policies and procedures are equitable and fair so that the best people are appointed to deliver its services;
- Only considering applicants for jobs on the basis of their relevant experience, skills and abilities. A requirement for occupational

qualifications will only be used for specific posts when absolutely necessary;

- ensuring that all employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they are part-time, full-time, or employed on a temporary basis;
- ensuring that employment policies and opportunities are of the highest possible quality and that equality, equity and consistency are embedded in practices, pay and conditions;
- making sure that equal consideration is given to people's needs and develop flexible and responsive employment opportunities to tackle those needs;
- encouraging and supporting employees to reach their full potential within the resources the Council has available to it;
- taking appropriate action against incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination and offering support and advice to victims or witnesses to incidents; and
- taking disciplinary action against employees who discriminate against people who work for the Council or who seek employment with the Council.

## 5 Contractors and Suppliers

5.1 St Austell Town Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all contractors and suppliers carrying out work on behalf of the Council have the appropriate policies and working practices in place to ensure Equality of Opportunity and to comply with the requisite equality legislation and guidance.

5.2 The Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that:

- contractors and providers have employment policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate; and
- monitor whether contracts and commissioning arrangements meet these equality commitments.

## 6 Management and Supervision of this Policy

### 6.1 Council and Committees

Strong leadership is essential to ensure that this policy is embedded at strategic and service delivery levels of the Council. Whilst the Full Council will be ultimately responsible for implementation of this policy, ongoing review of the policy will be the responsibility of the Finance and General Purposes Committee with day to day implementation and monitoring the responsibility of the Staffing Committee in respect of staffing and performance management issues and the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Community Committee in terms of Council facilities.

### 6.2 Councillors

Councillors have overall responsibility for the direction and scrutiny of this policy and will ensure that the principles of fairness and equality guide the decision making process.

6.3 **Line Managers and Supervisors**

It is the responsibility of managers/supervisors to:

(i) ensure that within their areas of responsibilities, the standards established within this policy are followed;
(ii) contribute to the development of equal opportunities action plan;
(iii) review the effectiveness of the policy and all related action plans and communicate their views to senior management.

6.4 **Employees**

All employees must:

(i) co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity;
(ii) report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices;
(iii) not persuade or attempt to persuade others to practice unlawful discrimination;
(iv) not victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence on discrimination;
(v) not harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of their race, gender etc;
(vi) not pressurise job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying or taking up a post.

6.5 **Breaches of Policy** - any breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure. Serious offences, such as harassment and victimisation, will be treated as gross misconduct.

7 **Complaints**

7.1 Any employee who has a concern regarding the application of this policy should make use of the Council's grievance procedure.

7.2 **Existing Employees** – employees wishing to raise a grievance alleging unlawful discrimination during an internal selection procedure should discuss this with the Town Clerk in the first instance. An appeal, where necessary, should be made to the Chairman of the Staffing Committee. An investigation will then be conducted by a senior officer who has not been previously involved in the selection procedure and will report to the Staffing Committee. The Staffing Committee's ruling will be final. The employee will receive written notification as to the outcome.

7.3 **Prospective Employees** – any prospective employee wishing to raise a complaint should do so, in writing, to the Town Clerk within 15 working

days, at the latest, of the alleged incident. An investigation will then be conducted by a senior officer who has not been previously involved in the selection procedure and will report to the Staffing Committee. The Staffing Committee's ruling will be final. The individual will receive written notification as to the outcome.

## 8 Information and Training

8.1 Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion / belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage / civil partnership, caste and pregnancy / maternity.

8.2 The Council will:

- seek to ensure that all employees are developed by the provision of appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in line with organisational needs;
- provide training that complies with the Council's Equalities Policies;
- Include a copy of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy as part of the induction programme / documentation;
- Provide equalities awareness training as part of its corporate learning and organisational development programme; and
- include equalities training as part of its Member development programme.

## 9 Monitoring Arrangements

9.1 The Council will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Policy. Where monitoring identifies an under-representation of a particular group(s), the Council will develop an action plan to address the imbalance.

9.2 Committee responsibility for monitoring is detailed in para 6.1. above.

## 10 Alternative Formats

10.1 The Equality Act 2010 – copies of this document in large print (A3 Format) or larger font size, or recorded onto tape as a 'talking book' can be made available for those with sight impairment on request from the Council Office or by telephoning 01726 829854 or e-mailing david.pooley@staustell-tc.gov.uk.

10.2 The Council can also arrange to provide versions in other languages.

## 11 Freedom of Information

11.1 In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website www.staustelltowncouncil.com and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Office.