

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment and provision of services. Our commitment to equal opportunities is shared equally by both Councillors and staff.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The main reason for adopting an equal opportunity policy is to demonstrate the Council's belief in the fundamental principle of equality. This, in turn, enables the organisation to combat discrimination against disadvantaged groups. Other considerations are detailed below.

2.2 Organisational/Economic Considerations

- to show a commitment to equal opportunities to employees and candidates for jobs;
- to improve motivation and performance;
- to stimulate a more productive atmosphere and improve the quality of working life;
- to ensure that the services provided by Ribble Valley Borough Council adequately meet the requirements of all groups within the community;
- to form part of an overall policy which would also include the improvement of service provision and to provide equality of access for all sections of the community;
- to respond to the recommendations of the "Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of Inquiry" by Sir William MacPherson;
- to adopt the Commission for Racial Equality Standard - "Race Equality Means Quality".
- to deliver the above as far as is reasonably practicable and within the scope of present and future financial, economic and organisational constraints.

2.3 Social

- to seek to accurately reflect the composition of the local community in the workforce of Ribble Valley Borough Council;

- to encourage a commitment to equal opportunities in the community at large.

2.4 Legal

- to combat direct and indirect discrimination in accordance with legislation and follow recommended codes of practice.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The policy has four principal aims:

- (i) To ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their ability to carry out a particular job.
- (ii) To ensure that a job applicant or employee belonging to a disadvantaged or minority group does not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of belonging to that group.
- (iii) To establish effective systems to monitor and record ethnicity in relation to existing staff and service provision.
- (iv) To ensure that all goods and services provided by Ribble Valley Borough Council are equally available to all members of the community.

4 SCOPE OF POLICY

4.1 The Council acknowledges its obligations under:

- (i) the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- (ii) the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986;
- (iii) the Race Relations Act 1976;
- (iv) the Equal Pay Act 1970 as amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983;
- (v) the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- (vi) Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992;
- (vii) the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- (viii) the Employment Rights Act 1996.

4.2 In carrying out its obligations under the legislation, the Council will:

- (a) give full, fair and equal consideration to all applicants for vacancies, regardless of sex, marital status, colour, race, nationality, age, religion, sexual orientation, trade union activity, political activity¹, or, subject to the physical requirements of the post, disablement;
- (b) aim to have a staff population which reflects the population we serve;
- (c) give all employees equality of opportunity for training, career development and promotion regardless of sex, marital status, colour, race, nationality, age,

religion, sexual orientation, trade union activity, political activity, or, subject to the physical requirements of the post, disablement;

- (d) retain where possible existing employees who become disabled and co-operate in any rehabilitation or retraining deemed necessary;
- (e) consider adaptation of premises, equipment or job restructuring to enable a disabled person to be employed or to continue in employment with Ribble Valley Borough Council, or to allow for improved access for all visitors to council premises;
- (f) seek actively to promote an environment which is free from harassment and encourage all employees to behave in an appropriate manner at all times;
- (g) monitor the provision of goods and services provided by Ribble Valley Borough Council, seek to identify the requirements of the community in relation to the provision of goods and services, and take positive action to address any areas of concern;
- (h) in relation to delivery of service we will ensure that:
 - everyone has fair access to our services;
 - we use clear and unambiguous criteria;
 - good quality information is available to people in plain English or if requested in a format which is accessible to them;
 - we consult people about their needs;
 - we set the highest example in all partnerships and arrangements in which we work alongside other individuals and organisations and expect the same standards from them.
- (i) establish an effective system to monitor and record ethnicity in relation to existing staff and service provision;
- (j) incorporate equal opportunity and ethnicity issues into all Best Value reviews.

5 IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTROL OF THE POLICY

5.1 The Personnel Committee is responsible for the implementation of the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy, but all elected members share that responsibility as the corporate employer.

5.2 The Corporate Management Team (CMT) are responsible for the implementation, promotion and monitoring of the policy. They should, at all times, give a lead in demonstrating the principles of equal opportunities eg in their own, personal attitudes, behaviour and language.

Certain posts are 'politically restricted' under specific local government legislation. Where this is the case, political activity is not allowed.

5.3 The Legal and Administration Manager is responsible for developing recruitment and selection procedures, the provision of training and advice, and the monitoring of statistics relating to the policy. In relation to this responsibility the Legal and Administration Manager will:

- (a) maintain close liaison and co-operate with the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and representatives of local disadvantaged groups via the Equal Opportunities Working Group;
- (b) ensure that all advertisements relating to employment include a statement declaring the Council's commitment to equal opportunities;
- (c) monitor job applications in relation to equal opportunities, and ensure that applicant schedules are complete for all vacancies; thereby ensuring objectivity in short-listing of candidates;
- (d) maintain any records necessary to monitor applications effectively;
- (e) provide a copy of the summary policy statement to all employees and applicants for posts within any of the Council's departments;
- (f) ensure that a copy of this policy is available for public inspection at the Council's main offices and sports and leisure facilities;
- (g) review the policy on an annual basis and revise as appropriate;
- (h) ensure that at least one appropriately trained member of personnel participates in recruitment and selection, promotion or training decisions;
- (i) provide relevant training in respect of equal opportunities where necessary.

6 OBLIGATIONS OF MANAGERS

6.1 All Managers are responsible for ensuring that all employees and potential employees are made aware of the policy, helped to understand it, and made clear about what standards of behaviour are expected of them.

6.2 Managers must not ignore, tolerate or condone harassment of any kind, but must take prompt action to deal with it.

6.3 All complaints alleging that the policy is being breached must be taken seriously and swift and appropriate action to investigate and deal with the complaint is taken.

6.4 Individuals who complain about such breaches and who indicate that they are consequently experiencing stress, must be supported.

6.5 Managers must seek advice and support if necessary.

7 OBLIGATIONS OF EMPLOYEES

7.1 In addition to the Council's own commitment to equal opportunities all employees should be aware of their own responsibilities.

These responsibilities include:

- (i) co-operating with the measures which have been introduced in consultation with the appropriate trade unions to ensure there is equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
- (ii) ensuring that they do not discriminate as managers or as persons responsible for selection decisions in recruitment, promotion, transfer and training;
- (iii) ensuring that they do not discriminate in the provision of goods and services;
- (iv) not condoning or aiding other employees, unions or manager, to practise unlawful discrimination;
- (v) drawing attention to suspected discriminatory acts or practices;
- (vi) not victimising individuals on the grounds that they have made complaints or provided information about discrimination.

7.2 Failure to comply with the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy by any employee may result in disciplinary action.

8 COMPLAINTS

8.1 The Council's Grievance Procedure is the appropriate channel for employees who feel that they have been discriminated against.

8.2 External applicants should write to the Legal and Administration Manager if they feel unfair discrimination has taken place.

8.3 Any member of the general public who feels they have been discriminated against should write to the Chief Executive.