**BILLINGE PARISH COUNCIL - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

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**Our Commitment**

The council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.  
This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.  
Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

**The Law**

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics”.  
Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.  
The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

**Types of Unlawful Discrimination**

* **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.
* **Indirect discrimination** is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals with a relevant protected characteristic and puts them at a disadvantage.
* **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person’s dignity or creates an offensive environment.
* **Associative discrimination** is where someone is treated unfairly because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.
* **Perceptive discrimination** is discrimination based on a perception that a person has a protected characteristic, even if they do not.
* **Third-party harassment** occurs when an employee is harassed by someone outside the council (e.g. a customer or contractor).
* **Victimisation** is treating someone badly because they made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010.
* **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** occurs when an employer fails to adapt the workplace for a disabled employee, putting them at a disadvantage.

**Equal Opportunities in Employment**

The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, training, pay and benefits, and discipline.

**Recruitment**

Job specifications will focus on necessary requirements only. Candidates will be assessed objectively and reasonable adjustments made where required.

**Working Practices**

The council will consider the impact of standard working conditions and agree to reasonable requests for changes unless it has justifiable reasons not to. It will also make reasonable adjustments where needed for disabled employees.

**Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

The council will monitor the composition of its workforce and job applicants in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and disability. Any patterns of concern will be addressed.

**Dignity at Work**

The council has a separate dignity at work policy dealing with bullying and harassment complaints.

**People Not Employed by the Council**

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against service users. Bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others should be reported to the council.

**Training**

The council will provide training or raise awareness of equal opportunities for those involved in recruitment and other relevant decision-making.  
All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities and managers may receive additional training in handling complaints.

**Your Responsibilities**

All employees must support equal opportunities and avoid discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable for unlawful discrimination.  
Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal for gross misconduct.

**Grievances**

If you believe you’ve been unlawfully discriminated against, use the council’s grievance procedure. Bullying and harassment complaints will follow the dignity at work policy.  
Complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with fairly. No employee will be penalised for raising a complaint unless it was made in bad faith.

**Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated in line with changes in the law or workforce data.  
Monitoring information will be used appropriately and in accordance with data protection legislation.

*This is a non-contractual procedure and may be updated from time to time.*