GRINDON & THORPE THEWLES PARISH COUNCIL
EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY POLICY

DEFINITIONS

Equality is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.

Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on those differences.

Equality of opportunity is about ensuring everybody has an equal chance to take up opportunities and to make full use of the opportunities on offer and to fulfil their potential.

INTRODUCTION

Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council (the Council) has committed itself to a policy of equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination, not only in its employment and human resource practices, but also in all the services for which it is responsible.

Although the overall responsibility for achieving, promoting and providing equality of opportunity rests with the employer (the Council) all employees have a responsibility to own and promote the Policy. The active cooperation of Parish Councillors and all employees is, therefore, essential for the success of the Council's Equalities Policy.

This document, therefore, outlines the Council's Equalities Policy, the Council's obligations under existing legislation and its intention to abide by and comply, not only with the requirements, but also the spirit of the legislation.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY

The Policy applies to all those who are employed by the Council.

Parish Councillors will be expected to act in accordance with the Council's Equalities Policy and in line with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and Pledge on Civility and Respect.

In addition, the Council will seek to ensure that individuals, voluntary organisations, firms and institutions, acting on behalf of or as agents of the Council do not practice unlawful and unfair acts of discrimination.

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT POLICY STATEMENT

1. Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council (the Council) positively supports the principle of equal opportunities and diversity in the provision of services and employment. It opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination.

2 Equality of opportunity means that residents, service users, job seekers, contractors, suppliers and employees will be treated equally and fairly regardless of their colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age, or any other unjustifiable criterion.

3 The Council welcomes and values the diversity of its workforce, the people and the communities in the Parish and of the people who use our services. The Council is seeking to ensure that through its policies, service delivery, employment, contracting and funding practices, we achieve the highest possible equality standards.

Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council's Equalities Policy has been developed in accordance with the following legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 & 1986
- Race Relations Acts 1976 & 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by the activities, policies and services provided.

The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Duty on Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council to work to:

a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who don't share it
c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who don't share it

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council, in the delivery of its services and in its employment of staff, will be proactive in eliminating discrimination on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexuality, disability, age, or any other unjustifiable criterion.

Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council will take appropriate action to assist disabled persons to have access to our services and to job opportunities that arise within the Council.

DEFINITION OF TERMS AS USED IN THIS POLICY

This policy document refers to categories of discrimination which are defined as follows:

- **Direct Discrimination** results from treating a person less favourably on the grounds of gender, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, sexuality, marital status, responsibility for dependants, religion, trade union activity or age (up to 65) or any protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination** arises where a condition or requirement, although applied equally to the above groups listed in the Policy Statement, has the effect of excluding, penalising or treating less favourably any of these groups, and cannot be shown to be justifiable and will be to the detriment of those who cannot comply with it.
- **Discrimination by Victimisation** this form of discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favourably than others are (or would be) treated in the same circumstances, because they have or intend to do (or the discriminator knows/suspects that they have or intend to do) any of the following in relation to the discriminator or any other person:
  - take proceedings under the legislation
  - given evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the legislation
  - otherwise done anything under or by reference to the legislation
  - alleged that the discriminator or any other person has committed an act which would amount to a contravention of the legislation.

Although under the legislation the acts prohibited by the victimisation provisions cover only the range of activities that the legislation covers, the Council considers any form of victimisation on the grounds of race, gender, disability etc. to be in breach of this policy.

Harassment / bullying is defined as any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, directed at an individual, that is found to be offensive or objectionable to the recipient, and that might threaten an employee's job security or create an intimidating environment.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The following sections outline the steps which the Council will take to develop and implement good employment and human resource practices in pursuit of its Equalities Policy.

Recruitment, Selection and Progression

All job advertisements will include the following statement:

'We are working towards being an Equal Opportunities Employer'

The Council will take steps to ensure that:

- all sections of the community and the Council's workforce are fully informed of job opportunities within the Council and are encouraged to apply
- the criteria for selection and progression are determined solely on the basis of the requirements of the job
- people are selected and appointed solely on the basis of their relevant, assessable experience and abilities
- all members of selection and interviewing panels will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the Council's Equalities Policy
- all job descriptions and person specifications will make reference to the Equalities policies

- that a specific question to test the understanding of equalities is asked at interview or during the selection process.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Observance of the Council's Equalities Policy is a condition of employment.

The Council will review existing locally determined terms and conditions of service to ensure that they do not discriminate and will amend and develop where necessary to bring them into line with its Equalities Policy.

The Council will take whatever action is open to it, in the consultative and negotiating process, to ensure that nationally determined terms and conditions of service do not discriminate and are in line with its own Equal Opportunities Policy.

Dismissal and Redundancies

The Council will ensure that:

- dismissal and redundancy decisions are not made on the basis of gender, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, pregnancy or maternity, sexuality, marital status, responsibility for dependants, religion, trade union activity or age or any protected characteristic.

Discipline

- Acts of discrimination, victimisation and harassment as defined in this document, perpetrated by an employee of the Council against other employees, clients or members of the public will result in disciplinary action. This will also apply to employees who attempt to induce other employees to discriminate, victimise or harass.
- Failure to comply with or adhere to the Council's Equalities Policy will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Grievance

- The Council will treat seriously and take prompt action on any employee grievance concerning discrimination, victimisation or harassment.
- The Council will encourage the development of appropriate support systems and procedures for employees who wish to pursue such grievances.
- In addition to the grounds covered by the existing grievance procedure, an employee who considers that she/he has been subjected to discrimination, victimisation or harassment by another employee will have recourse to the grievance procedure.

The Working Environment

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 2 (2), imposes on an employer the duty of the provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe, without risk to health and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work.

The Council will take steps to ensure that:

- it will provide a safe and accessible working environment for existing and potential employees it will provide equipment and facilities, including adaptations to the workplace to enable people with disabilities to develop their full potential
- action will be taken to protect employees who are at risk of violence while carrying out their duties.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Overall responsibility for implementation of the policy resides with the Council (the employer) the responsibility for day-to-day operation of the policy rests with the Parish Clerk.
The Parish Clerk must ensure that all employees, service providers or agents are aware of the policy and understand their role in its implementation.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential and integral element of the Council's Equalities Policy. The Council will develop an effective monitoring system in order to examine the effective implementation of its policy and to assess whether it is achieving its aims and objectives, and to plan future priorities and strategies.
The responsibility for monitoring the Council's Policy will rest with the Parish Clerk.

REVIEWING THIS POLICY

No policy document is static and must be subject to changes. It is the Council's intention to keep this policy and its existing codes of practice, management guidelines, instructions, procedures, etc under review, to ensure that the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity as set out in its policy statement is adopted and implemented.

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