EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY – FAIRNESS FOR ALL

1. Purpose of Policy

1.1 Telford & Wrekin Council believes in providing and promoting equality of opportunity and access for all in its role as an employer and major service provider. We intend this policy to improve employment opportunities for all and deliver improved services to our residents and service users. In doing so, it recognises and celebrates the contribution made by all communities to the borough’s economic, social and cultural well being.

1.2 We recognise our responsibility for achieving greater community cohesion in Telford & Wrekin and we will tackle social exclusion, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage.

1.3 Our policy defines the responsibilities of our elected members (councillors) and employees. These are designed to bring real benefits to the people living or working in Telford & Wrekin and those using our services.

1.4 This policy helps to promote social inclusion, service improvement, employment opportunities and equality and diversity.

1.5 For our policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed and involved in its delivery. Our goal is to work towards a society free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice.

2. Vision

2.1 The Council’s vision for Equality and Diversity is for a society which:

- Improves the quality of life for all by eliminating discrimination;
- Builds strong cohesive communities;
- Acknowledge that diversity brings an added value to the lives of all who live, work and travel to the area.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 We will regularly review all our policies, procedures and activities using the Council’s Impact Analysis process.

3.2 We will treat all people with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of everyone.

3.3 We will promote equality of opportunity and diversity; eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in service delivery, employment and in working with our partners and contractors; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between groups.

3.4 We will promote equality and diversity when awarding contracts to external organisations and agencies.
3.5 We will ensure that all promotional literature and publicity material are free from offensive images or language. Where appropriate the Council will produce information relating to its services in a variety of different formats.

3.6 We will be accountable for promoting equality of opportunity and respect for the diversity of everyone. This is in relation to the services we provide, our employment practices and arrangements we enter into with our partners making Telford & Wrekin a positive and place where our residents and employees can live and work in an environment that is safe, enjoyable and respectful.

3.7 We are committed to eliminating direct and indirect discrimination, including associative and perceptive discrimination, based on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and socio-economic disadvantage.

3.8 We will develop mainstreamed approaches to ensure that equality and diversity becomes an integral part of our employment practices, service delivery and performance management. We strive to attain the highest level by regularly evaluating and continually improving our services to ensure equality.

4. **Policy Areas**

4.1 The Council has identified 8 themes for equality and diversity work. These are:

4.1.1 **Leadership**

- In its leadership role, the Council has identified a Cabinet member to lead on the Council’s equality and diversity agenda.

- The Managing Director has lead responsibility for equality and diversity at officer level.

- The Council’s strategic direction for equality and diversity is managed by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team; they also have responsibility for the reviewing and monitoring of equality and diversity activities. The Community Engagement and Equalities Manager leads on the day-to-day development and implementation of corporate equality and diversity objectives.

4.1.2 **Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity**

- We are committed to making equality and diversity part of everything we do, including policy development, service delivery and employment.

- We will work towards incorporating any best practice approaches that will help us further enhance our reputation as an organisation and promote and practice its values of equality and diversity.

- We will deliver real and meaningful outcomes that make a difference to the community through our service provision and employment practices.
4.1.3 Equality and Diversity at Work

- The council is a major employer and as such recognises that a representative workforce provides greater sensitivity to the needs of our community.
- We will take action to achieve a workforce that reflects the community we serve.
- We monitor our recruitment and selection process to ensure there is no discrimination.
- All employees who participate in recruitment and selection processes are required to have completed dedicated training.
- All employees and job applicants will receive a summary copy of the equality and diversity policy statement.
- Equality and Diversity is a key feature of the Council’s induction programme we expect all training to follow best practice by integrating equality and diversity issues into delivery as appropriate.
- We encourage employees to participate in networks established to provide them support and enable contribution towards decision making and policy development.
- Our Human Resources policies support employees to positively manage their work, family and caring commitments.
- We will collate and publish annual data on important workforce inequalities that relate to all relevant protected characteristics. This will enable us to provide a broader picture of our employment performance.

4.1.4 Delivering Services

- We are committed to providing information and services that are accessible to all who need them.
- We will review Council services by assessing their impact to make sure they meet the needs of individuals and all the different sections of the community.
- We will collate and publish data about our decision making, on an annual basis. This will enable communities to judge how effectively we are eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations through our services and how we commission and procure.
- We will consult widely to improve our understanding of service needs. We will monitor and analyse services to ensure they are free from all forms of discrimination.
4.1.5 Harassment

- The Council has identified harassment as “unwanted conduct relating to the a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or humiliating environment for that individual”. It may be related to age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic disadvantage, or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. This type of behaviour will not be tolerated by the Council, and appropriate action will be taken if employees, customers or contractors and service providers, are found to be behaving in this way.

- We recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive and safe environment. The Council has a Dignity at Work Policy which provides a framework for managing instances of bullying or harassment.

- The Council works closely with partners to prevent and reduce hate crime, harassment and to respect cultures and lifestyles that support this work.

4.1.6 Consultation, Engagement and Involvement

- We promote opportunities to enable and encourage local people to engage with the Council and help shape our priorities, plans and services and aim to provide a safe and accessible environment for consultation.

- Corporate consultation activities are designed to be representative of the community as a whole.

- We listen to the views of our service users and residents and where appropriate work together to develop and evaluate our services.

- We will evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the processes that we undertake so that we can improve them.

4.1.7 Working with our Partners

- In engaging with others outside the Council, whether through partnerships, community engagement or contractual arrangements, we will influence them to adopt and use our Equality and Diversity Policy to support their service delivery, employment policies and practices.

4.1.8 Procurement

- The Council will strive to ensure that the purchasing of goods, services and facilities complies with our equality and diversity commitments and Procurement policy.

- We will engage with a diverse range of suppliers and ensure that all businesses have an equal opportunity of competing for Council contracts.
• We try wherever practicable to purchase from agencies or companies who share our values on equality of opportunity and diversity. Our commitment to equality and fair employment in procurement is incorporated in our **Equality in Procurement Guidelines.**

5. **Responsibilities**

5.1 Our Councillors (elected Members) have overall responsibility for the ownership and direction of this policy.

5.2 Our Senior Management Team has overall managerial responsibility for the direction of the policy and service management teams are accountable for its implementation and delivery.

5.3 All managers must be familiar with this policy. They must promote and monitor the policy actively throughout their teams and through their service deliver plans, employment practices and Personal Performance and Development discussions with their employees.

5.4 Every employee must take responsibility to understand and implement this policy through their work and actions – this will be supported by team discussions and training, all employees will need to take personal responsibility to promote this policy in their day-to-day dealings with customers, partners and each other.

5.5 Employees who fail to adhere to this policy may face disciplinary action. Some behaviour can be unlawful and may result in legal action being taken.

5.6 People associated with the Council, whether working for, with, or funded by Telford & Wrekin Council, will be expected to understand and comply with this policy.

6. **Reporting**

6.1 We will publish, on an annual basis, a range of equality data which shows our performance against the Council Plan. This data will demonstrate the council’s transparency with regard to the information on which we base our decisions. The information will be accessible to all in the following three areas:

• Workforce transparency

• Transparency in service provision

• Setting objectives

6.2 We will publish the results of our impact analysis, consultation/engagement and monitoring, this information will be accessible to everyone.
7. **Other related Telford & Wrekin Council Policies and Procedures**

7.1 There are a number of Telford & Wrekin policies that link with this policy. They include but are not limited to:
- Equal Opportunities Charter
- Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work Policy

8. **Accessibility**

8.1 This document is available to download from the Council’s website, [www.telford.gov.uk/equality](http://www.telford.gov.uk/equality)

8.2 A copy of this policy is available in community languages and in accessible formats upon request.

9. **Additional Information**

9.1 This policy was last reviewed in October 2017, and is due for review in Autumn 2019.