

Saxtead Parish Council

Equal Opportunities Policy

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Saxtead Parish Council acknowledges that the United Kingdom is diverse in culture, race beliefs and religion, and believes that no individual or group of people should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, age, colour, race, nationality, racial or national origins, cultural heritage, disability, marital status, social background, sexual orientation or geographical location. The Council acknowledges that members of these groups are often under-represented, exposed to prejudice and stereotyping, and suffer various disadvantages within our society and that equality of opportunities is an integral part of our policy.

It is recognised that the Equality Act now identifies the various groups as “Protected Characteristics” and these are identified and discussed below and in this document: -

age

disability

gender reassignment

race

religion or belief

sex

sexual orientation

marriage and civil partnership

pregnancy and maternity

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy Statement is to set out clearly and fully the positive action that:

Saxtead Parish Council intends to combat direct and indirect discrimination in employment policy, management of the organisation, relationships with other bodies, and the services it provides to the community, community organisations and individuals.

Saxtead Parish Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity in all areas of its work. It aims to overcome discrimination on the grounds mentioned above. The Council recognises that positive steps need to be taken to ensure equality of provision in areas of representation, service provision, membership and access and will take action to make this policy effective.

SCOPE

The Aims of the Council

Our aim is to ensure that we become aware of discrimination and the problem it causes. The council will ensure that persons providing information in respect of discrimination will not be victimised.

Saxtead Parish Council will challenge practices, legislation and institutions, which seek to discriminate against or deny the rights of individuals or groups in any form.

Saxtead Parish Council will seek to take positive action to address the inequalities in our society.

Saxtead Parish Council will welcome discussion with people that have special requirements in order to identify how their needs can be met

Saxtead Parish Council is committed to the equal opportunities policy set out in this document and will work to develop, improve and monitor it.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Equal Opportunities Policy and Code of Practice

Legislation

The Council acknowledges the definitions of various groups of people who are vulnerable to discrimination as set out in the relevant legislation. The Council will support and implement the legislation and will work to ensure that no person protected by the legislation is discriminated against unlawfully, and that any positive obligations and duties are performed.

Saxtead Parish Council will seek advice on making information and resources accessible under the **Disability Discrimination Act and Equality Act** where it is feasible to do so.

The Council gives the following specific commitments.

Disabled

The Council recognises that the legislation applies to persons who are not apparently disabled or ill. This includes any person having a physical or mental

impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, which would include things like using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

Age

The Saxtead Parish Council believes that people of all ages have skills experiences and ideas, which are equally valid, and have valid needs, expectations and aspirations. However, there may be grounds to justify that different treatment because of age was not unlawful direct or indirect discrimination if it can be demonstrated that it was a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim.

Ethnic Minorities - Religion or belief

The Council endorses the right of each individual to his or her own religious beliefs or the absence of a belief.

The Council will be alert to any implications of its services and actions for potential unlawful discrimination. The Council will challenge racism in any form and will encourage residents to do the same.

Religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion, therefore persons are protected if they do not follow a certain religion or have no religion at all. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief. Discrimination because of religion or belief will be discouraged when both the discriminator and recipient are of the same religion or belief.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Sexist policies, practices and attitudes (including policies, practices and attitudes which may relate to sexual orientation) will be challenged, and residents will be encouraged to do the same.

Both men and women will be treated equally.

Bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian persons will be treated with respect and have equal opportunities to be involved in all activities.

Gender Reassignment.

The council provides equality for transsexual people. A transsexual person is recognised as someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. This includes a woman who decides to live as a man (or vice versa), but does not undergo any medical procedures.

Marriage and Civil partnership

The Council recognises persons, who are married or in a civil partnership, and will endeavour to protect against discrimination. Single people are not protected by the Equality Act.

Pregnancy and maternity

A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled.

During this period, pregnancy and maternity discrimination cannot be treated as sex discrimination. The Council will not take into account an employee's period of absence due to pregnancy-related illness when making a decision about her employment.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of the group to which they belong.

People's feelings and views will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used or tolerated, e.g. racist jokes or derogatory terminology.

No one will be harassed abused or intimidated on the ground that they belong to a vulnerable group. Incidents of harassment will be taken seriously, and The Saxtead Parish Council will undertake investigations of any complaints quickly, impartially and thoroughly.

RECORDS

Records are to be retained for 5 years minimum.

Reviewing the Policy

In line with the Saxtead Parish Council Standing Orders, all Policies will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis for applicability in line with changes in current legislation and requirements of the council.

This Policy was reviewed and adopted at a meeting held on...../...../.....

Signed _____ Parish Clerk

Signed _____ Chair of Saxtead Parish Council