

Witham Town Council: Equality Policy

Policy Overview

Witham Town Council recognises that many individuals and communities experience unlawful and unfair discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave, their age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or socio-economic background. The Council believes that equality for all is a basic human right and actively opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. The Council celebrates the diversity of Essex and is striving to promote and reflect that diversity within our organisation.

The Council's vision for equality is to ensure that fairness is part of everything the Council does.

Legal and Policy Framework

Witham Town Council recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149, and related Codes of Practice. The Council will have due regard to its duties to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Council notes that the Equality Act 2010 identifies nine protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Witham Town Council recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty and will also have regard, where still relevant, to earlier legislation and case law, including:

- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (amended 1986)
- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Race Relations Act 1976, 2000 (amended) and 2003 (amended)
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and amendments
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- All relevant UK and retained European Regulations and Directives

The Council is committed to:

- taking into account the equality impacts of our emerging proposals and seek to mitigate any adverse impacts where possible
- ensuring that equality is at the heart of our thinking and is reflected in our commissioning strategies and policies.
- consulting and engaging with our communities taking into account the diverse needs of our residents and businesses

- identifying, and where possible addressing the root causes of disadvantage and discrimination, including direct, indirect and discrimination by association.
- embedding equalities in all the Council does and making it part of the council's business as usual practice
- recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects the communities the council serves and ensuring that council employees feel valued and respected.
- fostering good relations between different groups and communities.

All of the council's employees shall carry out their duties in line with Witham Town Council's commitment to achieving excellence in relation to equality, both in the workplace and across Witham.

The Council is committed to developing a culture that embeds the effective management of equality and diversity in all that the Council does. The Council will provide the necessary resources and leadership to make this happen.

Councillors and officers are expected to demonstrate visible leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion, challenge discrimination and harassment, and act as role models for respectful behaviour.

Managers are responsible for promoting inclusive practices within their teams, addressing concerns promptly and ensuring that policies (including recruitment, performance management and grievance/disciplinary procedures) are applied fairly.

Priorities, Monitoring and Review

Witham Town Council's equalities priorities will be kept under review and progress will be monitored against the achievement of the objectives.

For this policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed to, and involved in its delivery. The Council's goal is to work towards a just society, free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice. The Council aims to embed this in all council policies, procedures, day-to-day practices and external relationships.

Policy Adopted: Full Council 28th June 2021

Reviewed: Policy and Resources Committee March 23rd March 2026

Review Date: Policy and Resources Committee March 2028