



East Meon Parish Council - Equality & Diversity Policy

1. Policy Statement

EMPC 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.

EMPC recognises its statutory duties under legislation in terms of service provision and employment and is committed to meeting them by complying with this policy.

EMPC 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 or pregnancy/maternity and will ensure that in promoting such access will comply with Equal Opportunities Legislation and Codes of Practice.

2. Scope and Application

Councillors, employees and those acting on behalf of EMPC are responsible for implementing and supporting equality and diversity and have a duty to challenge all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

EMPC acknowledges its responsibility to promote and encourage equality in the provision of services and employment practices and will include appropriate obligations in contracts with other organisation and persons commissioned or contracted to deliver services on the Parish Council's behalf.

3. Equality of Opportunity in Service Delivery

EMPC is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and access to its facilities. The Parish 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 services and facilities and where necessary making them available in a variety of formats
- Ensuring that complaints and feedback procedures are accessible and effective
- Monitoring its services to ensure that they do not discriminate identifying where improvements can be made
- Ensuring that all employees understand what their roles and responsibilities are in relation to equality in service provision.

- Ensuring that, when on Parish Council business, Councillors do not use, or encourage use of, inappropriate stereotypes relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership or pregnancy/maternity.

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

EMPC is committed to providing equality of opportunity. All employees will have a part to play in achieving this and EMPC will ensure that individuals are aware of their personal responsibility to follow and support the Equality & Diversity Policy.

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, or pregnancy/maternity. EMPC will seek to identify and challenge unlawful discrimination, which denies individual opportunity to anyone falling within the criteria mentioned above. Employees and applicants have the right to complain about unfair discrimination through the appropriate procedures. EMPC 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 unless a genuine occupational qualification exists for specific posts
- 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, so that equality, equity and consistency are embedded in practices, pay and conditions
- Making sure that equal consideration is given to people's needs developing flexible and responsive employment opportunities to address 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
- Taking disciplinary action against employees who discriminate against people who work for the Parish Council or who seek employment with the Parish Council

5. Contractors and Suppliers

EMPC will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all contractors and suppliers carrying out work on behalf of the Parish 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. The Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that:

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

6. Management and Supervision of this Policy

EMPC will take all reasonable steps to ensure equality of opportunity and to prevent the discrimination, harassment or victimisation by any employee, councillor or organisation delivering services on its behalf. The Parish Council requires its employees and councillors, irrespective of their position on the Parish Council, to be responsible for ensuring they read and understand the relevant policies and are involved in their creation and implementation.

Councillors

Strong leadership is essential to ensure that this policy is embedded at strategic and service delivery levels of the Parish Council. 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 and meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Human Rights Act.

Clerk

It is the responsibility of the Parish Clerk to:

- Ensure that within devolved areas of responsibilities, the standards established within this policy are followed
- Advise the Parish Council on changing legislative standards as regards this policy
- Ensure EMPC addresses all of the following forms of discrimination:-
 - Direct discrimination
 - Discrimination arising out of disability
 - Combined discrimination
 - Discrimination by association
 - Perceptive discrimination
 - Victimisation

7. Information and Training

EMPC is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of training opportunities. Employees and Councillors will facilitate appropriate training regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, or pregnancy/maternity.

EMPC will:

- Seek to ensure that all employees have access to the provision of appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in line with organisational needs
- Facilitate training that complies with the Council's Equalities Policy
- Include a copy of the Council's Equalities Policy as part of the induction programme documentation

8. Legislation

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act replaced existing anti-discrimination laws with a single act.

The main provisions of the Equality Act include:

- Protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment, services, public functions and premises
- Protection from discrimination by association and perception
- Enhanced protection from third party harassment to all equalities groups
- Allowing employers to take positive action in recruitment and promotion
- Requiring employers to report on gender pay gaps and making pay secrecy clauses unenforceable
- Requiring public bodies to take account of socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions

- Extending the existing race, gender and disability duties on public bodies to age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender and reassignment and sexual orientation requiring public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between all persons
 - Foster good relations between all persons

Human Rights Act 1998

Rights include freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and the right to privacy and not be discriminated against in respect of these rights and freedoms.

Adopted: March 2023

Date of next review: March 2025