



# Equality & Diversity Policy

**Draft January 2024**

## **1. Definitions**

Clerk and/or Proper Officer – The Clerk to Market Rasen Town Council (MRTC)

The Council – MRTC

Members – Councillors of MRTC

## **2. What is Equality and Diversity?**

Equality, or equal opportunities, is based on a legal framework that aims to protect individuals from discrimination. The focus is on fair treatment for all, and not treating someone less favourably because of their race, gender, disability etc. This does not mean treating everyone the same; people are different and the issues relating to different groups require separate consideration.

Diversity goes beyond equality and the groups covered by anti-discrimination legislation. It refers to 'difference' and is about recognising and valuing the differences and individual contribution that people make, whether at work or in the community. It is concerned with having a workforce that is motivated by being valued and treated with respect, and ensuring that all people maximise their potential and contribution.

For the Council, this includes working towards having a Council that is representative of the community it serves, providing accessible and relevant services that respond to the Parishioner's needs, and creating an inclusive environment. However, it is not a replacement for equality or equal opportunities and both need to be considered together.

## **3. Aims**

By adopting and implementing this Equality and Diversity Policy, MRTC acknowledge their responsibility to address the imbalances caused by discrimination and disadvantage. In doing so, the Council will ensure that all communities have opportunities to work with the Council, access the Council's services and be involved in what the Council does. The Council will pursue this aim through continuously striving to improve the way in which it:

- Recruits, employs and develops employees;
- Provides services;

- Involves communities;
- Works with other organisations.

**MRTC aim to:**

- Promote equality and diversity in employment and in learning and development;
- Provide services that are accessible according to need;
- Involve all sections of the community in the planning, design, delivery and assessment of our services;
- Work in partnership with others to improve the lives of the people who live, work, study in and visit the Parish.

**MRTC believe:**

Responsibility for equality and diversity is wider than the areas covered by current laws.

The Council are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between people from different groups, in employment and in our services, on the grounds of:

- Race, nationality, national or ethnic origin;
- Gender, gender identity;
- Marital status, including civil partnerships;
- Disability;
- Age;
- Sexual orientation;
- Religion or belief, including the belief in no religion and non-religious belief;
- Caring responsibilities and family circumstances;
- Social class, income, or housing circumstances;
- Membership or non-membership of trade unions and involvement or non-involvement in trade union activity;
- Any other status as identified within the European Convention of Human Rights.

**MRTC will do this by:**

- Meeting all our responsibilities for equality and diversity in the relevant legislation and codes of practice;
- Mainstreaming equality and diversity into everything we do. This means making sure all aspects of our work, such as our policies, strategies, plans, practices and procedures, structures and systems, reflect and incorporate appropriate equality objectives and targets;
- Challenging discrimination and tackling all forms of bullying and harassment;
- Taking positive action to address social, economic and geographical disadvantage.

**4. Responsibilities**

The ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this Equality and Diversity Policy rests with the Council.

All elected councillors (Members) have responsibility for the ownership and direction of this policy.

All employees will have access to, understand and implement this policy through their work and actions.

## **5. What to do if something goes wrong**

### **Members of the public**

If a member of the public considers that the council are not providing a service in line with this policy or thinks they have been unfairly treated in any way, they can raise a complaint. MRTC's complaints procedure explains how to do this.

### **Council employees**

If an employee is concerned about any equality or diversity issue relating to their employment, they can speak to their line manager.

If an employee feels embarrassed, humiliated, offended, distressed, alarmed, apprehensive or fearful because of someone else's behaviour towards them, they have the right to have that behaviour stopped. The Council's Bullying and Harassment policy explains how to go about this. Employees also have a right to take up issues through the Council's Grievance Procedure.

If an employee is a member of a Trade Union, they can contact them for advice and support on any of these issues.

## **6. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by Market Rasen Town Council.

## **7. Glossary of Terms**

### **Equality**

Equality or equal opportunities, is based on a legal framework that aims to protect individuals from discrimination. The legislation covers employment and services.

The focus is on fair treatment for all, and not treating someone less favourably because of their race, gender, disability etc. This does not mean treating everyone

the same; people are different and the issues relating to different groups require separate consideration. The law allows for positive action to be taken to assist certain groups to overcome past disadvantage or under-representation in the workforce.

### **Diversity**

Diversity goes beyond equality and the groups covered by anti-discrimination legislation. It refers to 'difference' and is about recognising and valuing the differences and individual contribution that people make, whether at work or in the community. It is about having a workforce that is motivated by being valued and treated with respect, and ensuring that all people maximise their potential and contribution. For the Council, this includes working towards having a Council that is representative of the community we serve, providing accessible and relevant services that respond to the customer's needs, and creating an inclusive environment. However, it is not a replacement for equality or equal opportunities.

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is about people being thought of as having less worth or value, being treated less favourably than others or given fewer opportunities. Discrimination has its roots in stereotyping and prejudice, and fundamentally between whether a person belongs to the ingroup (us) or the out-group (them). Sometimes discrimination arises because people have decided that some people 'deserve' to be treated less well than others (because they're not part of the in-group). In other cases, people make assumptions that discriminate, for example that older workers don't learn as quickly as younger ones, or that disabled workers take more sick leave. Discrimination can be direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional. Individuals, groups or whole organisations can be discriminatory. Perception is just as important as intention. It is vital that we take seriously the views of people who experience discrimination.

### **Positive Action**

Positive action means taking steps to overcome past disadvantage or underrepresentation, in a way that helps put everyone on an equal footing. This might involve advertising to encourage job applicants from a particular under-represented group to apply, or training to help develop the potential of under-represented groups. Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination.

### **Prejudice**

Prejudice means to pre-judge. It refers to negative attitudes towards the members of a particular group based solely on their membership of that group, e.g. because of their gender, sexual orientation etc. Prejudice often involves stereotyping and acting negatively towards a particular group or treating them less favourably (discrimination).

### **Stereotyping**

This is the belief that all members of a particular group share certain traits or characteristics. It involves over-generalisations and is often linked to prejudice and discrimination.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, abuse of power or authority, which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees.

### **Harassment**

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It may be related to a particular personal characteristic, e.g. gender, race, age etc. It may be persistent or an isolated incident. What matters is the effect on the victim, not the intent of the perpetrator.

To review in January 2027 dependant upon amendments to legislation.