
Corporate Equality Policy

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council





Change Record

Version	Date	Amended By	Change Notes
0.1	21/09/2020	Lynne Mitchell	Added section 2.4 paragraph 11 Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism council definitions.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document details the councils Corporate Equality Policy & Procedure

1.2 Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to:

- Any permanent or temporary employee of council excluding Contractors/Agency Workers who are the employees of third parties.

This document supersedes any previously existing or alternative policies, agreements or arrangements relating to Corporate Equality Policy & Procedure at council.

This policy links with the following internal Policies:

- Equality in Employment Policy

1.3 Contractual Status

The councils reserve the right to revise, withdraw or replace the content of this policy at any time and to introduce new policies from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the organisations or new legislation. This policy refers to employees, but the standards outlined should be adhered to by everyone working for the councils, such as casual or agency workers or contractors.

The Corporate Equality Policy & Procedure will be regularly reviewed to ensure legislative compliance and best practice and may therefore be subject to adjustment from time to time.

All changes to council's HR Policies & Procedures will be updated on HR page of the Company intranet, advised through general email notification and, where necessary, team briefings or other face to face communications to assist understanding and application.

1.4 Relevant legislation

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018



1.5 Alternative formats

Alternative formats of this publication can be made available on request. These include large print, braille, audio, email, easy read and other languages.

Please contact the HR team via email at: hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk

or

the Assurance team, Equalities officer via email: equalities@southandvale.gov.uk



2 Policy

2.1 Statement of Commitment

1. South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council are committed to equality. We will have due regard to the general duty under the Equality Act 2010 when exercising our functions in order to:
 - eliminate any potential for unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity in service delivery and employment between people who share a protected characteristic¹ and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not².

We are committed to meeting our specific duties to:

2. Prepare one or more equality objectives every four years that are specific and measurable to meet any of the general duties in the Equalities Act 2010 (particularly in relation to those who share a protected characteristic)
3. Publish information annually relating to our employees and people who are affected by our policies and practices³ to demonstrate compliance with the general duty.
4. The councils are committed to meeting their legal duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 in service delivery and employment. When making decisions, developing policies or strategies, designing processes and practices we will ensure, so far as is possible, that they are compatible with the rights under the Convention of Human Rights⁴. It is illegal to discriminate on a wide range of grounds including sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

¹ A 'protected characteristic' under the Act is age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

² Bullets two and three do not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership

³ Particularly relating to people who share a relevant protected characteristic

⁴ Difference between Human Rights Act and Human Rights Convention is that the Convention on human rights is a treaty: an international agreement that was signed by all 47 member states of the Council of Europe. It was entered into force in 1953



5. The councils recognise this means ensuring that different people receive services, consultation and employment opportunities in a fair and equal way. The councils' therefore commit to recognising, accommodating and valuing diversity and human rights across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, and to incorporating this commitment into the planning and delivery of our services and functions. This is demonstrated through our commitment to delivering against the Equality Framework for Local Government, agreeing our equality objectives and this policy.

2.2 Assessing the impact of Service and Employment Design

6. We carry out Equality Impact Checks (EICs) on new policies, strategies and significant changes to services, in order to ensure service and employment opportunities the councils' provide and the policies or strategies they have in place do not discriminate, and that they advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations between different groups of people and take account of human rights.
7. The councils consider the impact that budget decisions have on vulnerable groups and publish the results of these assessments and take action to mitigate the impact. We also aim to ensure equalities is considered in our committee reports, service team projects and planning applications to ensure they pay due regard to the public sector equality duties.

2.3 Collecting monitoring data to understand our communities

Service user data

8. The councils' routinely collect equality monitoring data. We use this data where appropriate to inform our development of new policies/services and to inform our day to day service delivery.

District data service

9. The councils', in partnership with the other Oxfordshire district councils fund a data analyst service. Highlighting trends, geographical and other variations in social, economic and environmental data, Disseminating results from the Census 2011 and other major data resources such as the Indices of Deprivation. The Data provided helps the councils' to better understand the demographics of communities we serve, using the information to help inform service delivery, policy and decision making.



Employment data

10. We monitor performance by protected characteristic across a number of aspects of employment and training.⁵ These indicators help us ensure our employment practices are accessible for potential and current employees, according to race, disability, gender and age, and that all staff have the same opportunities. Staff are also encouraged to provide information relating to their sexuality, religion or belief and carer status. This information along with any proposed action to improve access is published annually, on our websites under South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils HR Equality Information – Employee Data followed by the relevant year.

2.4 Working in partnership to tackle prejudice and support communities

11. The Councils have formally recognised that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Antisemitism is the most widely accepted and recognized definition of anti-Jewish racism. It states that: Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of Antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPG) definition of Islamophobia says that: Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

By using these definitions, it helps to understand, identify, and tackle Antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The councils recognise the right to freedom of speech and freedom of religion as fundamentals, but freedom of speech is not an unlimited right, and should not be used to advocate racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The council's policy is therefore to:

- condemn all hate crimes and deplore the rise in hate crimes against members of the Jewish and Muslim communities in Britain;
- condemn inflammatory rhetoric in political discourse that is antisemitic or Islamophobic;
- adopt the IHRA definition of Antisemitism in full and without amendment;
- adopt the APPG definition of Islamophobia in full and without amendment;

⁵ applications for employment, applicants short listed, staff in post, applications/approval for training, staff ceasing employment, workforce representation by job group, staff subject to/involved in disciplinary and grievance procedures



12. The South and Vale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) reviews the prevalence of hate crime and hate incidents in the districts as part of its quarterly performance monitoring with the view to agreeing remedial action if a significant issue is identified. The councils also work in partnership to improve community cohesion and reduce tensions by supporting the CSP's monthly Joint Tasking Meetings, where complex community safety issues are discussed and actioned.
13. In 2018/19 the CSP helped set up 12 hate crime reporting centres in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, in partnership with Citizens Advice, Wantage IAC, both district councils, Soha and Sovereign. If people don't feel able to report hate crime/incidents to the police, this service provides them with an alternative where they can speak in confidence to a specially trained member of staff. Staff will talk to the individual about the incident and can offer to report it to the police on their behalf. They will also refer them to Victims First, a service dedicated to ensuring that victims or witnesses receive the support they need to cope with and recover from their experience.
14. As members of the CSP, the councils support projects that build community cohesion and break down barriers to reduce crime and the fear of crime. For example, the community safety team has worked with other agencies to set up the Safe Places scheme in both districts which helps vulnerable people feel confident and safe whilst out in the community. If someone feels they are being abused or harassed whilst they are out in the community, they have a safe place to go. Window stickers are displayed in public places (shops, libraries, community centres) to identify themselves as Safe Places.
15. The councils' community safety team co-ordinates the installation of guardcams (covert cameras) for vulnerable people in response to incidents of ASB, burglary, domestic abuse and other criminal activity. These cameras are funded by the CSP and have been installed to support victims of hate incidents.
16. They promote the annual hate crime awareness week to staff and local communities

2.5 Consultation and engagement

17. Provide support for Community Led and Neighbourhood Plans which help bring communities together.
18. The councils' use a variety of methods to consult and engage with members of the public to ensure that no groups is excluded from taking part.

2.6 Using Procurement to Advance Equality of Opportunity

19. We aim to ensure equality considerations are included at relevant stages of the procurement process through:
 - equality requirements included within our procurement policy



- standard equality and diversity clauses in all major contracts, relevant contract specifications and other tender documents
- review of contractor performance.

2.7 Equalities Training

20. The councils' are committed to ensuring that staff and councillors have the relevant skills and knowledge to ensure they do not discriminate against, harass or victimise customers or colleagues and seek ways to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.
21. All staff are required to attend mandatory equality and diversity training. We also offer this in-house training to councillors which focuses on how they can take account of the public sector equality duties within their role.

2.8 The Equality Framework for Local Government

22. We are committed to achieving the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local government in order to mainstream equalities in everything we do. The councils are working at the 'Achieving' level of the Framework⁶.

2.9 Human Resources Policies

23. The councils' have a separate Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy which incorporates equal pay and dignity at work. We also have other policies that ensure fair and equal treatment of staff who share a protected characteristic e.g. recruitment and selection, parental and carers leave and maternity, paternity and adoption. All policies are reviewed regularly.

2.10 Monitoring Complaints

24. The councils' monitor complaints that relate to potential discrimination and harassment and have processes in place to ensure that people with disabilities and limited English can access the process in a way that meets their needs.

⁶ Levels of the framework – 'developing' 'achieving' 'excellent'



2.11 How we monitor and review our Policy

25. The councils' cabinet is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the planning and provision of our services meet the needs of all our residents and employees and for approving our Corporate Equality Policy.
26. Our councillors and senior management team are responsible for monitoring the progress we make on promoting equality through an annual update report.
27. All our staff and councillors are encouraged to promote equality of opportunity in everything they do, ensure they eliminate all potential forms of discrimination and harassment and foster good relations between different groups of people.
28. In addition, some members of staff have specific responsibilities with regards to this policy:
 - accountability for our Corporate Equality Policy rests with the Chief Executive
 - the Equalities Officer is responsible for coordinating, and monitoring progress on our equalities programme and for reviewing this policy.
29. The policy will be reviewed in three years' time or as the result of new legislation.